

Instrument of Righteousness

Romans 6:1-14

Key verse: 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.*

One thing that we have to realize about Jesus' death and resurrection is that it is such a profound and amazing turning point in God's history. Our salvation depended on this fulfillment of the most amazing gift to mankind. However, it doesn't mean that all of a sudden all problems go away when you accept it personally. It does not mean that everything is now fully understood and you become perfect over night. As a matter of fact you may have more questions and struggles. So if you find yourself wanting to know more and dive deeper into who God and his amazing grace and love is, that is very natural and it is the right attitude to have. Do you want to dive deeper? Do you want to grow closer to your Savior?

Apostle Paul starts out in the book of Romans with a clear explanation of what God did *for* us through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith in him. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now from this Chapter through Chapter 8 he explains what God does *through* us in the Gospel. God has a clear purpose when he saves us. He has a grander plan for us to live a new life in Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, many believers live without knowing God's plan for us. May God help us understand God's purpose of salvation through this message so that we may live a life we are meant to live!

Part 1 Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

Look at verses 1-4. ***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.***

Salvation does not mean perfection. By the grace of God we are forgiven sinners but still for the rest of our lives we will struggle with the sinful nature in us. It is not that God is not willing to be patient and forgive us when we make mistakes. He does. But we must understand that God did not give us his one and only son to free us from sin so that we would make an excuse to sin without penalty. Apostle Paul's answer "by no means" means

that if you really understood what it cost for you to be justified you would not make an excuse like this.

On Friday we heard the opening message by Paul Sambuco who told us from Isaiah 55 that what God offers to you is without cost. It is free. Don't labor for what doesn't satisfy your life but come to Him instead and accept what's good. He is freely opening his arms out to offer you everything that is good for you. But you know the reality is it is only free for you and I. There was a major cost that was paid so that we could have all that was good in Him. Jesus Christ the Son of God died and paid this cost for you and then rose again to life by the power of the Resurrection. He overcame this eternal death consequence for you. And secured your place in the Kingdom of heaven! The moment you truly believe and understand this truth you have now entered into a new life. The moment you accept this amazing justification from God you die to your sin. A part of you has died and a new you has now come out of it. You have been baptized. Baptism is a sharing or a binding with Jesus Christ and his death and Resurrection. You share in this same amazing event that took place on the cross.

By today's terms an analogy that might be helpful is to view our sin as credit card debt. How many people have ever had a lot of credit card debt that they couldn't pay off on their own? In trouble with credit card companies, car, insurance, mortgage whatever? Maybe even the IRS? It's scary isn't it? (Shepherd Paul) Part of the reason its so scary is because eventually you get to the point that you are no longer in control of your finances but someone or something else is dictating your finances. Now imagine that someone like Bill Gates says to you, "I like you. As a matter of fact I love you so much that I'll pay this debt off for you" and boom it's done and gone. How would you feel? Relieved right? Thankful right? Asking a question like "Can we sin so grace may increase?" is like taking it for granted that your credit card debt is paid off. It's like saying "Oh wow now I can rack up my debt whenever I want! Let's buy everything. Astronomical debt! Don't worry Bill will pay it off for me." How do you think Bill Gates would feel about that? How do you think God feels when he sees that we have that attitude about his most precious gift, His one and only Son?

Take a look at some of the debt that Jesus paid for you and I and take an account of it right now. (List of flesh sins Galatians 5:19-21)

How many of these things have you knowingly and willingly indulged in and continue to live in even after accepting Jesus Christ? How many of these things have you even tried time and time again to overcome on your own and failed and fallen right back into? Is this really the kind of life that God called us for? No, God meant for us to have a new life alive in him and dead to our sin debt life. Not abusing this sacrifice but living the life that he meant for us to live. What kind of a life does this look like?

Part 2 A Life Free from Sin and Death

Look at verses 5-7. ***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,^[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.***

Our baptism and unity in Jesus means that we share in both his death and Resurrection. Our unity with him first of all means that we are free from our “old self”. This old self is called the ego or flesh. This is the part of you that has a tendency to be self seeking and selfish. This is the part of you that wants to replace God with ourselves in all areas of our life. When sin first came into the world it came because of a lie and a temptation by Satan who says you can be your own God. You can be like God and be the center of your own life and be just fine. That you don’t have to recognize the great and powerful sovereign God of the universe who made you. As a result of that deception we were cut off and slaves to sin and death from that time on.

