

“SINCE GRACE IS GRACE...” PT. 3
ROMANS 6:6-7

In his tremendously helpful book, *The Enemy Within*, Kris Lundgaard writes this in the opening chapter, “Evil at My Elbow:”

All I wanted to do was surprise my wife.

Since we had moved into our new house almost a year ago, the refrigerator door handle had been on the wrong side. I had put off moving it because of my clumsiness with mechanical things. But on this Thursday afternoon while my wife was at work, I was set to redeem myself and right the wrong.

I was halfway through the job. I had the refrigerator and freezer doors off and wanted to get them back on soon so nothing would spoil. I was at the pivotal step of swapping the hinges from the right side of the refrigerator to the left, when I realized that each hinge was fastened by two torx screws. Two lousy torx screws. There is only one tool in the universe that can (safely) remove a torx screw: a torx socket.

I didn’t have a torx socket.

Right then my three boys decided to move their Traveling Sibling Rivalry Show into the middle of my angst. I lost it. I let them have it, though they didn’t deserve it. They stared at me as if I were a monster from Alpha Centauri, while I ranted in an unknown tongue.

In mid-fit I had an out-of-body experience. I saw my contorted red face screaming at my charming boys and knew at once I was doing something evil. So I stopped and asked their forgiveness, right? Wrong. Something had control of me—it was as if an alien had invaded my body and was forcing me to do his bidding. It was long after they had fled from my wrath before I recovered my sanity and my conscience and humbled myself before them in groveling apologies.

I spent the next several days feeling like a whipped puppy. Was I really that wicked? How could I hurt my children like that? Had I done irreparable harm? Would they forgive me? Would God forgive me?

Anything like that ever happen to you? [*The Enemy Within*, 21-22]

I suspect that like Kris and like me, you know something like that feeling. It may not have been anger, but you know the sense of, “what have I done?” Where does this stuff come from? And how can we fight against it? Or does it even matter that we should fight against it? As believers, can we do what we want and not worry about sin, and simply appeal to grace and assume that in some sense sin is even good because it magnifies God’s grace and forgiveness?

To that latter idea, Paul says, “May it never be!” (**Rom. 6:1**) The idea is abhorrent to Paul. As he will say in verse four, the very reason we’ve been justified is so that ***we too [like Christ] might walk in newness of life***. In other words, we’ve been forgiven of sin *and* freed from sin so that we don’t have to sin. We don’t *have to* sin, but we invariably *do* sin. So how will we win the fight against sin? As we noted last week, in part, our victory over is by remembering what the Lord has provided for us in our salvation —

THE GRACE THAT JUSTIFIES SINNERS ALSO FREES SINNERS FROM THE POWER OF SIN.

How has a believer been freed from the power of sin? Paul identifies three ways we have been freed:

1. Our Old Man is DEAD (v. 6a)

- ✓ What is the “old man?”
- ✓ How was the old man crucified with Christ?

2. Our Body's Inclination to Sin is NEGATED (v. 6b)

3. We are JUSTIFIED from Sin (vv. 6c-7)

- We often say around here and I said it again last Sunday, the battle against sin is a battle that begins in the mind. In order to act righteously, we must first learn to think righteously and conform our minds to the truth of God.
- When Paul moves into the application of the truth of our salvation in chapter 12, the first thing he will talk about is the renewal of the mind (**Rom. 12:2**). And he will say something similar in this chapter (**6:11**). To fight against sin, we must constantly remind ourselves of what we are in Christ and what Christ has done for us.
- As Paul began his argument against antinomian in v. 3, he asked, ***Do you not know...?*** There was a body of truth about salvation that the Romans should have known, even though Paul had not yet been to Rome or taught the Roman church directly. And he continues that same thought in verse 6 — ***knowing this...*** That is, there is something that the Romans (and the antinomians) should know about salvation that they are not acting on. With both references to “knowledge,” Paul is reminding us that to fight against sin and live righteously, we must begin thinking the right kinds of ways.
- And here are three thoughts that we must think —

1. Our Old Man is DEAD (v. 6a)

- What is the “old man?”

