

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Paul's Letter to the Romans – Chapter 6, Verses 1-14
Notes from Tuesday October 5, 2010
Last Revised on October 11, 2010

Songs

Introduction

In this class, for those of you who are new, we are studying the Letter of Paul to the Romans.

Last week we finished Chapter 5.

Tonight we will begin Chapter 6.

Before we do, let's review a little bit.

Review

Last week I looked rather closely at Verse 1 of Chapter 5, which reads:

(Chapter 5, Verse 1)

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I suggested that the first word, "*therefore,*" looks back and refers to most of what Paul has written in the first four chapters.

The clause that follows the word "therefore" (i.e. "*since we have been justified by faith*") is how Paul summarizes the foregoing material.

In other words, the first four chapters of Romans are, in some sense, an exposition of what Paul **means** when he says "*we have been justified by faith.*"

Clearly "*justification by faith*" is not a simple concept or at least not one that it is easy to explain in a few words.

Paul works hard to explain it in four chapters and I dare say **nobody** understands it without the help of God, the Holy Spirit.

Paul's explanation of "justification by faith" is largely an explanation of what "*justification by faith*" is **NOT**.

Justification by faith is **NOT** about anything in us that is intrinsically good. We are all,

without exception, completely fallen and corrupt.

Justification by faith is **NOT** about who we, or our ancestors, or our race, or our society, or our church **are**, or about anything that we have **done** or refrained from doing.

This is what we mean when we say that we have been saved by **grace**. Our salvation is without any **merit** whatsoever.

On the contrary, Paul says, we are counted as righteous before God **DESPITE** all of the really terrible things we have all done, and that we all continue to do, all the time.

Our righteous standing before God is, surprisingly enough, Paul tells us, because of something God **Himself** has done, through **Jesus Christ**.

God put **Jesus** forward, Paul tells us, as a **propitiation** by his blood to be received **by faith**.

Just as we believe that **creation** of the universe and everything in it was the work of God our **Creator**, we also believe that **justification** is the work of God our **Justifier** and he alone.

We are his **workmanship**, the **sheep** of his pasture, his dearly beloved **children**. We owe 100 percent of everything to **Him!** There is no merit in any of this for **us**.

We **believe** that we will **not** be punished for our sins, as we know we deserve, because **Jesus** has suffered that punishment **for** us...on our behalf. That is why we **love** God and why we do **not** wish to flee from him. We know he wishes for us only good things.

The fact that we truly **do** believe these things about God, and believe God about these things, is the faith which God graciously **counts** as righteousness.

My sheep know my voice, Jesus said.

But such faith, such justification, such righteousness, as we must repeatedly remind ourselves, is not something that we can take credit for.

There is no **merit** in it. Not for **us**.

Faith is something that we are **given**, and it is something which grows and develops and expresses itself in us, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit,

but faith is not something that we can ever **“do”** by ourselves. Faith is an operation of God in us. We can only yield ourselves to it. We can only praise God for it!

Such faith is the gracious, miraculous, free, gift of God to all who are being saved **by God**.

This is the power of **God** unto salvation, for everyone who believes.

 This, then, is some of what Paul means when he says, in the first half of Verse 1 of Chapter 5, “***we have been justified by faith***”

 We next turned our attention toward the second half of Verse 1 of Chapter 5.

 “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith,*” (the first half of Verse 1) “***we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***.” (the second half of Verse 1).

 Paul spends most of Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 of his letter to the Romans, explaining some of what he means when he says that we have “***peace with God***.”

 So this, “***peace with God***,” which we are now exploring with Paul, must not be a very simple idea either.

 We have noticed how Verse 1 of Chapter 5 is a kind of hinge, connecting the **first** four chapters of the letter, which seek to explain “***justification by faith***,” with the **next** four chapters of the letter, which seek to explain “***peace with God***” through our Lord Jesus Christ.

 And therefore in some sense, one could say that Verse 1 of Chapter 5 is a kind of condensation of the first **eight** (8) chapters of Paul’s Letter to the Romans

 In these eight chapters Paul is saying: **because we have been justified by faith we have peace with God.**

 This is an idea that is so vast and mysterious, or perhaps so simple and unfathomable, that it takes the Apostle Paul **eight chapters** to speak of it generating words so important that the greatest minds the world has ever known have spent the next **2000 years** contemplating them!

