

THE NEW LIFE OF THE JUSTIFIED

Series: Righteousness Revealed

Romans 6:1-14

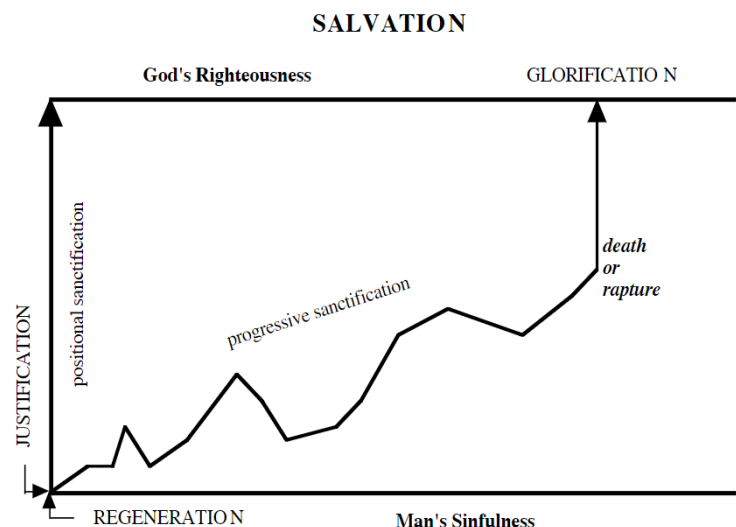
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When we first began our tour of Romans, we asked the question, “What in the world is God doing today?” Do you remember that? It’s an important question that the Apostle Paul is answering as he clearly and carefully explains God’s redemptive plan through the work of Jesus Christ and the Gospel. The good news of Jesus’s death, burial and resurrection have incredible meaning for our lives and for the world, and he’s revealing all of that. Jesus changes everything! Everything that Adam brought into the world like sin and death and condemnation, Jesus has the power to change as He brings us spiritual life, grace and righteousness. But He changes not only our position before God; He also changes our lives here and now. If you want to know what God is doing today, He’s in the business of changing lives!

So far in chapters 1-5, Paul has mostly explained how to be saved/justified through faith in Christ. We must understand we cannot be righteous on our own and we must look to the cross where Jesus died for us. We need His perfect righteousness. However, from the moment we get saved, we enter into a new spiritual realm and a new lifelong journey of life change, learning to become more and more like Jesus. In fact, I would say the chief responsibility of the Christian is to grow in Christlikeness. As we enter into chapters 6-8, that side of the Christian life is our focus. Jesus changes not only our position before God, but the shape of our daily walk and how we live. He gives us new life. New power. New allegiance. A new master.

So we are moving from justification to sanctification. These are stained glass words that we need to be familiar with. Justification is a one-time act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous, or justified, in Christ. Sanctification, however, is a lifelong process of being conformed to the image of Christ in our character. In justification He declares us righteous; in sanctification He is making us righteous. He loves us enough to save us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us the way we are.

When it comes to progressive sanctification, I can hardly think of a more important passage for us to study than the one we have before us today. It’s a critical passage for us to understand if we want to have victory in the battle with sin in our lives. Every Christian struggles with sin. Well, let me ask you: Have you



ever wished that you could change? Is there a certain besetting sin in your life that you struggle with? A habit you wish you could break? An addiction you wish you could quit? A virtue you wish you had like self-control? I think there's a lot of Christians walking around today who are walking around like Eeyore, that mopey donkey off of Winnie the Pooh, with their heads down, living lives defeated by sin and thinking there is no hope of ever getting victory over it. Many Christians have settled and said to themselves, "This is as good as it gets. I'm never going to have victory. Therefore, I'll just sit back and wait for heaven." I would submit that many true, born-again Christians are thinking that way. They just wish the battle was over. I do too, but the reality is that sin doesn't take a break. It's always working against God's will for our lives trying to push us the other direction and when it does, it has destructive consequences in our lives. It ruins our lives and relationships with God and others. But the good news is that Christ gives us power to change and experience significant victory—but it isn't automatic. There are some steps we need to take to live in the new, victorious life, so we're going to talk about 3 major steps this morning.