- ✓ These two verses echo and then expand what Paul has already said in vv. 3-4.
- ✓ In verse 3 he says that all believers have been identified with Christ’s death, and then in verse 4 he emphasizes the reality of Christ’s death by pointing to His burial and His resurrection from the *dead*. All these references to death were to emphasize the state and condition of death experienced by Christ and that if we are in Christ (justified by faith), then we have been identified with that death.
- ✓ But in these verses, Paul is a little more specific about who (or what) was put to death with Christ. Notice Paul says, **our old self**. A more literal translation is “our old man.” So Paul is not just saying, “believers have been put to death,” but “the old man is put to death.” What is that old man?
- ✓ Paul uses the term **man** to denote the totality of what and who we are. It is our whole self. And he uses the adjective **old** to describe us — by “old” he means obsolete, inferior, worn out, useless. It is “old” in contrast to what is “new” and it is “useless” in contrast to what is “useful.”
- ✓ Paul uses this same term a couple other times — Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9 (parallel passages).
 - In **Ephesians 4:22** it is clear that Paul is speaking of everything the believer was prior to Christ (notice **vv. 17-19**) — it is the domination of sin and living under the control and corruption of sin with an unredeemed mind. And that all changes when one trusts Christ (**vv. 20-21**).
 - In **Colossians 3:9** builds on the basic premise of the chapter (**3:1, 3**) that the believer is identified with Christ and he has experienced a fundamental change. Notice in v. 9, “you *laid* aside — past tense. The transformation from the old man is something that’s already happened. (Ephesians then is emphasizing that we should live in light of that truth.)
- ✓ So what does Paul mean in Rom. 6:6? He is emphasizing the change that took place when the second Adam usurped the first Adam. What happens when Christ defeats sin? There is new life and the old life is dead (**Rom. 5:18-19**). Adam and sin are no longer reigning in our lives; Christ is. Because we’ve been *converted* (think about the meaning of that word), redeemed, and transformed, there is a fundamental and complete change in our identity:

“The old self is the unregenerate self, connected with Adam. It encompasses everything a person is in Adam before union with Christ. The new self is the regenerate self, united with Christ, who replaces the old man. When a person becomes a Christian, he puts on the new self and becomes a ‘new creation’ in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). He is no longer the old man. The unregenerate self in Adam is gone forever. The new self in Christ is reality.” [MacArthur, *Biblical Doctrine*, 467.]

“Our old man’ is...the unregenerate man in his entirety in contrast with the new man as the regenerate man in his entirety. It is a mistake to think of the believer as both an old man and new man or as having in him both the old man and new man, the latter in view of regeneration and the former because of remaining corruption. That this is not Paul’s concept is made apparent here by the fact that the ‘old man’ is represented as having been crucified with Christ and the tense indicates a once-for-all definitive act after the pattern of Christ’s crucifixion. The ‘old man’ can no more be regarded as in the process of being crucified than Christ in his sphere could he thus regarded.” [John Murray, *Romans*]

- So when Paul says **our old man was crucified**, he simply means that our relationship to Adam, under the dominion of sin is removed through justification and our salvation.
- And that leads to the next question —
- **How was the old man crucified with Christ?**
 - ✓ As we noted in v. 4, Paul uses **death** in this passage to denote the reality of it and not the process.
 - ✓ So when Paul says our old man was **crucified**, he is speaking about the “complete end of a whole way of life...a decisive ending of the old as the believer enters new life.” [Morris]
 - ✓ Paul uses the idea of crucifixion because that’s how Christ died; Paul is identifying us with the reality and totality of Christ’s death. Notice v. 10 — **He died to sin once for all**. And if we are in Christ, that is our place as well. As Stott says, “what was crucified with Christ was not a part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted.”
 - Christ’s crucifixion meant his conquering of the realm of sin (6:10), and our crucifixion with Christ means our release from the realm of sin (this verse).
 - Christ’s crucifixion meant his release from the law (Gal. 4:4-5), and our crucifixion with Christ means our release from the law (6:14; 7:24)
 - And Christ’s crucifixion meant his release from death (v. 9; Phil. 2:7-8), and our crucifixion with Christ means our release from death (8:1-11). [Moo]
 - ✓ This sounds wonderful, but how then does the believer still sin?
 - It is clear that believers still sin (7:19-21).
 - There is a difference between committing sin and *living in* the sin and delighting in it
 - ... Even while Paul committed sin (Rom. 7:14-25), he hated it.
 - ... A believer will sin and may be trapped and struggle for an extended time against a particular sin, but a believer cannot live in a state of unrepentant rebellion against God (1 Jn. 3:4-6).
 - ... We belong to a new “kingdom” but the temptation to go back to that kingdom still remains with us until final glorification: “What we *were* ‘in Adam’ is no more; but until heaven, the temptation to *live* in Adam always remains.” [Moo]
 - ✓ When we say our old man was crucified, we do not mean our capacity to sin died with Christ, but our old relationship to Adam & sin. The capacity to sin still lives, but our old life does not...