 Ours may not be among the greatest minds the world has ever know, but we can contemplate these things too.

 As I contemplated these words on the train this morning, it occurred to me that if our justification depended on anything **else** --- i.e. anything other than faith in God--- then we could never have any peace with God. Because God is the only one we can possibly trust to save us!

 Nothing else outside of God, and certainly not we ourselves, could credibly promise to reconcile us with God. Only God can reconcile us with himself, and he does this in Christ Jesus.

 Last week we spent a long time mulling over the point that the “**peace**” we have with God simply can **not** be understood as the opposite of, or the absence of, or the cessation of, or the prelude to any kind of a “**war**” with God.

 Because nobody and no confederation of persons, on earth or in heaven, could ever wage “**war**” against God.

 What we humans **have** done, however, because God has given us this much freedom, is to wander away from God, and pretend that God does not exist, or to pretend that he is some other kind of god entirely, and so we have willfully done many things of which God clearly does not approve, and we have become degenerate beings such as God could never approve or admit into his presence and, therefore beings which can, by themselves, and should, we must all readily agree, only die. We really must be eliminated somehow.

 Beings such as we are, apart from God, should not exist. And eternally we do not exist. We are dead in our sin.

 This is not a **war** with God, but kind of foolish and wicked and self-destructive **rebellion** which God has **permitted** though what Paul calls divine forbearance, because God is **able** to redeem it.

 The problem is not who shall **defend** God against man or who shall defend **man** against God.

 Both things are equally meaningless.

 The problem is, how shall man be **reconciled** with God, and so return from **death** to **life**.

 Man for his part simply **can** not accomplish this and, for the most part, does not even **wish** to make the attempt!

 The answer is: only God shall do this, and he shall do so “**through Jesus Christ our Lord**” .

 This has always been, is now, and ever shall be God’s eternal plan --- that He might be **just** and the Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (**3:26**).

 The welcoming arms of God are seen in the gospel. There we can see and believe that God is and has always been **supremely** committed to being reconciled with us, and that He Himself will do and indeed already has done all that is necessary to welcome us into our heavenly home.

 He loves us too much to leave us where we are and as we are. He aims to make us perfect.

 All we need is to **believe** this and come home.

 All we need is to believe this and come home.

 This belief, this faith in God and his goodness, and his love for us, is what the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts, as Paul says in Verse 5 of Chapter 5.

The first 5 verses of Chapter 5, as we saw two weeks ago, basically make the point that this loving and eternal relationship which God intends to have with us, is often perfected through our **suffering** in this present life, which as Paul will soon say (8:16) cannot be compared to the glory to be revealed in us!

Verses 6-11 of Chapter 5 help us see that our present suffering is something that we have in common with ... God ... through Christ. God in Christ came to suffer **with** us and **for** us so that we could be reconciled with Him. And he did all of this while we were openly rebelling against him.

He **could** have had a war with us....I suppose... in which case we would not exist now. Or what amounts to the same thing, God could simply have not **created** us in the first place. Or he could have created us such that we were **unable** to rebel. But God did none of those things.

Instead he created us, gave us the freedom to sin against him, and then came to live among us in Christ, who suffered and gave up his life for us to atone for our sins, so that now we are reconciled with God and at peace with Him, because of what he had purposed and accomplished **for us!**

Last week in Verses 12 -21 of Chapter 5, we examined Paul's extraordinarily **careful** comparison of the rebellion which proceeded from Adam, on the one hand, with the reconciliation and perfection which proceeds eternally from Jesus Christ, on the other hand.

Almost from the very beginning of creation, starting with Adam and spreading throughout all of humanity, and continuing until this very day, the world has been under the dominion of sin and death. Men are born, they sin, and they die.

God called a special people for himself, and spoke to them, and gave them the Law. We read all about this in our Old Testament. But this did not turn aside sin and death, but only made sin and death more visible and more certain, and Man's situation, in himself, more clearly hopeless, and the coming of the Savior more certainly necessary.

The Savior has always and eternally been necessary, and the goal and purpose of creation.

