

WHAT A GHASTLY THOUGHT!

I. Romans 6:1-14

A. Before we jump into our text let's check out some brief highlights from Romans 5. The key word for chapter 5 is **Justification**. (*Just-as-if-I'd never sinned; just-as-if-I'd always obeyed.*) Check out these key verses from Romans 5:

1) **V1-2** "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

2) **V6-10** "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die--but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."

3) **V20-21** "Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

B. Remember these three stages. **Justification** means we've been saved from sin's penalty. **Sanctification** (the process of being conformed into the image of Christ) means we're being saved from sin's power. **Glorification** takes place when we're with Christ and saved from sin's presence altogether. Now on to our text:

C. Romans 6:1-14 (ESV) is written to believers...

1) **V1-2** "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! (KJV "God forbid!" Phillips: "What a ghastly thought!" NASB: "May it never be!") How can we who died to sin still live in it?" (In other words, should we (Christians) continue doing the horrible things that put Jesus on the cross in the first place in order to keep experiencing His undeserved love? Charles Spurgeon put it well: "If Christ has died for me, I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend." After coming to Christ: Will idolaters keep worshiping idols? Murderers keep on murdering? Fornicators keep on fornicating? Adulterers keep on committing adultery? Liars keep on lying? Thieves keep stealing? Gossips keep on gossiping? Addicts keep on shooting up? Alcoholics keep getting wasted? Will the self-righteous keep on boasting about their good works? Hypocrites remain hypocritical? **May it never be! God forbid! What a ghastly thought!**)

2) **V3-4** "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Baptism is an act of obedience that follows a person's conversion. It is an outward sign of an inward grace. (e.g. Wedding Rings) Baptism is a public drama that vividly declares your conversion. You go down in the water to identify with Jesus' death and burial and you're raised up from the water identifying with His resurrection. It declares that we're dead to those things that put Jesus on the Cross and we embrace by faith His righteousness, proclaiming newness of life that culminates in our resurrection.)

3) **V5-6** "For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin (**Sin's controlling reign**) might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." (This is sanctification, the redemptive process of becoming like Christ.)

4) **V7-14** "For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members (**Any part of yourself--your tongue to slandering, your hands to stealing, your eyes to porn, your feet to running from God, your heart to anger and bitterness, selfishness and pride.**) to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace." (Let's become His hands & feet, with eyes that see dire needs and meet them, tongues that proclaim Good News, hearts full of mercy and forgiveness. When you come to Christ He puts a new song in your heart--so sing that song loud!)

D. So do Christians still sin? Do believers still wrestle with indwelling sin? Are we still tempted? Do we still stumble and fall? Every honest believer must say yes. But here's some better questions: Has our deliberate pattern of sin been broken? Are we free from sin, free then not to sin, and free to obey God? Are we pursuing the passions of our flesh or following after the Holy Spirit and bearing His fruit? Are we still willfully doing the things that put Jesus on the cross or are we now walking in ways that show His law has been written on the tablets of our hearts?

E. "God's grace places a believer in Christ and the Holy Spirit in the believer." Real grace changes us! The evidence that I'm free from sin's penalty will be increasingly clearer as sin's power over me is progressively less and less. The hope that I will one day be freed from sin's presence altogether finds evidenced in the same. (*Did you hear about: That Samaritan slut? That filthy little tax collector? That Jewish terrorist? That prodigal kid? His self-righteous older brother!*)

F. **2 Corinthians 5:17-18a (ESV)** will take us home today: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation (**Creature**). The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God..." **Same verse in the NLT** "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God..." **And this reality is not ghastly; it's great! it's glorious! it's gladdening!**

* Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Romans 6:1-14 (ESV)

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? **2** By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? **3** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **4** We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. **6** We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For one who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. **9** We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. **10** For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. **11** So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. **13** Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. **14** For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a (ESV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God...

2 Corinthians 5:17-18a (NLT)

17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! **18** And all of this is a gift from God...

