

Resurrection and the End of Sin, Part 1

Romans 6:1-11

In the message of the Gospel, we learn that God saves sinners. We learn that God reconciles sinners to himself, not counting their trespasses against them because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross. All who repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ, God delivers them from death. He delivers them from suffering an eternal wrath of judgment for their sins. Instead of that wrath and suffering, he removes that, and he gives them in its place a new life to live, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

And that's it. That's the Gospel. It takes unpacking, for sure, but that is the simple message of the Gospel. And yet how easily it has been ignored, that message of the Gospel. It's been so easy for so many people to lose sight of that simple message that God saves sinners, and that he saves them from his own wrath.

And why has he been angry? Why has he been wrathful? Why will he judge those who continue in their sins with an eternity in hell? Because sin defies his righteousness, because sin is transgression of his law, because sin is rebellion against his holiness. And so when God saves sinners, he delivers them from their sins, not leaving them in their sins, but he saves them out of their sins so that they may live a new life, so that they may walk in righteousness and holiness.

We're assured of this because of what God has done in our Savior. He handed Jesus over to crucifixion, that he might die and be buried in a tomb and then be raised from the dead. And what God did in Jesus Christ established a pattern for all who follow Christ, that they, too, would die, be buried, and be raised to walk in newness of life.

Sadly, as we look around to see what passes for Christianity these days, we have to admit that we see, we can see publicly anyway, very little newness of life. It seems to be a low ebb moment in our day as professing Christians have lost sight of the Gospel's true power, which is, at its most basic and fundamental level, the power to raise the dead. The

professing church, the visible church, has failed to appropriate the power of Christ's resurrection for their day-to-day lives. They believe the lies of the world instead, and that has thereby seriously damaged the witness of professing evangelicalism.

All that has become an occasion to blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ and to sling mud on the church and on conservative evangelicalism, as a whole. I mean, the secular press is having a field day; once again, all that that reveals is yet another false gospel, one that is completely powerless to transform sinners. Here in our church, we see sinners transforming all the time, and it doesn't take beatings and punishment. It does require truth. It does require the regeneration of a sinner to be born again. Without that, there is no change.

It is vitally important that we acknowledge the magnitude of the problem of sin, and that we recognize the depth of the problem of sin, and not just what's going on in that immoral revolution happening in the culture around us, which is so easy to shoot at, but rather to take a look at our own house, at our own life. Peter says, "It is time for judgment to begin in the household of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the

outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God?" It's not just for the sake of the purity of the church and the purity of the Gospel. Though it is at, definitely that. And what does sin do to the soul? It destroys it. The devil loves to entice and hold people with guilt and shame, hold them under sin, enslave them.

It's not just a matter of bad teaching and weak theology in the pulpits, though it is that. We're reaping the fruit of no theology. We're reaping the fruit of preaching that is ostensibly, it's, it's professed to be expository preaching, and yet it just gives the high points of everything and jumps directly from just talking about the text to some moralistic lessons from the text, a little bit of therapy from that passage. Doing public therapy is mostly what's going on in pulpits today. No theology, no depth. So how do people grow if they don't know the truth?

But what we're seeing, I think, is more severe. It's an abandonment of the Gospel. And it's an abandonment of the Gospel among those for whom the Gospel is in the name. Evangelical refers to those who have the *evangel*. The *evangel* is the Greek

word for the Gospel. And sadly, on the whole, evangelicals have lost sight of the Gospel, not only because they're not articulating a clear Gospel to people, often just giving a subpar version of the Gospel that, they pass it off that way.

But I think more deeply they're not practicing the Gospel. They're not obeying the Gospel. They're not applying the Gospel to their daily lives, internally in how they think, and externally in how they act, how they behave, how they speak, which is why sin runs riot through the evangelical ranks.

And that tells lies about God. What lies? It's saying that his Gospel really has no power to save. That's a lie. His Gospel saves sinners. I'm one of them. He's transformed my life because of the power of the Word of God, because of this all-sufficient Scripture that he's given us, because the Holy Spirit has regenerated me to new life. I could stand here and tell you, as a satisfied customer, I believe the truth. You should, too.

What we're seeing around us is not an indictment of this. It's an indictment of a false gospel. It's, it's a false message

giving false assurance to false professing believers. They're not believers.

