

## **The Power of the Gospel**

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**Romans: Gospel of God Series**

**Romans 6:1-14**

I want to begin with the story of two Romanians, Dorel and Cornelia. The year is 1984 and at the time Romania was led by a brutal communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu. Ceausescu's regime punished anyone who stepped out of line with imprisonment, torture, and even death. Ceausescu paid for his secret police and brutal regime by taking away water, electricity and food from the citizens of Romania. Most evenings Romanians sat in silent darkness. Apartments had access to water only 2-3 hours a day. Folks would fill up their bathtubs and pots and pans with water during those few hours. Ceausescu exported all the meat in order to get hard currency leaving only pigs' necks, heads and feet for Romanian consumption. Families used to wake up at 4:00 a.m. so that they could wait in long lines for rationed goods like rice, milk, oil and sugar.

Dorel and Cornelia had it doubly hard because not only did they suffer the deprivations common to all other Romanians, but Dorel and Cornelia were Christians, Baptist Christians to be specific. During the time of communism many churches were demolished. Most Christians were forced to pray and meet in secrecy in small groups. Dorel and Cornelia, along with other Christians, were discriminated against in school and in work. And sometimes friends and family members would betray each other to the government because they needed money, or they needed a job. Everyone lived in fear.

Well, Cornelia's brother, whose name is so hard to pronounce that I am going to call him "Uncle M.," was the first of the family to escape across the border. He made it safely to America when he was only 19 years old. From America, Uncle M. sent the family wonderful presents that no one had ever seen before – things like sunglasses, watches, clothing, and perfume. Dorel used to wear shirts all around Romania with huge letters that said, "USA" and "America is free."

Finally, Dorel and one of his brothers, along with a friend, hatched a plan to escape from Romania. They went into training for months because in order to get out of Romania, you had to swim across the Danube River which is a mile wide between Romania and the former Yugoslavia. They hid by the river for four days. There were guards on the Romanian side of the river with orders to shoot anyone who tried to swim across the river.

Finally, on the 4<sup>th</sup> day it began to rain. Dorel's friend decided that crossing the river was too dangerous and he opted out. Dorel and his brother tied a small bag of belongings to

their waists and when night fell and it was pouring down rain, the two men jumped into the river. It was icy cold with a swift flowing current. Dorel couldn't see his brother in the darkness. After about an hour of swimming, Dorel made it safely to the other side of the river, but his brother, unfortunately, never made it. He drowned in the river.

Dorel was taken to a police station and held there for 20 days. Most of the escapees from Romania were sent back on a bus to Romania where they were imprisoned or shot. Dorel made it through the interview process, then on to a UN Refugee Camp for four months. From the refugee camp he was able to contact his brother-in-law, who sponsored his application to come to the United States as a refugee. Many months after Dorel first jumped into the river, he finally came to New York City where, like many refugees, who come to America, he got to see the Statue of Liberty.

With his brother-in-law's help, Dorel was able to sponsor his wife, Cornelia's, escape from Romania. He started a business and over the last 30 years raised a family here in the United States of America.

I've been doing a series from the book of Romans, a series that I've titled "The Gospel of God." Today we're going to continue in that series in a message that I've titled "The Power of the Gospel." Let's pray.

#### **Romans 6:1–14 (NIV)**

**6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

**5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.**

**8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.**

**11 In the same way, count yourselves 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 evil desires. 13 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an**

instrument of righteousness. **14 For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.**

### **The objection to the gospel**

Paul has preached for five chapters a gospel which essentially says that salvation is entirely of God; that Christian salvation is 100% God and nothing of us at all. Paul has repeatedly told us in his preaching on the gospel of God that salvation is not the product of our efforts, our moral improvements, our prayers, our promises to change, our tears, our sincerity, our motives. For five chapters Paul says to us that the gospel is not about you and me at all. It is about what God did in Christ. It is about what God did in defeating Satan, sin, and death through the sinless life, the sacrificial death, and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, who God has appointed Lord of all. The gospel is about Jesus Christ.

Paul told us this in the first few chapters of Romans 1.

#### **Romans 1:1–4 (NIV)**

**Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

If the gospel was a theatre production, we would not have outside of the theatre on the marquee, “The Gospel starring Jesus, co-starring other Christians.” The gospel is not Jesus as the star and us as the supporting cast; or Jesus, who gets top billing, and us as bit-players. The gospel is a solo act. If we were to enact the gospel in terms of a play, there would just be one person on the stage from beginning to end – Jesus the Messiah.

