

GOD'S GLORIOUS GOSPEL**Romans, chapters 6-7****The Gospel: Union with Christ****I | CONTEXT AND CONNECTIONS**

1 / We will attempt in this lesson to at least outline and follow Paul's train of thought and the development of his message of "The Glorious Gospel of God." In broad outline of the whole book thus far, in chapters 1-5, Paul has been proclaiming what God has accomplished *for* us in the Gospel. Now, in chapters 6-8, He will bring it home to our heart and lives by telling us what God has accomplished *in* us by the Gospel. As we read through these chapters, we will observe a distinct moving into our innermost hearts and lives as he describes how the Gospel does its work in us—especially here in chapters 6-7 with respect to sin in our lives.

2 / The most core and pivotal message that Paul will deliver is our **Union with Christ**. That's what the Gospel does—the Gospel joins us with Christ. Not just an association with who Christ is and what He has done for us, but our very identification with Christ Himself. So vitally are we joined with Christ and united with Him, that Paul will proclaim that when Christ died for us, we died with Him—in Him. And when Christ was resurrected from death, we were resurrected and raised with Him—in Him. And that's the way we must live out the life we are now living. We live in Him, and He lives in us.

3 / By way of connection, we must begin reading chapter 6 where it comes in Paul's writing—after the end of chapter 5. As chapter 5 ends, Paul has been describing what we called in our last lesson "federal headship." Whatever the 'federal head' does, those who are 'in him' do the same. It was so with Adam in his sin, and it is so with Christ in His death and resurrection. The 'federal headship' of Christ is another way of expressing 'union with Christ.'

4 / We will follow the reading of these two chapters according to Paul's questions that he raises at the beginning of each section of his message: "**What shall we say then?**" [6.1]; "**What then?**" [6.15]; "**Or do you not know, brothers?**" [7.1]; "**What then shall we say?**" [7.7]. As always, all we can do is summarize Paul's main Gospel truths in each section and show how they connect and explain the whole message of **Union with Christ**.

II | ch 6.1-14 | Union with Christ in His death and resurrection saves us from living in sin

1 / As Paul does all throughout this letter, he is anticipating and pre-empting questions his readers—or even his detractors who seek to find flaws, poke holes, disprove, or refute his Gospel of free Grace through faith in Christ alone. That's what he's doing by this Q&A section: **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!** This is a follow up to the previous section where he repeatedly says that **the free gift by the grace of that one Man Jesus Christ abounded for many [15]**, and his grand conclusion **but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more [20]**. So, the possible confusion—or even the objection—could be said this way: *Well, if the abundance of God's grace through faith in Christ justifies me from all the abundance of my sin, then does that mean that since I am justified freely and wholly from all my sin...that I now have the liberty to continue to sin with impunity?* Paul's rejoinder is: **By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

2 / Paul is not saying here that justified believers in Jesus Christ do not commit sin. He will go into this issue at length and in depth in **ch 7.7-25** using his own personal experience as an illustration of our daily, on-going sin that remains in us. But, **continue in sin** means to practice sin as a way of life or as the controlling, ruling authority in our lives and conduct. Believers in Jesus Christ do not—indeed, cannot—live in on-going practices of sin. The reason being: ***we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection!*** Paul will draw out both of these inseparable provisions of the Gospel—Christ's death for our sin and His resurrection for our justification [**see ch 4.24-25**]*—in the following verses of this section.*

3 / The illustration that Paul uses is *baptism [immersion, plunging under water]*. Baptism illustrates, confesses, and proclaims our union with Christ. Also, **baptism** here should be viewed from a two-fold perspective—kind of like viewing the same object through two lenses to bring it into sharp focus. ***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, or order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk [live, conduct our lives] in newness of life. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we are united with His own death on the Cross as the **propitiation / sin payment** for our sins. So much so, that when Christ died for our sins, we died **in Him** along with all our sins. That is, *when Christ died for our sins and was buried [baptized, immersed into the grave], we too died with Him and were buried [baptized] with Him!* And then, when Christ was **raised from the dead in His resurrection**, we too were **raised with Him** in His own resurrection. We are so **united with Christ and ‘in Him,’** that when He died, was buried, and raised again from death—so were we! **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** [that continued in sin, lived in sin as a ruling, governing law] **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 [5-6].** Then, the second lens through which we view **baptism** is our physical baptism in water as our confession and testimony that we have been united with Christ by faith in Him.