6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 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; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

Don't you want that? Newness of life? Our body of sin done away with? No longer slaves to sin? Freed from sin? It only happens through Christ. But Paul enters into this discussion by way of the last verse of chapter 5 where he made the statement that for the believer in Christ, where sin increases, grace increases all the more. We talked about how grace always outpaces our sin. If sin takes one step, grace takes two. If sin takes three steps, grace takes four. That is unbelievable, radical grace. However, some might misinterpret Paul's statement as to say, "Well then, if grace increases when we sin, shouldn't we just go on sinning? Shouldn't we give God the opportunity to give us grace?"

Throughout history there have always been people (who tend to be nominal in their faith by the way) who treat God's forgiveness or grace as a license to sin. Actually, Jude 4 warned about false teachers who would make grace a license to sin (Bible students call that lawlessness/antinomianism). One man, W. H. Auden once said, "I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged." He presumed upon the grace of God assuming judgment would never come. Rasputin, an old Russian leader whose name means "debauched one" and whose ideas seemed to pave the way for atheistic Communism, believed that sinning was necessary for salvation—the more you sinned, the more secure your salvation was. Many people today who claim to be Christians treat God's grace like it's fire insurance. They want the grace to live however they want, misunderstanding grace as freedom *to* sin rather than freedom *from* sin.

To such a false theology, Paul responds with that now familiar saying, “May it never be!” Why? Because “How shall we who died still live in it?” The phrase “live in it” entails living a sinful lifestyle. Our new life in Christ is not to be characterized by sin, but rather by righteousness because we are now “dead to sin” in Christ. As a new believer, I remember this concept being very confusing for me. But while difficult to understand at times, what Paul is touching on here is incredibly important and practical. We need to get a grip on it to live a victorious Christian life. Actually, I’m afraid that because many Christians still struggle unnecessarily at times because they don’t understand or are ignorant of this matter of knowing their union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.

Step 1: Know your new identity in Christ.

If you have a pen or pencil, circle that word “know” in verses 3, 6, & 9. If you want to live victoriously over sin in your life, you have to *know* something of what Christ has done for you and who you are now that you are in Christ. You need to know you are united with Him. Victory begins with knowledge. Paul says to be transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:1-2). He understands learning is the key to living. Living depends on learning; duty depends on doctrine. This is why Paul, in his letters, begins with doctrine before he talks about duty. For example, the first 3 chapters of Ephesians are about who we are in Christ and the last 3 are about how to live in Christ. This is Paul’s pattern because he understands that we need to know some things about what Christ has done for us if we’re going to live righteously in Christ—and that man tends to think the other way around. We tend to think that we need to live as saints in order to become saints. The reality is that He makes us saints in order to do what a saint does.

I’m going to share an illustration that I admit is a bit absurd, but it gets the point across. Let’s imagine when I was a baby that my parents were missionaries in Indonesia. And one day while they were out hiking in the jungle a momma orangutan reaches down from the trees and swipes me up and runs off with me. My parents never find me and so I live with the orangutans for several years. So my whole life what have I learned the ways of? The orangutans. And let’s pretend that one day you’re on mission trip and are hiking through that same area and see a bunch of orangutans swinging through the trees. But there is one clumsy and funny looking one that is lagging behind, trying to keep up. It’s me. So you say, “Check it out! That kid thinks he’s an orangutan!” How do you know that I think I’m an orangutan? Because I’m acting like one! I don’t know any different. So you stop me and you try to rehab me. You give me a book on how to live like a human being. Suppose I can read it and understand it. Is it going to help me any? No. I think I’m an orangutan. Why would I want to know how to act like a human when I think I’m an orangutan? The only way you’re going to rehab me is to change my mind. You have to convince me that I’m a human first. If you convince me of the truth that I am a human being, then I will start to behave like a human being. See my behavior tells everyone the truth about who I think I am. If I know I’m a human being, I’m going to act like one. I’m going to put off the ways of the orangutan and put on the way of the human being.