And Paul goes on to say that the people to whom the gospel of God applies are not good, loving people who want to do God’s will, but occasionally mess up. Here is what we read in Romans 5:6-10:

#### **Romans 5:6–10 (NIV)**

**6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**

Who are the people for whom Christ died? Not competent, God-fearing, obedient friends of God, but powerless, ungodly, sinful enemies of God. And if you heard my message on Romans 5:6-10, you heard me say that the person who has truly embraced Jesus is secure for all eternity. The person who is justified through faith will be glorified and will be embraced by the love of Christ when they stand before him in judgment.

Immediately following that service a couple of women came up to me at our Pastors Welcome and said, "Wait a minute, Rich. You have made it too easy." One said to me, "My husband is having an affair. Are you saying that he can continue in this affair and still get to live with Jesus in heaven when he dies?"

Great question. This was what the critics were saying to Paul as they heard his gospel.

**Romans 6:1 (NIV)**

**6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**

They said to Paul as they listened to Paul's gospel of grace, "Paul, you've made salvation too easy. If people are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, then what difference does it make if a person continues to sin? In fact, if you think about it, if grace is shown to be all the more gracious when God forgives particularly heinous and awful sins, then why don't we deliberately sin so that God may really be shown to be gracious? Let's just keep on sinning and God will keep on forgiving." That's what critics of Paul said about his gospel. It's too easy. You've so emphasized free grace and the impossibility of self-salvation with the result that a person has total assurance of God's salvation, well then, people are just going to continue in sin so that grace may abound.

Friends, you can tell whether the gospel is being truly proclaimed if someone raises this objection. To put it in the negative, if after listening to someone's gospel presentation, no one says, "This is too easy for us. People are going to abuse this. This is too much grace; too much assurance – people are going to pervert this into an excuse to continue to sin" – if that objection is not raised, then the gospel is probably not being accurately communicated.

The gospel that Paul preached and the gospel which we must preach, if we are going to preach the gospel truly, always ought to provoke this objection – too easy, too free, too much assurance, too much security; people are going to abuse it. This is the test for the gospel of grace – does somebody object to it?

Now, notice that the Apostle Paul doesn't answer this objection by saying, "You've misunderstood me."

**Paul's response**

### **What it isn't**

Paul doesn't say, "Oh, no, no...I didn't really mean that God will accept you purely on the basis of the death of Christ by grace alone through faith alone; that your justification can be accomplished without your own contribution. Oh no, no...you've misunderstood. What I really meant was that you are accepted before God by grace, plus you need to contribute something by way of your own obedience and your own faithfulness. Your justification is a majority-based on the grace of God, but there is a percentage that is based upon your behavior."

Paul doesn't correct his opponents that way because the opponents were quite right – at least in terms of what they heard Paul saying. Paul was saying, "Your entire acceptance before God, your entire salvation, is based purely on the death of Christ for you – the benefits of which are given to you by grace alone to be received through faith alone."

So, notice Paul doesn't say, "My doctrine of grace isn't nearly as radical as you think. Let me water it down a little bit. Let me mix together grace and your contribution, your good works. That's really what I meant." Paul doesn't respond that way.

How does the Apostle Paul respond?

### **What it is**

#### **Romans 6:2 (NIV)**

**2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?**

Now the Greek for the NIV's translation of "by no means" is really strong. The Greek original was

#### **me genoito**

When Paul really wants to reject a proposition, he uses this phrase, "me genoito!" The King James Version says, "God forbid!" It literally means,

#### **May it never ever ever be**

When we object we might say, "That's absurd; that's stupid; that's ridiculous; I totally reject that line of thinking." And Paul is responding in this chapter to the person who says, "Well, because salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, I might as well sin because my sin is covered by the grace of God. It really doesn't matter very much, because God will forgive me no matter what I do."

Paul says yes, I've preached a gospel of total grace, but you don't understand what grace is.

Is that what grace is? Is grace just a rug under which we sweep all of our sins? Is grace just a ticket that we get punched that admits us to heaven and then we're free to do as we please?

Let me outline this text for you. Paul's argumentative style is sometimes very dense. He packs a huge amount into very little space. But Romans 6 divides up very neatly into two sections – vv. 1-14 and vv. 15-23. Both vv. 1-14 and 15-23 begin with a probing question about sin in relationship to grace.

