

## **“Know What’s True, Change What You Do”**

*Romans 6:1-14*

Back on Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> we looked at John 3:16 in the context of the conversation Jesus had with Nicodemus. In John 3 Jesus equated eternal life and the kingdom of God as the same concept. Nicodemus (and many Jews of his day) had the same problem with the kingdom of God as we do with understanding eternal life. They saw the Kingdom of God as a future only time when the Messiah ruled. Jesus opened many people’s eyes when His first message was “The Kingdom of heaven is near.” So, Jesus told Nicodemus if you want to see the kingdom of heaven you need a change of heart. And then you’ll see that the person and work of the Messiah, Jesus, affects how you live now as you wait for Him to return and rule on this earth.

Likewise, we have often sold the gospel short by using John 3:16 to say that eternal life is only the future time we spend with Jesus in a perfect environment. But Jesus told us we have eternal life now and that changes how we see ourselves and our world. If eternal life is only ‘heaven insurance’, what difference does knowing Jesus now make in our life? If the reality of the kingdom is present now, through the power of the victorious King Jesus over death, then eternal life is something that affects us now.

Not surprisingly the Apostle Paul was on the same page as Jesus, encouraging His followers in his own day to live out eternal life now. Many of Paul’s letters were similar in style. A section of teaching truth followed by an application of that truth to life now. Paul’s purpose was always the same: the more you know what’s true, it should change what you do. That makes sense. How can you know how to live for Christ if you don’t know all that you have in Christ? And this phrase “in Christ” was Paul’s favourite way to describe who we are.

Paul never used the term “Christian” to describe followers of Jesus. But he did use the phrase “in Christ” over 100 times and it was almost always a reference to our present and ongoing position in Christ. And for Paul being In Christ changes how we live. What does the phrase ‘in Christ’ mean? If I jump ‘in water’, I become wet; I take on the characteristics of the water. If it’s warm, I am warmed. If it’s cold I become cold. If I’m walking around on a farm and I fall into a pile of manure, I will take on the characteristics of manure. I will stink and become very dirty. The manure will get into my skin and hair and everyone will know that I have been in manure.

This is why Paul taught that being saved meant you were ‘in Christ’ and as a result we should take on the characteristics of Jesus Christ, who by the way is eternal. Here in Romans 6 Paul is in the middle of an argument. He said in Ch. 5 that

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;<sup>4</sup> perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

When the Holy Spirit came into our life when we received Christ as our Saviour, He sealed us as the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. We are now in Christ and as we saw last week in John 10, nothing can snatch us out of the Father’s hand. Or as Paul would say in Rom. 8, ‘*Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.*’

In the second half of Rom. 5, Paul reminds us that before we were saved, we were “in Adam”. We were ruled by sin and the consequence of sin is death. But Paul says now that we have received the gift through faith we are justified and made right before God. What’s the gift? Ch. 5 and Ch. 6 are one long argument and he defines the gift in 6:22-23 when he says,

*22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We have often used 6:23 as a ‘get-to-heaven by faith’ proof text, even though it is the summary of what he just finished telling us here in Ch. 6 that accepting the gift of eternal life through faith should not result in more sinning but in less sinning.

When we come to Rom. 6 Paul has been explaining the difference between being under the law and being under grace. The law showed us what sin is and how hard it is not to sin. But eternal life is the gift of God in Jesus that results in forgiveness of sins and releases us from the bondage of the law. Ch. 6 begins with Paul dealing with an issue that some had wrongly concluded – that now that we are forgiven in Christ, we can sin all we want because grace was available! Hang on, Paul says, you need a reminder of ...

## **Knowing Who You Are** **(6:1-10)**

*1What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.*

Paul is reminding disciples here that if we’re in Christ our sin nature was pronounced dead with Jesus. Jesus lives now to show there is life after death but also to show there is power over sin. We only think of life after death as something that happens to us when we leave this world. But Jesus died to sin and now lives so we will die to sin and now truly live.

### ***You have a new identity (vv.1-4)***

Prior to salvation we had no recourse for not sinning. We did what we wanted. Now we have been baptized into Christ. We have been fully immersed with Him and have His Spirit dwelling in us. By choosing faith in Jesus we choose to be identified with Him as His follower.

The image of baptism pictures well the change from being in Adam to being in Christ. When Jesus commands us to be baptized He tells us to be baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Spirit. We are His. We have a new identity. Baptism is a symbolic demonstration of our new identity and taking on a new name, the name of the trinity.

Baptism pictures the death and resurrection of Jesus but also our own separation [which is what death means] from our former life to our new life for Jesus. To live a new life in Jesus we have to separate ourselves from the old life. The power of the cross in having victory over sin is available to us now. Jesus died and lives so we can die to sin and live for Him. ‘We died to sin, so how can we live in it?’, Paul argues. Paul isn’t saying we will never sin. He’s saying if we are truly in Christ, we won’t live in it like we did before we came to know Christ - our life in Christ will not be characterized by sin. Since we are in Christ we are to take on His characteristics.

To be in Christ means to be able to live out from under sin's control. So knowing who we are means we also have ...

### **A new freedom (vv.5-7)**

*<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection, <sup>6</sup> knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup> for he who has died is freed from sin.*

When we accepted Christ, we were freed from the debt of sin which is eternal separation from God. Since sin no longer has power over us in the future it also has no power over us in the present. We choose to give sin its power over us when we succumb to temptation.

When we said yes to live for Jesus we said no to living for self. Yet everyday we struggle with who to live for because the sinful nature now co-exists with the new nature of the Spirit inside us. Paul states that when we die, we are free from sin. That principle applies to the present as well in that the power of sin has been defeated and now, we who are in Christ don't have to be nor should we be subject to sin's control.