- And that leads us to the second thought we need to think in relation to sin —

2. Our Body's Inclination to Sin is **NEGATED** (v. 6b)

• What is *our body of sin*?

- ✓ Whatever *our body of sin* is, it can't be the same thing as "our old self." Notice Paul says, that our old self was crucified *in order that* our body of sin might be done away with. So if they are references to the same thing then it would be something like, "our old man was put to death so that our old man could be put away." And that doesn't make sense.
- ✓ Many suggest that Paul is speaking about our physical body — that the body in which we practice our sin and the body that is marked by sin. The problem with that is that statement seems to suggest that the body is inherently evil (a false teaching of the Gnostics).
- ✓ This is an unusual phrase and it is the only time it appears in the NT. However, similar phrases appear in **Romans 6:12; 8:10, 11, 13, 23**. In all those verses he is talking about the body as the place of sinful impulses and desires, what he typically calls "the flesh." And that's probably the best way to understand this phrase — the old man was crucified with Christ (we were saved and our relationship with Adam and sin was changed) *in order that* our flesh might be done away with. We were converted so that we might win the battle with the flesh, our sinful desires and longings.
- ✓ But that also leads to another question —

• In what sense is our body of sin *done away with*?

- ✓ The word has a wide range of meanings — it can mean "nullified," or "rendered ineffective," or "destroyed" and "abolished," or even "annihilated."
- ✓ So how does that relate to the flesh? On the one hand, it is completely true that the flesh will ultimately be annihilated and abolished (1 Jn. 3:2; Rom. 8:30). But it's also true that we don't experience the full effect of that abolishment yet. We still experience the weaknesses of sinful attraction and desires.
 - This week I experienced the weakness of the flesh when I upgraded my computer OS beyond the hardware's ability and experienced a tremendous slow down...
 - And I experienced the weakness of the flesh when I had a short night of sleep and was tempted to be irritable and crabby the next day, violating my mother's rule about staying up late...
 - That's the flesh — we experience those pulls and attractions in dozens of different ways virtually every day. The flesh is weak (the physical body is weak), so we are inclined to still give in to the flesh (sinful desires and longings). As MacArthur said, "...sin's potential for expression in [the believer's] life has not yet been fully removed. His human weaknesses and instincts make him capable of succumbing to Satan's temptations when he lives apart from the Spirit's Word and power. He is a new, redeemed, holy creation incarcerated in unredeemed flesh." [Romans 1-8]

- ✓ And yet, because of the death of the old man and because of the negation of the flesh, there is also a sense in which the flesh is even now “nullified” or “rendered ineffective.” I wrestled for a long time trying to find the right way to say this in the outline — “Our body’s inclination to sin is negated...” That’s not perfect, but it’s as close as I could get. The inclination of the flesh is not fully beat back and obliterated, but it is hindered and pushed away. You know what that’s like, don’t you?
 - The flesh is negated every time we restrain an angry word and replace it with a gracious word
 - The flesh is negated when we resist a greedy purchase and instead give those funds to a needy individual or cause
 - The flesh is negated when we put off a controlling behavior (food or alcohol) and exhibit restraint. I told Raye Jeanne this week, “I’ve said ‘no’ to some foods this week, not because I didn’t have the liberty to eat them, but because I wanted to cultivate the discipline of not being controlled by what I want...” (That’s *really* hard for me! — which is why I need to practice it.)
 - The flesh is negated every time we see a link that says “come look at me and find pleasure” and we say “No...” and we get up and go serve someone instead of indulging our selfish desires.
 - The flesh is negated every time we sin against someone and then confess and are reconciled.
 - And friends, that can only happen when you are a new man. It’s impossible to do that without being identified with Christ’s death. But when we are identified with Christ’s death, we *can* push against fleshly desires.
 - And that leads to the third thought we should think in relation to sin —
- 3. We are JUSTIFIED from Sin (vv. 6c-7)**
- The final phrase of v. 6 is so very hopeful — ***so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.***
 - ✓ Here is the purpose of the death of the old man and the negation of the flesh — God is removing us from the tyrannical mastery of sin. It’s a ruler and master whose kingdom has been overrun and vanquished by Christ. We are not in bondage to sin any longer.
 - ✓ Notice that before salvation we were enslaved to sin. Sin was the master. All we could do was sin. We lived for self and we lived to indulge the flesh (Titus 3:3). There was nothing good in what we did (i.e., there was nothing that would please God). And there was no freedom in what we did. There is no freedom in sin. Sin is always and only bondage. And there is no lasting joy or benefit in sin (6:20-22). There are momentary pleasures with sin, but they only leave bitterness and sorrow. For example, Israel went the way of the nations (Jer. 2:14-18) and discovered that it was only bitterness (Jer. 2:19).
 - ✓ But notice the words ***no longer***. Friends, if you are in Christ, that’s not true of you any more. You are still a slave, but now you are a slave that has been freed to do righteous things, and not a slave that is condemned only to do evil. This is one of the primary purposes for which God saved you — to liberate you from sin.