**Romans 6:1 (NIV)**

**6 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?**

**Romans 6:15 (NIV)**

**15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?**

**By no means!**

Both sections react to the question with the same response.

**Romans 6:2 (NIV)**

**2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?**

**Romans 6:15 (NIV)**

**15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?**

**By no means!**

Both sections say that the reason for this idea that you can just continue in sin is due to ignorance, especially with regards to Christian beginnings.

**Romans 6:3 (NIV)**

**3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

**Romans 6:16 (NIV)**

**16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?**

In other words, Paul says that if you understood your baptism and you understood your conversion you never would have asked the question.

And finally, both teach the same radical change that occurs between our old pre-conversion, pre-baptism life and our new post-conversion, post-baptism life. So, let's look at this a little more closely. What happens when a person gets saved? What changes? Does anything change? Does nothing change? Does salvation simply mean that you punch your ticket and you are now safely on the train going to heaven; live like hell and get heaven at the end? Stay in love with the world and still be embraced by the love of Christ? Choose a lifestyle of sin and get God anyway?

### **The power of the gospel**

Now, there are two inaccurate views of what happens to a person when you are saved, when you are converted.

### **You are the same**

I am the same old guy; I am the same old girl. Nothing really has changed in my getting saved. You've seen the bumper sticker:

### **I'm just a sinner saved by grace.**

I'm the same old person, only I've stood up in church, repeated some words, stamped my ticket, and I'm heaven-bound. But I've continued to live the way I've always lived before. I'm not particularly inclined to forgive people, who have hurt me. There's been no change in my sexual practices. I do business just as I've always done business. There's no change in my desires; no radical break in who I was before I came to Christ, or no radical break in my behavior.

What happens when you're saved? Some people think you are the same. Some people say:

### **You are given a new nature.**

Many people say, based on a mis-translation of Romans 6, that what happens when a person is saved is that God, as it were, reaches into your chest, pulls out your old sinful nature, and puts into a new sinless nature that doesn't want to sin. But the change that occurs through conversion is a change in your essence – what philosophers call an

### **Ontological Change**

Big words...but it simply means that in your conversion, your essence, your essential being has changed. And then Christians debate with one another. Do you have one nature, Christians ask, a sinless nature, or two natures – a new sinless nature that continues alongside your old sinful nature and these two are at war with one another

and battle each other. Which one is it? And these are really interesting theological questions. Do you have one nature, or two natures? They are worth discussing.

But that's not what Paul is talking about here in Romans 6 at all. That's not what Romans 6 is about. It is absolutely true that when a person is converted you receive the Holy Spirit in your conversion. You have a new principle of life put into your being. But Paul in Romans 6 is not talking about a change in your essence. And he is not weighing in here about whether at conversion you are given one nature or two natures.

According to the Apostle Paul, what does happen when a person gets saved? What is going on in salvation?

And here is what Paul argues in Romans 5 and Romans 6:

**You are transferred from one kingdom to another**

The second half of Romans 5 and Romans 6 is all about the kingdom of God, the reign of God, the rule of God. What government you are living under. Like the story of Dorel and Cornelia that I began the message with today. Dorel and Cornelia, who escaped from Romania and came to the United States, that's what Romans 5 and 6 are about. It is about either living under freedom, or living under tyranny. It is like the difference between democracy and dictatorship, American and the former communist Romania.

Five of the nine instances of kingdom language in all of Paul's writings occur in the second half of Romans 5 and in Romans 6. The Greek word that Paul uses for reigning or ruling is

**Basileuo = to rule as a king; to reign**

We read about death reigning and sin reigning; ruling as cruel dictators.

**Romans 5:14 (NIV)**

**14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.**

**Romans 5:17 (NIV)**

**17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man...**

**Romans 5:21 (NIV)**

**21 so that, just as sin reigned in death...**

We read about death reigning and sin reigning. We also read about the believer reigning:

**Romans 5:17 (NIV)**

**17 ...how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!**

In v. 21 we read about grace reigning.