Film Clips & Other Links

Slaves to Sin or Slaves to God, Sanctification - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXUxRQZo680>

What do Justification and Sanctification Mean? - John Piper

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oy0X_Xl44Q

Justification and Sanctification - Kevin DeYoung, Bryan Chapell, Rick Phillips

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUTldsTJHWg>

The Difference Between Our Sanctification and Our Glorification - RC Sproul

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSN2r_BpxdY

"My Worth Is Not In What I Own" - Keith & Kristyn Getty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfFrJHuptUQ>

"That Was Then, This Is Now" - Josh Wilson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8H_m2ql5kSs

"Down to the River to Pray" - Alison Krauss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSif77IVQdY>

Bonus Stuff

Hebrews 10:11-14 (ESV)

11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. 14 For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Quote by Charles H. Spurgeon

"If Christ has died for me, I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend."

Quote by J.C. Ryle

"A true Christian is one who has not only peace of conscience, but war within. He may be known by his warfare as well as by his peace."

Quote by John Piper

"We are condemned in Adam as his sin is credited to us; we are justified in Christ as His righteousness is credited to us."

Quote by Augustine

"Adam before the Fall was able to sin. Adam after the Fall was not able not to sin. Believers in Christ are able not to sin. In heaven we will be not able to sin."

Quote by John Newton

"I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

Quote by Oswald Chambers

"Tolerating a wrong attitude toward another person causes you to follow the spirit of the devil, no matter how saintly you are."

Quote by George Whitefield

"When a poor soul is somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, then the poor creature, being born under the covenant of works, flies directly to a covenant of works again. And as Adam and Eve hid themselves... and sewed fig leaves... so the poor sinner, when awakened, flies to his duties and to his performances, to hide himself from God, and goes to patch up a righteousness of his own. Says he, I will be mighty good now—I will reform—I will do all I can; and then certainly Jesus Christ will have mercy on me."

- George Whitefield, Sermon titled, "*The Method of Grace*," September 13, 1741, Glasgow, Scotland.

Prose by John Wesley

"Purge me from every sinful blot;
My idols all be cast aside:
Cleanse me from every evil thought,
From all the filth of self and pride.
The hatred of the carnal mind
Out of my flesh at once remove:
Give me a tender heart, resigned,
And pure, and full of faith and love."

- John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Volume XI, Third Edition, p. 386.

Quote by S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

"Justification, someone has said, is restoration to life. Sanctification is restoration to health. When a person has Jesus Christ he has not only justification but he also has sanctification. He has justification as his position. He is righteous and satisfies the righteous claims of a holy God in Christ. But also he possesses ideally sanctification. But that sanctification is something that is worked out in a process in his daily life. Justification brings us from the tomb, to use another figure. Sanctification delivers us from the old clothes that characterize the life of the tomb. We think of John chapter 11 and Lazarus' resurrection, and when Lazarus came forth from the tomb at the word of Christ, it reminds us of the fact that we have life and justification through the word of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then Lazarus it was commanded that others by should loose Lazarus from his garments. And so it is necessary for a believer in Jesus Christ to put off the old threads and put on new set forth in the word of God as that characteristic of the new life in Christ."

- Dr. S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., sermon titled, "*Shall We Continue to Sin?*" <http://slj.institute.net/pauls-epistles/romans/shall-we-continue-in-sin/>

Quote by John MacArthur

"Holiness is as much a gift of God to the believer as salvation is in His redemptive act. When someone is redeemed, that is not merely a divine transaction, but a miracle of transformation. Redemption is not merely a legal reality but a reality period. God not only says it's true, but also begins to make it true! God declares us righteous, and begins to create Christ's righteousness in us. It is vital for the church today to understand the connection between justification and sanctification. That's because if you are not living a holy life, you are not truly saved. I am convinced that for the most part, the American church is an unredeemed church because there is such a lack of any practical holiness there. The life of God must be present in the one who claims to know Christ."