In the text I read earlier, Romans 6, you can turn there in your Bibles if you're not there already, Romans chapter 6, Paul opens that section of teaching by posing a question, and it's a question that had been used by his opponents as a charge against his ministry. Paul is the, the one who taught a Gospel of grace, the grace of God that overcomes the law, overcomes the condemnation of the law, and so his opponents said, Oh, yeah? Well, if your Grace, the Gospel of grace is so powerful, I'll just keep on sinning. That's what you're saying. Paul, you're giving an antinomian message. You're giving a message that says, Keep on sinning. The more you sin, the more grace abounds.

That's wrongly applied to Paul and his Gospel, as he's going to make clear, but it's a fair question when it's directed at us, the question that may very well indict our modern form of evangelical religion, and much of the substance of it as well. The question's there in Romans 6:1, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?"

And I look around at what's, a lot of the shenanigans that are happening around the land, that's publicized now. You might think that that's actually what the professing evangelical church believes. We just continue sinning because grace abounds. Pastors these days commit all kinds of sin, sexual sins, and otherwise, sins of abuse of power and all kinds of horrible things. They go through a little bit of therapy, and then they're back in a pulpit the next year with their new church launch funded by some enterprise.

Who, who, who's keeping these people accountable? you might think. This is what they say: Now that I've fallen, I really understand the grace of God. I can really connect with people who, who just struggle with sin, who are overcome. See how attractive that message is to people who love their sin? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? You're thinking about that question for yourself. Perhaps you're a decent enough biblicalist to look at the next verse and say, "By no means! May it never be!" And perhaps you think for yourself, That's not true for me.

So why are we in this state of affairs today? I remember once I was trying to help a young man with this thought life. He was debilitated by some, overcome by sinful thinking and debilitated because of it. I recommended that he memorize some passages of Scripture. I was going to work with him on that, memorize with him, have him meditate on those passages, have him answer a few questions, and he, he reacted with incredulity, even a bit of scorn, responding to my counsel and my plan for helping him, saying, Isn't this a bit legalistic? Ah, thwarted again! Silenced by that unanswerable charge of legalism.

Throughout my years of pastoral ministry, I've found that people are quite happy to listen to preaching, quite pleased to come into churches, sit and listen to expositions of biblical passages. The more educated, the more erudite the exposition, the better. Here's some interesting illustrations, even consider, considering making some applications about that message. As long as no one holds them accountable for following through with any of it, as long as one's religion remains on one's own terms, all's well and good. That's why we really like radio preaching. We really like preaching on YouTube. We really like podcasts because none of those guys are getting into my



home. Start poking around in anyone's life, and now you've gone from preaching to meddling, haven't you?

Paul asked a general question. He said, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Let's get just a bit more specific because I think Paul would authorize us to do that. Are we to continue in selfishness, living for ease and comfort, that grace may abound? Are we continue, to continue enjoying our retirement because that's what I deserve. Don't ask me to do anything, so that grace may abound?

Are we to continue in spiritual laziness, content with spiritual mediocrity that grace may abound? Are we to continue dabbling with sexual sins that grace may abound? Are we to continue gossiping, slandering, lying, exaggerating, sinning with our tongues? Are we to continue in hypocrisy, pretending before others to be what we're actually not? Are we to continue in a bitter, unforgiving spirit, having a critical spirit, complaining spirits, ungrateful hearts?

Are we to continue living unaccountable lives, keeping everyone at their arms' length, never committing to anything or anyone? Are we to continue in fear and worry and anxiety? Are we to continue fearing man rather than God, doing what people want us to do because they tell us to do it, because we don't want their, their disappointment, because we don't want their judgment, rather than doing what God expects? Are we to continue using our personalities as an excuse for our sins? You've heard it: Man, she's kind of angry, critical. Well, she's just like that. Man, I feel like I'm egg, on egg shells around that guy all the time. Well, you know, you just need to understand, that's just him. Really, is this what the Gospel does, just leaves us like that?

Are we to continue blaming our physiology, our chemistry, the trials we've gone through, the pains we've suffered, what happened in childhood? Are we gonna continue blaming all of that, or our poor health, or whatever it is, that grace may abound? Does grace just cover over all that? Is that what we think of God's grace?