**Romans 5:21 (NIV)**

**21 ...so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

And finally, in Romans 6:12:

**Romans 6:12 (NIV)**

**12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.**

Paul pictures two realms:

Realm:	Realm:
Sin	Righteousness
Death	Life
Condemnation	Justification
Law	Grace
The realm of Adam	The realm of Christ
The old age	The New Age

The question that Paul is asking is which realm are you living in, under what government – the government of Adam, or the government of Christ, the government of law, or the government of grace, the government of sin, or the government of righteousness, the government of death, or the government of life, the government of condemnation, or the government of justification – where are you living; under what power, what Lord, under what ruler, under what master are you living?

Let me work this out for you.

**The reign of the gospel**

Here is what Paul says in Romans 6:2:

**Romans 6:2 (NIV)**

**2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?**

The Apostle Paul, in Romans 6:2, says: we have died to sin. What does it mean that if you are a Christian joined to Christ through faith, a joining union which is portrayed, which is exhibited in Christian baptism – Christian baptism is an expression of your prior faith. As you go under the water of baptism, you are vividly portraying the fact that you have joined yourself to the death of Christ. What does the Apostle Paul mean that we who are Christians have placed who have placed our faith in Christ to save us have died to sin?

This is a really puzzling phrase for many Christians. Lots of people struggle with this text. The great Bible expositor, John Stott, said that when he was a young Christian, he was taught that what it meant to die to sin was to be rendered absolutely insensitive to sin. Stott says that the illustration that he was taught was that if you were walking down the street and saw a dog lying in the road, and you didn't know if the dog was asleep or if it was dead, you could kick it. If the dog didn't respond at all, you would know that it was dead. So it is with a Christian. We don't respond to sin. We're insensitive to it. It has no allure any more, no draw.

Now, there is a basic problem with that interpretation – that to have died to sin means to be rendered utterly insensitive to sin. The first problem with that interpretation is that it doesn't comport with the experience of any Christian who has ever lived! I have never met a Christian, and neither have you, who would say, "I don't feel the tug of sin in my life any longer. I don't feel the pull. I don't feel the draw." I don't have within me an inclination, a tendency, a grooved out pattern which is attracted to sin, which finds sin alluring, which finds sin temporarily satisfying. My attraction to sin hasn't died.

What does the Apostle Paul mean that you Christians have died to sin?

It doesn't mean you Christians will never sin again. He doesn't mean you Christians are totally insensitive to the draw and allure of sin.

What the Apostle Paul is talking about is dying to sin is dying to the reign and rule of sin over our lives. He spoke about that in ch. 5. v.20-21.

**Romans 5:20–21 (NIV)**

**20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Paul is portraying sin as a kind of lord, a kind of master, exercising authority over a realm. And he is saying to Christians, "You used to live under the reign, under the

authority, under the mastery, under the lordship of this power called sin. That's where you used to live." You used to live in the country that was dominated by a king named sin.

But you know something? Jesus, the Messiah, the Conquering King, came into this world as a Savior. And he entered that country that was ruled by this lord named sin and this evil king put Jesus the Savior to death. That was the ultimate power that the king named sin had – the power of death.

But Jesus was too holy and too powerful for this weapon of death. Jesus rose from the dead. He defeated that king. And he entered a new kingdom, a new realm, the kingdom of God.

And now, friends, Paul says, here's what happened to you. When you place your faith in Christ, you are not just getting your ticket punched for heaven. That's not what happens in salvation. What happens is that by faith you are joining yourself to Jesus and all that Jesus is and all that Jesus did. You are uniting yourself to Jesus' death and also to his resurrection portrayed in baptism by going under the water and coming up out of the water. So that when you place your faith in Christ, far from simply getting your ticket punched to heaven, you are being transferred out from under the lordship and mastery and reign of this king called sin. And you are being transferred to a new kingdom, a kingdom ruled by God.

To die to sin is to no longer be a citizen of the country of sin. Sin no longer has authority over your life. It no longer has to dominate you. You've renounced your citizenship papers from the land of your birth. You've renounced allegiance to that king. You've gone through a naturalization process and have become a citizen of a new kingdom – the kingdom of God.

Now, just because you've gone through this change, this naturalization process, just because you've torn up your citizenship papers of the old government that reigned in your life – the government of sin, law, condemnation and death, doesn't mean that all your old habits, or inclinations, or weaknesses, or wounds instantly change. You absolutely can live inconsistently with the reality of the change of your citizenship. You're still influenced and tempted by the powers of the old age. We lived under that old government of sin for so long that the patterns have gotten grooved out in our lives. We have to fight; we have to resist; we struggle to live a completely new life. That's why we have commands like Ephesians 4:22-24:

**Ephesians 4:22–24 (NIV)**

**22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

The actualizing, the bringing into our lives the radical change that occurs when we are converted, the walking out of this profound change of governments, is what the Christian life is all about. How do we get this change of reigns, this change of government, this radical escape from tyranny to freedom into our lives?