Just as that first act of disobedience led to the certain death of all men, because all were born into sin, the obedient life and death of Christ is the basis for all life, and all who believe in Him are forgiven and sanctified and finally glorified live a perfect life forever in the presence of God, for Jesus sake!

We know this because Christ who came and died for our sins, rose from the dead and is alive, and he promised to go and prepare a place for us, so that where he is, we may be also.

So then we understand what we have been and still are, to some extent, in Adam.

And we understand what we have become, are becoming, and eternally will be in Christ.

We were dead in sin. We are alive in Christ. We will be perfected and live eternally with Him.

Because we have been justified by faith, we have been reconciled and are at peace with God!

So what does say about our **present** life, on this earth, here and now?

That is where Paul goes next.

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 6, Verse 1

Will someone please read Verse 1 of Chapter 6 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read that verse in English.

(Verse 1)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Thank you.

Q. What kind of a question is this?

A. In Greek, grammatically, the form is neutral.

This is not one of those questions we so often see Paul ask which grammatically require a negative answer.

It is at least grammatically a "real question."

Paul is admitting that, logically, one inference that might possibly be drawn from what he has written to this point, is that believers in Christ may continue to sin, because God has already forgiven them.

We all know Christians who live as if they believe this statement.

They are saved and so (they suppose) their sin doesn't matter.

To even speak to such Christians about their sin, is likely to provoke an extreme reaction from them.

How dare **anyone** speak of their sins, which God **himself** has forgiven?

So do such Christians reason.

And we are **all** such Christians!

At least sometimes...aren't we?

We sin and we **hide** our sin behind our **Christianity!**

And so we expose the gospel of Jesus Christ to **ridicule.**

People **rightly** question any faith that seems to condone and even to promote bad behavior.

I question **militant Islam** for that reason, just for example.

May God **forgive** us when our bad behavior brings dishonor upon the gospel of **Christ!**

And so often our behavior does **exactly** that.

Doesn't it?!

Nothing does more to obscure the gospel of Jesus Christ than men who behave **badly** in the name of Christ.

So Paul needs to address this question --- to explore the relationship between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the behavior of Christians --- for two (closely related) reasons.

One reason is doctrinal: He needs to make it plain that the gospel of Jesus Christ, properly understood, does not promote sin.

The other reason is homiletic or horatory: He needs to admonish Christians not to sin.

He begins this exploration in Verse 1 of Chapter 6, by asking if grace **promotes** sin.

Starting in Verse 2 he proceeds to answer this question.

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 6, Verse 2-11

Will someone please read Verses 2-11 of Chapter 6 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those same verses in English.

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.

Thank you.

We remember that in Verse 1, Paul has asked if the gospel of Jesus Christ promotes sin.

now in the first part of Verse 2 he answers:

(Verse 2a)

By no means!

Although the question was grammatically neutral, the negative answer is **emphatic**.

The gospel certainly does **not** promote sin ... not in the **slightest**...not in **any** way.

But as we can see in ourselves and in other Christians (and as we have been discussing) the gospel sometimes does **seem** to promote sin.

And we can understand “**philosophically**” how and why others, law-abiding Jews for example, might understand the gospel of grace to be an invitation to sin.

They ask themselves “why would men do good if they could do evil with no consequences.”

 And this question is telling!

But I think what Paul means to say here is that, wherever the gospel seems to be an invitation to sin or a permission to sin or a subtle encouragement to sin, there the gospel is not being understood correctly.

Paul is here correcting this misunderstanding, by teaching us more about the gospel of grace.

His emphatic denial that the gospel invites sin (Verse 2.a.) is followed by the probing question:

(Verse 2b)

How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Q. By “*we who died to sin*” Paul clearly means to refer to...**whom**?

A. Christians

Q. By “*live in it*” Paul means live in ... **what**?

A. Sin

In its simplest sense, then, this sentence means: “How can we continue to sin now that we have become Christians?”

It’s here almost as if Paul is suggesting that such a thing should be impossible.

Becoming a Christian is not just a matter of joining some religious group.

It is not just a matter of learning some religious teaching.

It is a matter, Paul means to say, of actually being changed.

Of stopping to be what we were, and starting to be something else.

Of dying to the life of Adam and being born to the life of Christ.

Sin...Paul means to say... is part of the old life, and no part of the new life.