There are many eloquent speakers who actually instill this into others. I used to listen to Dr. Wayne Dwyer until one day he flat out said to his audience that “you are God” French President Macron announced to everyone I Am god. My friends you have the great blessings available to you by God in his Kingdom but, you are not God.

When we die with Jesus on the cross this part of us that wants to be the god is now done away with as Paul says. We are now freed from the dominion of sin and under God with the hope of a resurrection and glorification like his. Dying to your ego does not mean that all the sudden you have no temptation or desire to be selfish. It does not mean that you have no more tendencies to fall back into sin. What it really means is that your status as a person has changed officially from slave to free. You were owned by the master of sin and death. And now purchased and freed by Jesus. You now officially have the freedom to live with and for all of the riches and glorious blessings of God’s heavenly Kingdom. You are now legitimized by God who doesn’t bind you in sin and death but makes you legitimate as his adopted child. We have the privilege of calling him the most intimate and personal names that define our relationship of true freedom in him. Abba Father. Daddy. As his child we have the freedom to come to Him with all the benefits of his household and kingdom. You are truly in a life of freedom now legitimized by Him! Before we were totally bound in slavery without any ability to resist sinful cravings. But now we have the freedom to choose not to sin.

In the bible God’s people the Israelites were at one time slaves. They had centuries of slave oppression and bondage being treated as less than human beings. But when God called

Moses to lead them out of bondage they were free. After a lifetime of being forced in bondage they were now free to follow Moses out and grow in God in the desert. But their mentality and their viewpoint on their new found freedom did not automatically change. They still had what they called a slave mentality. They had fear. They had uncertainty and a complaining attitude. It was such a profound shift in their existence that they even complained and wanted to go back to their slave life. They had a limited vision for so long that it took a long time and a lot of mistakes for them to accept God's vision and purpose for their new life. In the same way the slave mentality in us does not just go away once we receive salvation grace. We still have a sinful nature that entices us. It wants us to be slaves to it again. The difference is now we are not bound to serve our former sin slave master. We are free to live for and in Christ. In Galatians 5:1 Paul encouraged: ***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. We are now free from sin.***¹³ ***You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^a; rather, serve one another humbly in love.***

Did you know that Jesus not only set us free from the power of sin but he also set us free from the power of death? Let's look at verses 8-11. ***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.***

The death of Jesus Christ was a one time for all promise of atonement by God. Your sin required the death penalty. But God paid for your sins on the cross totally and completely at this one time event in history. There is nothing ever that can ever take its place or ever compare to it. When you mark the life of a person it is determined by two important definitive times: date of birth and date of death. These two times mark our limitation as finite and mortal human beings. Life starts and ends for all of us here on earth.

When my daughter was born last December there were all kinds of things that were documented on that date to prove that at this time a human life has come into the world. Date, time, place, parents, height, weight, everything. It really takes a lot to bring a human life into this world. Also when a human life goes out of this world there is a lot that marks that time and definitive end to that life.

Jesus had a definitive date of birth and death just like all of us do too. He came into the world, lived and died at exactly the right time when the world was still in sin exactly as God intended. But when he resurrected by the power of God this was not limited and definitively contained at that time as just an event at one time in history. The Resurrection echoed into all eternity for all who are willing to accept Him. He overcame for us once and for all what we couldn't overcome. All hope and glory and life is anchored upon the fact

that he died and then rose again and still lives! Jesus lives to God right now interceding for all those who truly believe and accept this absolutely astounding event.

Did you know that you don't have to fear death anymore? A physical Death isn't the end of you. You have an ultimate life in Jesus and in his Resurrection that you can live fearlessly here and today. You are dead to sin and alive in Christ because he died for your sin and now lives for the sake of you in God's eternal glory! The culmination of this new life is a truly fearless life as Paul described! Look at Romans 8:31-39

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Many Christians faced persecutions and rejections yet they overcame them with resurrection faith. When we believe that Jesus' resurrection is my resurrection we can face anything and anyone with courage. We can even face death in peace. Last week, M. William Jung of Boston UBF went to heaven at the age of 47. We are sad because he is not with us anymore. But we are joyful because we know that he is with Jesus, perhaps watching over us. We also have hope that someday we will see him again. His homecoming ceremony was full of grace. It was a time and place in which we renewed our hope for eternal life in heaven. There is no death in those who believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus said to Martha whose brother had just died, ***"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*** (John 11:25-26) What are we afraid of? Who do we fear? Let's live a truly fearless life in Jesus!