Paul ticks off at least two things here in the first half of Romans 6 so that we make this real; so it doesn't remain theoretical. First,

#### **SLIDE**

#### **The importance of baptism**

#### **Romans 6:3-4 (NIV)**

**3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

You know, we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, chop up what the Bible holds together. So, for example, concerning a marriage ceremony and sex and living together as a new family, the Bible ties all of that together. We read in Genesis 2:24:

#### **Genesis 2:24 (NIV)**

**24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.**

There is one undivided reality, a person separates themselves from their family of origin; there is a public ceremony acknowledging that fact of separation, a ceremony called marriage. A new family unit is created and an expression of this new unit, this new union is the sexual act. Today, we chop it all up. We say at some point, if you are attracted to another person, you may have sex with them. And then, a few years later, as you've hung out together and gotten to know one another, you may live together for a while. And then sometime down the road, if it seems like this is the right person, then you might go through a marriage ceremony. But all of this could be on a timeline of 5 years, or 10 years, or you may never go through a marriage ceremony at all. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we chop up what the Bible holds together.

And the same thing is true today regarding Christian conversion and receiving the Holy Spirit and water baptism. In the New Testament these things were all part of one bigger reality that you could call conversion, initiation. But in the New Testament a person places their faith in Christ, experienced the Holy Spirit coming into their lives and expressed this inner change by immediately going through a public ceremony called baptism. And in baptism an individual was reenacting what spiritually occurred. So we read in Romans 6:3-4:

**Romans 6:3–4 (NIV)**

**3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

In baptism we are reenacting our joining together with Christ through faith and the Spirit. As we go under the water, we're reenacting our joining to the death of Christ; and when we come up out of the water, we're reenacting our faith and Holy Spirit connection to the resurrection of Christ.

But again, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we chop all of this up. So a person may turn to Christ and then ask the question: Do I really need to be baptized? I don't feel like I want to. It is not convenient. I don't like public ceremonies. I don't want to get wet. I want to get baptized when my kids are older, or with a friend. All these things today are way more important to us than the New Testament pattern of conversion and baptism.

And then another ten years may go by until we first experience the Holy Spirit. Paul says the reason why you continue in sin is that you don't understand your baptism. You crossed the border. Baptism is like the Israelis passing through the Red Sea from Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. Baptism is like what Dorel went through when he went under the icy waters of the Danube, made his way from dictatorship to freedom, from darkness to light. You would not continue in a lifestyle of sin, Paul says, if you understood the radical nature of your baptism.

And, by the way, if you have not been baptized, we are having a baptism service at the Cooper Road Campus on December 7-8. Today, immediately following the services, there is going to be a baptism class which I would very much encourage you to participate in. Talk with your child, if they are over 10 about getting baptized as well.

How do we make real this change of government? Paul talks about the importance of baptism, and he talks about:

**The importance of union with Christ**

**Romans 6:5 (NIV)**

**5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.**

It doesn't get worked into us instantaneously. It is progressive. Where it says in v. 5:

**Romans 6:5 (NIV)**

**5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.**

That word “united” literally means to grow together, to grow together like two trees in the woods. I’ve been to the Redwood Forest in California and I’ve seen a very strange thing. Two Redwood trees will be at their base maybe six feet apart; but, as they grow and the rings spread, they will start touching each other 40’ or 50’ up the trunk. The bark will start overlapping. And then 60’ up the two trees will become one and at the top you will have one tree.

That is a picture of the Christian life. We start off separated from Christ; and then we make contact with Christ by faith; we grow together. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, we become one spirit with him. Our life becomes mingled with his life through the Holy Spirit. So that in all things, we progressively grow up into him, who is the Head, into Christ.