Here’s the point: If as a Christian, you’re moping around all the time like Eeyore thinking, “I’m just a no-good dirty-rotten scum-bag sinner,” well, don’t be surprised when you act like one! If you think you’re just a sinner who will always be hopelessly stuck in your besetting sin, whatever

that sin may be, you will never behave the way a child of God is encouraged to behave. I'm convinced that this is why a majority of believers can't seem to get victory over some sins their life. They don't know who they are in Christ. They don't know they're saints. They don't understand their union with Christ and the power in Him. We need to understand who we are in Christ before we're ever going to live like Him. This is why Bible study is so important and why someone well said once that "Christianity is the thinking man's religion." It's not just about doing – but thinking. It starts with the right thoughts and motives. The religious man always wants to do first, but the spiritual man bases his doing on the knowledge of Christ. One man said, "If Satan can keep a Christian ignorant, he can keep him impotent."

The spiritual reality is that those who have believed in Christ have been united (v. 5) with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. The word united is a botanical term that is used for grafting of trees. We have been grafted into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is also what is being pictured in water baptism. There is, by the way, a lot of debate over verse 3 as to whether Paul is talking about the outward symbol of water baptism or the inward, invisible work of Spirit baptism. There's no way to tell, even in the Greek, if Paul is talking about Spirit baptism or water baptism. It appears that Paul is using baptism to refer to the whole conversion experience which would include Spirit baptism and water baptism. Water baptism is a picture of the inward reality—our union with Christ as we die and go under the water (being buried) and come up out of the water (being raised to new life). Water baptism doesn't save, but it is an important step in our conversion experience. Jesus commanded it and through it we are identifying with Christ, the Church, and the gospel message. We are saying that we have believed in Christ and desire to follow Him. We want to walk in the newness of life with Christ, not the old ways of sin with Adam.

8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So Paul again goes back to the realities of the gospel—that Jesus died and was raised from the dead, never to die again. Death is no longer His master, and it never will be again. Well, the logic is that since we are united with Christ in these things, we benefit from them as well, even here and now. We share in what Christ has done. The old us is dead. We have new life. He died to sin once for all. We should die to sin. We should appropriate that thought. He says to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Step 2: Reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Circle the here is reckon/count/consider depending on the translation. In our neck of the woods, saying "I reckon" means something more like "I guess." Like, "I reckon it's going to rain this afternoon." "I reckon them Huskers are going to win big with Dylan Raiola at quarterback next year!" I hope so, but it's not really an expression of confidence in English. In Romans, "reckon" is a word of confident faith or belief. To consider or reckon something is to think about something

that you know and take hold of it. You grasp it mentally. You take it and internalize it. The Greek word is in a continuous present tense as well so this is something that we are to continue doing; we're to keep on considering. We should continually consider it true that our relationship to sin and death has changed. That we're not the same people we once were. And this is no game of pretending! This ain't make believe here. Believers are to consider themselves to be what God has in fact made them. One man said, "If we fail to believe that sin no longer dominates us, we will be much more vulnerable to yield to temptation, to practice sin, and to fear death. However if we count on sin not having that power we will be more apt to resist temptation, to stay clear of sin, and to anticipate death less fearfully." Another said, "Holiness of life can be stifled if we fail continually to appropriate and put to work the new life God has given us."