Paul's answer, "By no means! May it never be!" Emphatically no; strongest form of negation possible in the Greek language, that's what he's used here. It's emphatically denied, the toleration of any sin, and it's not just in the specific and the general and the vague. He's talking about sin in specific, concrete forms because God desires truth in the inward parts. All of them. He shines his truth and his light and his salvation on the heart. All of it. He intends to radically transform the entire personality. He's going to dominate your personality, and he's going to conform it to Jesus Christ. If you don't think that that's good news, then you don't understand the Gospel.

That's what Paul speaks of, here, when he says in verse 2, "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" We can't. By no means can we do that. Truth is, no true Christian can continue living in sin. No true Christian can be comfortable with sin. Did I say no true Christian sins? No. I said no true Christian can continue in sin. Every Christian wants to mortify sin that he finds in himself. And believe me, we find a lot in ourselves. The more we grow into maturity, the deeper we see. You realize what's at the root, producing all that bad fruit. And when we see it, we want it gone.

Every Christian wants to mortify sin. Every Christian wants sin dead, because sin is what we're saved from. Sin is the obstacle that prevents us from full enjoyment of the life of God in Christ Jesus. So let's move the meter a little bit and help us think differently. We need to think differently.

So we're going consider some implications of Christ's resurrection for how we live today, and the key is to change how we think about this. Five times in these verses, really Romans 6:3-11, five times in those verses, Paul uses a verb that has to do with the thought life, has to do with how we think, what we think. Look at verse 3. He says, "Do you not know?" Verse 6, "We know." Verse 8, "We believe," which has to do with what you know and understand and embrace. Verse 9, "We know," and in verse 11 also he says, "So you also must consider yourselves." The verb *logizomai*, thinking.

And just as Paul's words here to the Romans, they're fitting to reorient the minds of Christians in his own day, those who are steeped in Greek philosophy, all manner of wacky

mythology. You think The Avengers or Marvel is anything new? It all came from this stuff. They've even got one called Thor. Where's that coming from? It's like dipping into the old mythologies and putting it on the big screen. These guys are steeped in that stuff.

So his words are fitting to reorient the minds of those Christians coming out of that culture, having really believed all that stuff. And if his words are powerful enough to reorient their minds, his words are just as fitting to reorient the minds of Christians today. We're not in any more significant culture of lies than these Romans were. We have been raised in a climate of moralistic therapeutic deism.

Moralistic: just teaching rules to live by. Therapeutic: it's about salving your hurts, trying to help you heal and overcome, and even though you'll always be addicted, even though you'll always be recovering, there's no "done with that," that's therapeutic. And it's deism. Why? Because there is no accountability. God is remote. He wound up the universe and then stepped away and let us run the show. Moralistic therapeutic

deism: that's what, that's coming out of most pulpits in churches today.

Listen, we've entered into the Christian faith with our heads full of error, with our hearts saddled with wrong desires, with our, our habits of living, they're trained by the world. So Paul tells us we have got to start at the bottom level, basement level, in our thinking, in our minds, at a radical fundamental, we need to think differently.

And that means that when you walk in here every Sunday, I have to tell you you're wrong about something. You're wrong. I'm wrong. That's why I go to the Word of God, to have my theology sorted out. We need to relearn everything. That's not a message that the unbelieving world wants to hear, and sadly, increasingly, that's not a message that many professing Christians are patient with either.

But that is the message of the Gospel. That is the Gospel of divine grace. Grace has power to change this, the repenting sinner. We're transformed by a resurrection of power,

demonstrated first in the power that raised Jesus from the dead, and now demonstrated daily in every single life, to show fundamentally, radically, the change that comes in our lives.

Praise God for his amazing grace. Amen? And grace, that's just a shorthand way of summarizing the meaning of this Passion weekend as we remember his crucifixion for our forgiveness, and as we celebrate his resurrection for our justification. He died to sin once for all, that we too, having died with him, might never die again. He was raised that we, too, might walk in newness of life.

And by living this way, we'll give a true and living testimony that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is alive and well, still, on planet Earth, here in America, here in Northern Colorado, and that Christ continues to build his church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.