To say that the gospel promotes sin, is to completely miss the point of the gospel.

The gospel does not say (6:1) *continue to sin that grace may abound*.

The gospel **says** (John 8:11) *neither do I condemn you, go thou and sin no more.*

The gospel is the **end** and not the beginning of sin in the life of a man.

Paul next speaks of Christian baptism and apparently he expects the believers in Rome, a city where Paul has never been, already to share with him a common understanding of the meaning and significance of baptism.

(Verse 3)

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Christian baptism symbolizes not just a washing or purification of the old man, but his death and resurrection.

Because of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf through his death and resurrection, through faith, we are **more** than washed, **more** than transformed, we are **killed** and we are **buried**, so that we can **rise** from the dead with Christ and share in **his** eternal perfection.

The physical act of baptism is **not** magic. If a **non**-believer is baptized he merely gets **wet**.

But baptism is **more** than just a symbol. For the man who truly believes, it is a sacrament, a means of grace ordained by God, whereby the person who is baptized identifies himself with Christ, who died for them to take away their sin and who was reborn so that they could live a perfect eternal life **without** sin.

If this is properly understood, Paul means to say, you could never even **ask** the question as to whether the gospel of Jesus Christ is an invitation to sin or a permission to sin.

It is quite exactly the **opposite**. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the freedom **not** to sin!

This is the thought expressed in Verse 4, which reads:

(Verse 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.

Becoming Christian does not **excuse** our old life. It **kills** it. And **buries** it.

So that we might live **new** lives, **infinitely better** lives and, **certainly** not, lives which are more sinful.

I think we get the **point**.

But it goes **beyond** that.

Verse 5 reads

(Verse 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.

Let me take these thoughts in reverse order...

We do not **just** pass through the waters of baptism and live a better, less sinful, Christian life.

Jesus rose **literally** from the grave and **literally, bodily** ascended to eternal life in the presence of God.

So **also** will all who believe, literally, bodily rise from the dead and live eternally with Christ in God's presence.

But this means that we must first be united with Jesus in a "***death like his.***"

Q. And what does **that** mean?

Q. Just in the sacramental, **baptismal** sense?

A. I don't think Paul's meaning is confined here to baptism.

A. Certainly the death we die is "***like his***" in the biological sense.

Each of us will really stop breathing, and our hearts will really stop beating, and we will really die. Just as Jesus certainly did.

But it means more than that.

Jesus did not live a life of ease, grow old gently, die comfortably in bed at a ripe old age and, then, float gently up to heaven. Neither did he just pretend to be a man or pretend to die.

Jesus lived a perfect life filled with suffering, and died a horrible death, in obedience to God the Father, for **our** benefit.

We who are Christian are called to live and to die "like that."

A disciple, Jesus said, is not superior to his master.

Verse 6 reads

(Verse 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.

Jesus died “*like that*” to take our sin away from us.

How dare we take his death as the pretext for sin!

On the contrary, if I am reading this correctly, I think we are being invited to share in honor and the privilege of participating (at least in some small way) in the suffering and death of Jesus.

We are being asked to crucify our old self.

And this is a process which finally ends with our physical, biological death.

At which point the “*body of sin*” will be full and finally “*brought to nothing,*”

and we will no longer be enslaved to it at all.

For the redeemed in Christ, death is the final defeat of sin, and not sin's final victory!

This is why Christians should not fear death.

So Verse 7 reads

(Verse 7)

For one who has died has been set free from sin.

When we finally breathe our last, we shall be completely and eternally free from sin.

But even now, to the extent that our old self is being crucified with Christ,

to the extent that our flesh is being, as they say, mortified

we have gained a measure of freedom from sin.

Sin besets us, but it no longer has dominion over us.

Because we know that sin and death have already been defeated by Christ

 and we know that he promises to share his victory with us,

 those of us with whom he has shared his crucifixion.

 It is Christ and not sin which has dominion over us now!

 This is why Christians should not fear death,

 and may rejoice because of what they suffer for Christ,

 and may make real progress in the battle against sin!

 Verse 8 reads:

(Verse 8)

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

God in Christ came down to live and die with us, so as to redeem us from our sin and to be reconciled with us.