Romans 5:1-21 (ESV)

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **6** For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. **12** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— **13** for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. **14** Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the One who was to come. **15** But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that One Man Jesus Christ abounded for many. **16** And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. **17** For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the One Man Jesus Christ. **18** Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. **19** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the One Man's obedience the many will be made righteous. **20** Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, **21** so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Theological Note on Romans 6:6

ESV Study Bible

6:6: The power of sin has been broken in those who believe, for their **old self** (lt., "old man," meaning who they were in Adam) **was crucified** and put to death with Christ. They were born into the world as sinners, with the result that their bodies were ruled by sin. **Body of sin** refers to the rule of sin, but without excluding the involvement of the personal self that lives through the body. Sin's rule, however, was broken when Christians died with Christ, and therefore they are no longer **enslaved to sin**. Paul does not argue that Christians do not sin at all (a view called sinless perfection); instead, the tyranny, domination, and rule of sin have been defeated for them. This means that the normal pattern of life for Christians should be progressive growth in sanctification, resulting in ever greater maturity and conformity to God's moral law in thought and action.

- Theological Note on Romans 6:6, *The ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, p. 2167.

Theological Note on Romans 6:14

NKJV Study Bible

Not under law means not under the law of Moses. Yet the believer with God's help, the believer **under grace**, fulfills the law (see 3:31; 13:8-10). The Mosaic system consisted of external laws which revealed the sin prevalent in human hearts. In contrast, God's grace places a believer in Christ and the Holy Spirit in the believer. Therefore a Christian does not have to sin, he or she can resist temptation and do what is right (see 2 Cor. 3:15-18).

- Theological Note on Romans 6:14, *The NKJV Study Bible*, Thomas Nelson, p. 1775.

Theological Note on Romans 6:14-15

Life Application Study Bible

6:14, 15: If we are no longer under the law but under grace, are we now free to sin and disregard the Ten Commandments? Paul says, "Of course not!" When we were under the law, sin was our master--the law does not

justify us or help us overcome sin. But now that we are bound to Christ, He is our Master, and He gives us power to do good rather than evil.

- Theological Note on Romans 6:14-15, *The Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale, p. 2486.

Theological Note on Romans 6:14

The Reformation Study Bible

6:14 sin will have no dominion over you. This is an indicative statement--that is, a statement of what is already true of every genuine Christian--and not an imperative or exhortation. **Not under law but under grace.** Paul is not saying that the believer is free from the obligation to keep the law's demands (13:8-10; 12:1-2). Rather, he says that, because the believer's standing before God rests on Christ's righteousness and not one's own law-keeping, the controlling principle in the life of the believer is the reign of grace that sets him free from the reign of sin (5:21) and transforms him into the likeness of Christ.

- Theological Note on Romans 6:14, *The Reformation Study Bible*, Reformation Trust-Ligonier Ministries, p. 1989.

"Are We to Continue in Sin that Grace Might Increase?"

Sermon by John Piper

(Romans 6:1-14 (NASB)) *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. 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. 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.*

One of the Greatest Issues in Life

As we enter Romans 6, we are taking up one of the greatest issues in the Christian life. And that means one of the greatest issues in life, period. Because the only life that will lead to eternal life is the Christian life. So what we are about to see is relevant and crucial for everybody, whether they call themselves Christian or not. Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, spiritualists, atheists – every person who is descended from Adam needs to know what Romans 6 teaches. What Paul describes here is not provincial or parochial or sectarian or regional or ethnic. It relates to everybody because it describes the only kind of life that leads to eternal life. All of us are sinners and guilty because we are united to the first Adam. We will be saved, or not, because we are united by faith to Jesus Christ, the second Adam. And there is a kind of life that comes from being united to Christ. That life leads to heaven. And that life only. That is what is at stake in Romans 6.

One way to see this is to jump to the end of the chapter and look at verse 22: "But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification [or holiness], and the outcome, eternal life." Notice carefully: What is eternal life the outcome of? It is the outcome of "sanctification" or "holiness" or "freedom from sin and slavery to God." In other words, Romans 6 deals with the kind of life that leads to eternal life: What it is and how to live it.