A Puritan named Jeremiah Bourroughs in the 17<sup>th</sup> century put it like this:

***From Christ as from a fountain, sanctification flows into the souls of the Saints: their sanctification comes not so much from their struggling, and endeavors, and vows, and resolutions, as it comes flowing to them from their union with him.***

Another pastor, Helmut Thielicke, put it this way:

***We saints must not close our mouth to this fountain of sanctification, but continue to drink from it.***

See, the lie is that I’ve got to fake the Christian life; I’ve got to put on a religious veneer and pretend on the outside to be changed when nothing really has happened. The truth that v. 5 is teaching us here in Romans 6 is that his life is flowing inside of me now. It is not just an outward thing, a mask, a behavior modification. I am growing together with Christ. My life is touching his life. His abundant life fills our empty lives right now. His Holy Spirit is in us. There is a major difference between being religious and having a relationship with the indwelling Christ. Dynamic Christian living comes from the realization that I am now united with Christ and in prayer I open myself up to drink from his fountain regularly.

How do I make this change in governments real for me in my own life? Paul speaks about the importance of baptism, the importance of union with Christ, and the importance of:

**The importance of reckoning**

**Romans 6:11 (NIV)**

**11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

Some of the older versions say: “reckon yourselves dead.” The Greek word is the word from which we get the word “logic” – think through the implications. Paul says that coming out from under the reign of sin, coming into a new reign, the reign of grace. I want you to understand what happened, Paul says, when you became a Christian. What are the implications of the gospel?

Tim Keller, in his great book titled Center Church distinguished between outward, what he calls moralistic behavioral change, and inward gospel change. In speaking about moralistic behavioral change, Tim Keller writes:

***People typically try to instill honesty in others this way: “If you lie, you will get in trouble with God and other people,” or “if you lie, you will be like those terrible people, those habitual liars, and you are better than that!” What motivations are being encouraged? They are being called to change their behavior out of fear of punishment (“you’ll get in trouble”) and out of pride (“you’ll be like a dirty liar; you wouldn’t want to be like one of them”). Both fear of punishment and pride are essentially self-centered. The root motivation is, then, “Be honest because it will pay off for you.” This approach puts pressure on the will and stirs up the ego to more selfishness in order to force a person to curb his or her inclinations to do wrong. We call this “moralistic behavior change” because its basic argument is this: “Will yourself to change your behavior, and you can save yourself.” ...Stirring up self-centeredness in order to get someone to do the right thing does not get at the fundamental self-regard and self-absorption that is the main problem of the human heart.***

But instead of moralistic behavior change, you need a change so that you can get in good with God; or you need a change because you don’t want to be like all these other people, Paul says if you understood and reckoned to yourself the gospel of grace, you would change. Again, listen to Tim Keller as I close:

***When the gospel is brought home to our hearts, it eats away at this sin-born neediness, it destroys the inner engines that drive our sinful behavior. We don’t have to lie, because our reputation is so important to us. We don’t have to respond in violent anger against our opponents, because no one can touch our true treasure. The gospel destroys both the pride and the fearfulness that fuel moralistic behavior change. The gospel destroys pride because it tells us that we are so lost that Jesus had to die for us. And it also destroys fear of punishment, because it tells us that nothing we can do will ever exhaust his love for us. When we deeply embrace these truths, our hearts are not merely restrained, but changed. Their fundamental orientation is transformed.***

When your heart is deeply touched by the grace of God, not grace that is just a ticket that you stamp that gets you an entrance pass to heaven, but grace that is a power; grace that is a change of government; grace that offers a changed life; grace that gives freedom and hope; grace that is like Dorel escaping from a dictatorship in communist Romania to freedom in the United States, then of course we would change. Do you think Dorel sits in the dark every night in the United States the way he did back in Romania? Do you think he fills buckets of water because he is afraid he won't have water the next day? Do you think he lines up at 4:00 a.m. in front of the grocery for fear of not having enough food for the day?

Understand what happened in your baptism. Understand your union with Christ. And understand and lay hold of the gospel and you will change, if you truly belong to Christ. Let's pray.

## The Power of the Gospel

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Rich Nathan

November 16-17, 2013

Romans: Gospel of God Series

Romans 6:1-14

- I. The objection to the gospel
  - A. Paul's response
    - 1. What it isn't
    - 2. What it is
  
- II. The power of the gospel
  - A. You are the same
  - B. You are given a new nature
  
  - C. You are transferred from one kingdom to another
  
- III. The reign of the gospel
  - A. The importance of baptism
  
  - B. The importance of union with Christ
  
  - C. The importance of reckoning