Part 3 God's Instrument

Look at verses 12-14 ***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.***

Your new identity is marked by freedom from sin and freedom from death. Counting yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ means that you are not standing on your own power and ability but the grace of God. Do not let any part of you be used as an instrument of sin. But take those parts of you that have been previously used to indulge in sin and allow God

in. Let Him come into your life in all areas and teach you and guide you how to use them for the true purpose as His created being. Before mankind fell in sin we were created by God. Everything including you and I were created with a special and inherent purpose. God saw that it was good. When we were cut off from sin we lost this inherent and beautiful Godly nature in us. There is a part of you that can only truly be satisfied and fulfilled by the saving Grace of God through Jesus Christ. Nothing else will ever satisfy or replace what God can only fill in you.

Some believers do not understand this gospel of grace that they still live under the law, not under grace. They are deeply rooted in work-based righteousness that they strive to earn God's approval and people's recognition. They do things to be seen by others. They serve and love to be recognized and blessed. But real Gospel Life should be the opposite. We love because we have been loved and are still being loved by God. We serve because we have been called and blessed by God. We are forgiven to forgive! We are called and blessed to serve!

Offering yourself to God is a decision of faith that leads to action. However, it is actually not dependent on our effort or ability. If anything it is not what you need to do more of but what you need to do less of. Think of it this way: When you realize that you have a really sinful or deep weakness in you that you cannot overcome on your own, does striving more make you overcome it? Is our attempt to drive out darkness in us successful? No, our darkness can only be driven out when we come to Jesus the light of the world! When we die to ourselves in our own ego it means that we recognize very humbly that we are not strong enough to overcome something. Instead we come before God in our helplessness and admit it before Him. And let his grace and the induction of the Holy Spirit based on the forgiveness of sins come into us. In the areas of your life where you are the most vulnerable or have the hardest time overcoming accepting believing or wrapping your head around this obstacle

I'll give you a personal example. It is not my intention to make you feel uncomfortable as I share this. It may. But I want you to understand what God's grace means for me personally in my life. For the majority of my life as a young man I had a problem. I had a sexual problem. A problem that at one point really consumed me. The more I tried to overcome it on my own the more I would fall into it in the form of pornography and indulgence. I was so embarrassed about it that it made me want to hide it even more and not admit it. I didn't die to myself in this area of my life so the sin in me was still very much active. I thought it was mind over matter. I could control it and overcome it through my own effort. But I couldn't and it would only get worse and worse. Through many mistakes I finally got to the point where I knelt before God and admitted finally that I am not strong enough overcome this on my own. I was truly helpless. God answered my prayers and told me that the reason

that I had this problem was that there is a part of me that was very lonely inside and yearned for intimacy. I had a part of me that could only be filled and complete with the grace and presence of God in my life. This intimacy and restoration that God wanted to have with me was the real answer. I read the book of Galatians and discovered that sexual immorality was first on the list of acts of the flesh. It was no coincidence to me. This is an act or a striving to replace or fill a part of you that only God's grace and Holy Spirit can truly satisfy in my life. After admitting helplessness and submitting it to God it was then that his Holy Spirit came into me and began to work and heal and protect me from this indulgence. God said you are not strong enough but I am and I have the power to help you overcome. This is why God told apostle Paul My grace is sufficient for you because grace is made perfect in weakness 2 Cor 12:9. In the areas of your life that you are the weakest and admit and submit to the Holy Spirit's presence will be the areas of your life where you will know the grace of God the most powerfully. Can I say that there will never be a temptation in my life again? No. Can I fall back into this sin problem again? Yes I can. But I know that I have truly surrendered this in my life and am under the grace of God. Keeping in step with the Spirit.

When we live under grace, not under the law, we will realize that God has a beautiful and powerful new life in store for us to have here and now today. Ephesians 2:8-10 ***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Let's stand in the grace of Jesus Christ and let God the Father use us as the instruments of righteousness. That's the new life we are meant to live. Let us stop letting sin reign over our body that we may obey its evil desires.

Let us offer ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of ourselves to him as an instrument of righteousness. Sin shall no longer be your master if we are under grace. God will enable us to form the image of Christ as we offer ourselves to him. Then we will be power instruments of God for his purpose. We will become instrument of righteousness for God's glory. Amen.

Key verse: 13 Read together.