But now let's go back to the beginning of the chapter and find out how this subject was raised and how it relates to the teaching on justification by grace through faith that dominated Romans 1-5.

Shall We Sin So That Grace May Increase?

Paul came to the end of Romans 1-5 with the most radical emphasis possible on justification by grace through faith, apart from works of the law. He taught (in Romans 5:18) that "as through one transgression [of Adam] there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness [of Christ] there resulted justification of life to all men." In other words, our union with Adam brought us condemnation because of his disobedience; and our union with Christ brings us justification because of his obedience. This is extreme grace: Christ's obedience, not ours, is the ground of our justification. God reckons us righteous, and accepts us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness (Titus 3:5), but because of deeds done by Christ in righteousness (Romans 5:18). The whole point of bringing Adam into the picture here at the end of Romans 1-5 is to make this radically gracious way of justification dangerously clear. We are condemned in Adam as his sin is credited to us; we are justified in Christ as his righteousness is credited to us.

Now what? Why do I say that this teaching about Adam and Christ makes justification by grace "dangerously" clear? Because of what people may do with it – the way they may distort it, the way they draw implications from it that seem right,

but are dead wrong. Paul knows the way his radical teaching on justification by grace through faith apart from works (Romans 3:28) is most often distorted. So he brings it up.

He plays his own worst adversary in Romans 6:1. He has just said in Romans 5:20, "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Now he asks, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?" Here is the great objection to justification by grace through faith apart from works of the law. It seems to open the door to rampant sinning. In fact, it seems to invite more sinning because if grace is God's act to forgive and accept sinners on the basis of Christ's righteousness, not ours, then would not that grace shine all the brighter if we kept on sinning? The more sin there is, the more forgiveness there is. And the more sinning there is, the greater must be the righteousness of Christ to compensate for it. So doesn't Paul's radical teaching on justification open the door to careless living and indifference to holiness? That is the question Romans 6 (indeed 6-8) is meant to answer. Here is his answer: Verse 2: "May it never be!"

Why Not?

First his answer is, "No!" "May it never be!" We are not to continue in sin so that grace might increase. That is a wrong conclusion to draw from his radical teaching on justification by grace through faith alone. But now why? That's the content of Romans 6 – why do people who are justified by grace through faith alone *not* continue in sin? You can see how tremendously practical this becomes. Justified people do *not* continue in sin that grace may abound. Why not? How not? That's the issue now.

Today I just want to give a very brief overview of his answer. Then we will step back and look at some specifics. So what is Paul's answer to why those who are justified on the basis of Christ's righteousness, by grace, through faith alone do *not* continue in sin that grace might increase?

Before we give Paul's answer, be sure you see what his answer is not. This is crucial. His answer is not that the objection has misunderstood the radical character of justifying grace. Paul did not say, Oh, you misunderstood – I didn't really mean that justification is all of grace and all based on the righteousness of Christ and only obtained by faith without works. He didn't say, What I really meant was that justification is really based on your behavior after all. He did not say that justification won't lead to lawlessness because law-keeping is part of what you have to do to get justified. He might have corrected his opponents this way, if he thought that was their mistake, but he didn't. That wasn't their mistake. They saw something correctly: justification is really by grace through faith alone on the basis of Christ's righteousness alone. That is how we get right with God. That is the foundation of the Christian life. It's this radical view of grace that seems to cause the problem.

So then, what is Paul's answer to why people who are justified by grace through faith do not continue in sin? His answer is in verse 2. After he says, "No, may it never be!" he gives the basis of his answer in the form of a question: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" That's his answer in the briefest form. The rest of the chapter explains.

We Can't!

Let's make sure we see this little sentence clearly. It's a rhetorical question. That means Paul doesn't expect an answer. He expects us to see the answer already in the question, when he says, "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" The answer is, We *can't*. In other words, rhetorical questions don't expect answers; they make statements.