But while this sounds simple, I think this is where people stop. I think this is where most people quit. They don't want to go here because it requires an internal transparency with God. Most people don't want to sit and contemplate with God. They don't want to slow down and think critically about spiritual matters. They know what Jesus did, but they never want to sit down and contemplate what it really means for them. They think it's great if Jesus paid for their sin but don't let it interfere with my life, with my time. It's this way with many things. We know we should pray and talk to God. We know the Lord's prayer. We know how to pray. We know what to pray for. We know many tips to help us pray. But do we do it? Do we sit down and do it? When you're tempted to sin or you have sinned, at times it's important to pause and preach the gospel to yourself and say, "That's not who I am anymore. I'm dead to that. That will not glorify God. And I'm alive to God in righteousness."

I can tell you about two college girls who understood this point. After getting saved they were invited to a party on campus as usual. Before Christ, they would've accepted the invite and been the center of the party. However, now that they were saved and experienced truly abundant life in Christ, they replied to the invite with, "Sorry, we can't come for we have died."

A Christian counselor who disciplined me quite a bit said that when he sees Christians struggling with sin, rather than turning first to some behavior modification, he likes to imagine a big neon sign above their heads that says, "Help! I'm deceived! I don't know who I am in Christ." Because in all likelihood many people have tried to live the Christian life in their power. Rather than relying on their union with Christ and the resources given through the Spirit, they rely on themselves. So if we want victory over the destructive sin in our lives, we are 1) know, 2) reckon, and 3) present/yield/offer/give ourselves to God in service. Sometimes we talk about surrendering to the Lord. This is it. Circle the word in verse 13.

Step 3: Yield yourself to God for His use.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Because of who we are in Christ, Paul calls on believers to present themselves to God in a decisive act of self-dedication. We aren't to let sin reign in our mortal bodies. We aren't to go on yielding to sin but yielding to righteousness. What's amazing is that we have the freedom to do that. Before we are in Christ, as unbelievers, we have no power to do this. We're dead in sin. After we are saved, however, and born again by the Spirit, we are now free not to sin. An unsaved person may think that he is not a slave to sin when he really is. And the Christian may think that he is a slave to sin but he really isn't. In Peter's words, the born again Christian has everything he needs for life and godliness because he has become a partaker of the divine nature.

The reason God united us with Christ is so that our old body of sin (in the likeness of Adam) might be done away with and we would walk in the new life of freedom (in the likeness of Christ). This freedom is not a freedom from sin's presence. We will always struggle with sin in this life and until glory. But we can now say no to sin. Sin is no longer our master. We don't have to answer to the masters of immorality, greed, anger, sloth, envy, or lust anymore. Sin is not the captain of the Christian's ship. I like to think of the Christian as a sailor on a ship and the old, sinful captain is tied up to the mast of the ship. And while he can bark orders and taunt us, we don't have to listen to his tyrannical commands. Christ is the new captain of the ship. We listen to Him. We use our bodies for righteousness, bringing God glory.

Paul says instead of using the members of our body as tools/weapons/instruments with which to sin, we are to use them to do His will in righteousness. Have you thought of your body parts as tools God can use? I can use my hand for good or evil, sin or righteousness. I can push someone down or I can lift someone up with my hands. I can use my mouth to curse or to bless. I can use my feet to go places I know I should go or I can use them to take a pie over to my neighbor's house and ask how they're doing. I can use my mind to dwell on lustful thoughts or I can use it to dwell on how good God is or think of creative ways to glorify God in the situation I'm in.

That's the challenging application from Scripture this morning: that in light of what Christ has done for you, having empowered you, that you would yield your life to Him. It's not enough to know. It's not enough to consider. You must put the theology into action. You have to surrender your life to Him and say, "Lord, I'm yours. Take my hands, my feet, my mouth, my mind... Use me to bring You glory." Perhaps you're one of the many who have said "no" to sin, but have you said "yes" to the Lord? "Yes, Lord, you can have me. You can have my life. Show me how you can use me in my home, my church, my community, my world." There comes a time when we all must present everything we are and have to God in righteousness. So as the worship team plays, I invite you to cry out to the Lord in your heart and let Him know that right here and right now, you want to be done serving the tyrant of sin, and you want to give your life to Jesus who brings you life and freedom.