Paul continues to hammer home this truth that what we have sealed for us in the future is also available to us now.

### **You have a new life (vv.8-10)**

*<sup>8</sup> Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, <sup>9</sup> knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*

Jesus' resurrection from death means He'll never have to die again. Our salvation in Christ means death to self and God's promise that "we will also live with Him". Paul says "We know this" because God said so and because Jesus rose. Death is no longer master over Jesus since He lives for God.

This is the new life we're to live now. Jesus died to sin and has a new life in God's presence. We who are in Christ also have His Father and Spirit and Jesus all with us now. We also are to live for God and no longer to our sinful selfish desires.

In these 10 verses Paul has been reviewing what 'we know' to be true about our new life in Christ. "Don't you know" (v.3), "for we know" (v.6) and "for we know" (v.9). So if we know what's true [we died with Christ and can now live with and for Him] that will change what we do. Know Who you are and

## **You'll Reflect Who's You Are** **(6:11-14)**

Truth in vv.1-10, now the application. How does all this work practically? Paul gives three practical commands. The first practical command is:

*"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

'Count' or 'consider' is the root of the English word logic. Paul's saying think about the logic of these truths.

### **Remind yourself every day (v.11)**

... that the power of sin is broken for us who are in Christ. The power of sin over you was broken at the cross and when we accepted Christ the power sin has over us is now broken. It won't have power over us when we die so it doesn't have power over us now. What good is faith in Jesus if it only has future rewards? None, that's why it's available now, and tomorrow and the next day. That sinful habit we struggle with, it actually has no power over us. We give it the power. For Paul, knowing truth results in application. If we just 'try and

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change' we fail. Because we're doing it in our own strength. Do it in the Spirit's strength who lives in you. Perhaps we need to literally say to ourselves when tempted, 'God says this sin [\_\_\_\_\_] no longer has power over me. I can have victory in His strength.'

Paul's second command follows up on this:

*"Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness ..."*

When Paul says 'do not let sin reign' he's commanding us to ...

### **Stop making sin your lord (vv.12-13a)**

The word mastery is the word for 'lord'. Paul is using lord to make a point: death can't 'lord' it over our Lord therefore the power of death – sin - can't lord it over us if we are in Christ the true Lord. Jesus was victorious over death – and so will we – but practically speaking so can have victories over sin now.

He knows people are always struggling with sin so he's saying whatever sin you've allowed to be lord of your life, stop empowering it by obeying its' lusts. Sin wants us. Sin is appealing. It brings a temporal but empty satisfaction to it. Stop empowering it so that you don't obey its pull. Or better, it's 'knock'. The word obey historically meant 'answer the door'. When sin knocks, don't open the door. It is dethroned at the cross. It has to come to you. Only if we open the door to temptation do we let it in. We give sin its power over us.

Listen to Paul's words in 1 Cor. 10:13

*"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful, He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."*

You and I have resurrection power over sin. The only power sin has over us is when we let it control us. That next drink or lustful thought or angry response or raising of pride or juicy piece of gossip or critical spirit or impatient attitude has no power over you if you know Christ. God has equipped us with the Spirit to overcome these temptations – one at a time – to have victory in Christ. Our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with. Remind yourself daily we are dead to that specific sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The third practical command is how we counter temptation. Because in order to say no we need a better yes.

*“... but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of Your body as instruments of righteousness.”*

There's a greater alternative to sin.

### **Choose God's better-for-you desires (v13b)**

We sin with our eyes (what we look for and at), our minds (what we think about), our feet (where we go) and our tongue – what we say. How do we offer these parts of our body to God instead of for sin? We must train our mind, eyes, tongue and feet to prefer what God wants believing it is better for us, than for what sin wants.

Our ability to withstand temptation depends on whether we really believe God's ways are more enjoyable and more rewarding and more satisfying than the fleeting moment of sin. What has better long-lasting benefits, sin or obedience? We know obedience has greater benefits than the consequences of sin so let's trust God and choose His benefits over sin's consequences. The more often we choose obedience to God the less likely we'll sin because we're tasting the good stuff!

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him.” [Ps. 34:8]*

Real fruit is better than canned fruit. Home made bread is better than store bought bread. But if you never have the real thing you never know there's something better. The reason why we fall to sin as much as we do is because we're not hanging around God enough and tasting and seeing how good He is and how wonderfully tasty obedience is. God satisfies far more than sin does, but if we're only spending 5 minutes with God a day or church is our only God time, then we're not feeding on the good stuff which helps us see the bad stuff.

*Ps. 90:14 O satisfy us in the morning with Your unfailing love,  
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Return to me, says the Lord and I will return to you says the Lord.

Paul has a summary statement that brings this altogether here;

*<sup>14</sup> For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

### **Let grace continue it's saving work (v.14)**

We are saved by grace through faith. Eternal life is a gift. But we are not there yet and so we must continue to let God's grace complete the work of salvation until we are perfect in Him, in His presence. Since we're commanded to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, it must mean we can grow in grace and knowledge.

If you think about it, a lot of our sin is due to graceless-ness. We're impatient, we're harsh, critical, vindictive usually because we over react to something someone said or what we think someone did or did not do. We are saved by grace. We live under grace. Let's exercise grace. Let's close the door when we're tempted to overreact or respond harshly or judge presumptuously. Let's live by grace and give people the chance to explain themselves, to wait for others to show up or

speaking, to cut people slack the same way God cuts us slack and shows us grace. Gracelessness leads to sinfulness. Gracefulness leads to sinlessness.

Jesus died for our sins so that we could be free from sin when we die AND have victory over sin now. Our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Jesus is our Lord, not sin. Jesus died and lives so we can die to sin and self and live for Him each day. If we know who we are let's take on the characteristics of who's we are.

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