For example, kids, if your dad says, "How are you going to keep your room neat if you throw your clothes on the floor and never hang them up or put them in the drawers?," he's not looking for an answer. He's making a statement: You won't keep your room neat if you throw your clothes on the floor and don't hang them up. Or if your mom says, "How can you expect people to be your friend if you're not friendly?," she's not looking for an answer. She's making a statement. Perhaps a plea. You won't have friends if you are not friendly.

Well, that is the way Paul is using the rhetorical question in Romans 5:2. He is not expecting an answer; he is making a statement: "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" There is no answer to this "how" question. We can't live in sin if we died to it. That is his statement. That is his answer to the objection.

So, in summary form:

- *Objection:* If justification is on the basis of Christ's righteousness, not ours, by grace through faith alone, then shouldn't we continue in sin that grace might increase?
- *Answer:* No!
- *Reason:* Because if you died to sin, you can't go on living in it. Or to put it bluntly: Dead people don't sin.

The rest of Romans 6 is explanation. So let's just look at the structure of the explanation today, and then in two weeks dig into the practical teaching of how this really works in our daily lives.

Why Don't Dead People Sin?

Is it important that you know this? Look at verse 3 for Paul's answer. After giving his summary explanation—Dead men don't sin—he asks, "*Or do you not know* that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" "Do you not know?" Have you not been taught? Surely you know these things. Surely someone explained to you what your baptism means. In other words, Paul believes that this is important to know and that it is surprising when Christians don't know it. So if we have failed you and not taught you this, let's grow now in the knowledge and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

The explanation Paul gives for dead people not sinning can be summed up in three steps.

1. When Christ died, believers in some crucial sense died in him and with him.
2. When Christ rose, believers in some crucial sense were made alive in him.
3. Therefore, believers are commanded to become in practice what we are in Christ: dead to sin and alive to God.

Look at a text or two for these three steps.

1. When Christ died, believers in some crucial sense died in him and with him.

- Romans 6:5, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death . . ."
- Romans 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with."
- Romans 6:8, "Now if we have died with Christ . . ."

So there is a union with Christ that makes what happened to him valid for us in him. When he died, we died. That is the key to why the justified do not go on sinning. Dead people don't sin. Of course that raises the question of perfectionism and how free we actually are from sin. That we will deal with in the coming weeks.

2. When Christ rose, believers in some crucial sense were made alive in him.

- Romans 6:4b: ". . . so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."
- Romans 6:5, "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be [united with him] in the likeness of His resurrection."

The believer's union with Christ not only means that we died when he died, but that in his resurrection our new life to God was secured. In some sense we died with him and came alive to God with him. Paul is cautious here, and doesn't say that we rose [past tense] with him. We will examine why in the weeks to come (see 2 Timothy 2:18).

3. Therefore, believers are commanded to *become* in practice what we *are* in Christ: dead to sin and alive to God.

- Romans 6:11, "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."
- Romans 6:13, "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."

Notice carefully, Paul does not draw the conclusion of a mechanical or automatic obedience from our death and resurrection with Christ. He does not say, "Since you all died to sin in Christ and are alive to God in him, there is no need for me to command you to do anything, and there is no act of obedience involved. There is only an automatic, mechanical outcome of sinlessness. You died to sin; so you automatically don't sin. You are alive to God; so you automatically serve God. No need for commands." No, that is not what he says. Instead he says, you died, so consider yourselves dead. You are alive, so consider yourselves alive to God. You are . . . so now become what you are.

We are justified by grace through faith alone because of our union with Christ whose righteousness is counted as ours. And now we see that this same union with Christ explains why we will not continue in sin. I hope you can see how crucial this is and will stay with me and learn with me how to live as justified people. O how free and peaceful and joyful and radical we would be if we learned this together. I will do my best to open it for us. Pray with me that we see it and live it – to the glory of Christ: our righteousness.

- Sermon by John Piper, September 10, 2000, Bethlehem Baptist Church. From John Piper: "Our mission is to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples, through Jesus Christ. Feel free to copy and share this message by following our lead in not selling it but by providing it freely to others. We ask that you share it in its entirety as is. For more information about our ministry visit our web pages at [Desiring God](#) or email us at [DG](#)."