 Now for a short time we may gladly suffer and die with Christ, so that we may be reborn and live with Him forever in a perfect place, and even be perfect as he is, free not to sin, ever again.

 Even **here** and even **now**, to the extent we have died with Christ we can live with him!

 Verse 9 reads:

(Verses 9)

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Our blessed assurance is that Christ has **already** risen and he lives **eternally**.

 So likewise will **all** whom Christ redeemed through his death, rise and live eternally.

 Verse 10 reads

(Verse 10)

For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.

When Christ died, all sin died with him.

That is to say, sin lost all ability to kill those who belong to Christ.

When Christ rose from the dead --- literally, bodily --- He was the firstborn among many deathless, sinless, men who will follow him into eternal life.

Where he is, there shall we be also, all who have been truly baptized into his death.

Verse 11 reads:

(Verse 11)

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Our old sinful self is dying a crucifixion death. Our new sinless self is being born in our life with Christ.

It is only to our benefit to hastily put off the old and put on the new.

It is not possible to move “**forward**” into a life of greater sin.

That is not the direction that God’s program is running.

Sin has already run its course and been defeated in Christ and will soon be put away forever.

We must not turn back into sin and death again, and finally we cannot turn back.

It is the job of pastors such as Paul to remind people of this and to exhort them.

And it is the work of God, the Holy Spirit, to sanctify people by these words.

Those whom God will save, he will save.

Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Chapter 6, Verses 12 - 13

Will someone please read Chapter 6, verses 12 and 13 in Japanese.

Thank you. Now will someone please read those same words in English.

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.

Thank you.

OK. So Paul has been explaining how, because we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

The world was separated from God for a time because of sin, which entered the world through Adam.

But the world has since been reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, who died to sin, once for all.

Now all who believe in Christ will not die but will have a blessed eternal life.

Sin has been overcome and death has been defeated.

Continuing to sin makes no sense at all.

So Paul exhorts them and us

In Verse 12

(Verse 12)

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

So long as we are alive in this present world, we will be affected by passions, leading to sin.

It seems plain to me the Paul nowhere expects to find a sinless person, not even in church

Our crucifixion with Christ ends in our death.

But he does expect believers in Christ to resist the tyranny of sin, and to fight against it.

He urges us to remember who we are and to maintain control of ourselves.

We struggle against that same evil which Christ gave his life to overcome.

We need to remember whose side we are on.

Verse 13 reads

(Verse 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.

Knowing what we know, we should willingly present our mortal bodies, each and every aspect of what we are, **not** to sin for unrighteousness, but to **God** as instruments of righteousness.

Notice that Paul is here appealing to the **understanding** and calling for an act of **reason**, and **affirmation**, and **will**.

Because you now understand the gospel and are being saved by it, he says, you stand in a different relationship with God than before and, therefore, you should now **behave** differently,

Surely you **wish** to behave differently, because of the love God pours into your heart through the Holy Spirit.,

Certainly you are you are **able** to behave differently, because God, the Holy Spirit, abides in you, and help you to struggle against the passions of the flesh.

Those who are being saved by faith in Christ, should not be seen to live lives of sin.

And now our last verse for this evening.

Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 6, Verse 14.

Would someone please read verse 14, in Japanese.

Thank you. Now would someone please read the same verse in English.

(Verse 14)

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

The natural man has no choice but to sin.

That is the point of Chapter 5 and the story of Adam.

Sin entered the world through Adam and, therefore, all men since Adam have been dead in sin.

Later the law was added, which only made sin more inescapable.

Everyone stood under a death sentence, and was cut off from God.

But Jesus came and paid the penalty for sin, and offered everyone the free gift of eternal life.

Those who believe and accepted this gift are eternal children of God.

Born of his Spirit and Washed in his Blood, as the song says.

Reconciled with God, filled with the Spirit of God, and full of love of God, we are not subject to Satan, to Sin, or to Death.

And so we are free NOT to sin.

This freedom is not perfected in this life (or so I believe) in any man save Christ,

But a life of obedience is something toward which believers can make constant progress.

Because Paul writes to believers, these words of his make sense.

He is not primarily trying to talk people into the Kingdom.

He is trying to remind people of the Kingdom of who they really are.

And urging them to live a life “according to their calling” (Eph. 4:1)

Closing Prayer