- And then Paul gives a summary statement in v. 7 — **for** (because) **he who has died is freed from sin**.
 - ✓ Notice that Paul moves from the second to the third person; he's making a broad application.
 - ✓ What does he mean with this phrase? Some think that he is speaking of literal death as an illustration of the spiritual principle — the one who dies physically and is put in a grave is free from sin — the body can no longer sin. And that sounds good — except that many who are put in the ground are still captivated by their sin. They are in Hell enduring God's wrath because of their sin and they are experiencing in Hell the fullness of sin, for there is never anything righteous, good, kind, benevolent, or gracious in Hell. In Hell only evil exists and only in all its fulness. For way too many, there is no freedom from sin in death (and we need to think about that daily so that we cultivate mouths to clearly speak the gospel).
 - ✓ What's interesting about this clause is that the word **freed** is that it is the word "justified." And I think that's the way it should be translated. Because Paul is pointing to the reality that we died with Christ. With that death we have been declared righteous and therefore we are also being sanctified into the image of Christ. Through Christ's death the power of sin is removed from us so that we can obey Christ. So the sense is, "the one who has died (in Christ) is justified from sin."
 - ✓ I find what John Stott says about this verse very helpful:

"For us, then, it is like this. We deserved to die for our sins. And in fact we did die, though not in our own person, but in the person of Jesus Christ our substitute, who died in our place, and with whom we have been united by faith and baptism. And by union with the same Christ we have risen again. So the old life of sin is finished, because we died to it, and the new life of justified sinners has begun. Our death and resurrection with Christ render it inconceivable that we should go back. It is in this sense that our sinful self has been deprived of power and we have been set free."

- ✓ And as another man has said, because we are justified, we "can stand directly in the presence of [our] former master, look the master in the eye, and ignore every command....There is the complete freedom to turn and walk away. The reason is because we have been... 'declared righteous' in spite of our sins....We are no longer under the dominion of sin, of darkness, whose only way out was death. We have been rescued by another (Col. 1:13) who went down the road of death for us, freeing us from the obligation, the control, the guilt, and the penalty of both Adam's sin and our own sins."

CONCLUSION: Have you ever been saved like this? Has this been your experience?

- Have you known what it is like to know that your old man is dead? That the inclination to the flesh is negated? And that you have been justified from sin, liberated from its power?
- If you have, is this not cause for incredible joy? This is what Christ did on the cross for you and this is such a fitting reason to come to the table of communion this morning.

- If not, it could be that you are saved, and you've just never been taught the blessings of salvation. If that's you, you need to meditate on these verses — memorize them and delight in them, and be liberated from your sin by them. When the flesh compels you to sin, you need to think on these verses and say, "No — I *died* to this; I have been justified *from* this and I have been justified to obey Christ and it is my joy to obey Him rather than indulge the flesh."
- And if you can't (or won't) do that, it may be evidence that you never have experienced the saving grace of God in your life. You may not be a Christian. And if that's you, I urge and exhort you to confess your sin and give up your sin and come to Christ and love and obey and serve Him. (To believe in Christ is to love Christ and to love Christ is to obey Christ, **fn. 14:15, 21**). There is no better day than today to do that and no better time to do that than communion. Would you believe in Jesus as the Savior from your sin and that Jesus is the only way to live and to get to God?

BENEDICTION: Romans 11:33-36