4 / Now, since we **know that** [as Paul repeatedly reminds us in vv 3, 6, 8, 9, 16], we must live in that reality! **Therefore since we know that, believe and trust in that reality by saving faith, “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus [vv 11-14]. NOT LIVING IN SIN IS NOW OUR CHOICE, OUR DECISION, OUR COMMITMENT! Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body [connect with ch 5.17, 21], to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present your members 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 not under law but under grace.** Before we were saved, we were enslaved to sin. Sin ruled over us with dominion. **But now! We have been united with Christ in His death to put our sin’s rule over us to death—and in His resurrection to raise us up again to live in righteousness as our ruling government over our lives and conduct! We don’t HAVE TO sin. Our residual indwelling sin CANNOT MAKE US sin. We have been united with Christ—our ruling sin nature and desires have been put to death. We now live united with Christ in His own eternal life to live in righteousness!**

III | ch 6.15-23 | Union with Christ liberates us from slavery to the Law and sin—and makes us love-slaves to Christ

1 / Since Paul has already introduced our former way of life in sin as ‘slavery’ or being **enslaved to sin [6]**, he now returns to the example and illustration of **slavery** to explain how our **union with Christ frees us [7]** from the rule of sin in our lives and conduct. And since he has also brought us back to our relationship with the Law of God [14], he will now describe in more detail our relationship with the Law of God as it relates to our desires and motivation to live a holy life. He has just said in 6.14 **“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you not under law but under grace.”** So, he means for us to understand that as long as we are **under law**, we are under the dominion and enslaved to sin. So, he is using the Law here to refer to when we attempt to keep the Law to earn our salvation. Keep in mind: justification is ‘being made righteous / to righteous-fy.’ The truth that Paul has been emphasizing is that righteousness is either ‘gifted’ to us by faith in Christ; or it is ‘earned’ by us by our works keeping the Law.

2 / So, the question here is: *Since we are not ‘under the law’ to earn our salvation [but under grace], does that mean we should disregard it and sin without compunction or conscience? By no means!* And then, the rest of his explanation has to do with a slavery analogy. A slave does the will of the master. A slave is owned and under the dominion of the slave-master and does what the master desires and commands. When we were enslaved to the Law in our efforts to do what the Law commands and requires to earn our justification, the only outcome of that slavery is **death**. [This is in contrast to the **life** we have from being in **union with Christ**.] But Law-keeping is always trying to perform external acts that will qualify us to be ‘good enough for God.’ It can’t be done. And, we don’t attempt to keep the Law out of **obedience from the heart [17]**.

3 / Paul is emphatic here: every one of us is **enslaved** to some master that leads us to sin [16]. Either it is the Law of ‘religion,’ or it is our own will or some other creation object—or it is Christ. And you **present yourself** to that sin-master to fulfill its desires, all in the hopes it will satisfy your desires to be fulfilled, or made whole and complete. This is what Paul means when he talks about **what fruit were you getting at that time** [21].

4 / BUT, the only way we can be fulfilled in **righteousness** is to be heart-slaves, love-slaves to Christ. If you are attempting to earn **righteousness** by serving any other slave-master, the only **fruit** you will earn is **death** [16, 19, 21, 23]. And the only way you can be gifted to be **slaves of righteousness leading to sanctification and its end, eternal life** is by **the free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** [23]. That’s why “**But thanks be to God**” [17] is the only response we can have and give—because this **love-slavery to Christ** is by God’s Grace through faith in Jesus Christ!

IV | ch 7.1-6 | Union with Christ releases us from being ‘married’ to the Law as the motivation for our obedience—and ‘marries’ us to Christ in love...to please Him by our obedience

1 / Paul pursues this same theme of **not under law but under grace** through our **union with Christ**. In the last illustration, he employed the illustration of slavery. Now he pursues the illustration of marriage to continue teaching our **union with Christ**. When we believe on Christ to be justified, made righteous before God, **God marries us to Christ!** We used to be married to the law [whatever law we were ‘married’ to]. But now, when we are married to Christ, then **the ‘law marriage partner’ died**. Why? Because Christ fulfilled all its demands, requirements, and judgments against us.

2 / So, to follow Paul’s analogy: “**...that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives ... For a married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage ... But if her husband dies, she is free from that law...**” Then the marriage analogy is applied to us: **Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ** [that is, through our **union with Christ**, when Christ died in body on the Cross, He fulfilled and perfectly satisfied the law’s requirements, demands, and judgments against us, and **in Christ, we also died to the law**] ... **so that you may belong to another, to Him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit to God.**

3 / This is so beautiful—to think and to know with certainty that when we trust Christ, we are in **union with Christ!** And, it is a marriage union. Christ gives Himself to us to be our Heavenly Husband and Bridegroom! And the **fruit** we bear to God is **the fruit of righteousness**. When we were married to the Law [whatever law it was], the only fruit we could bear is **death**. Our law ‘marriage partner’ could never satisfy our desires for **righteousness**; it could only stir up **our sinful passions** that were in our born human nature—ending up in **bearing fruit for death**.

4 / **But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.** And all of this is because of our **union with Christ!**

V | ch 7.7-25 | Union with Christ gives us the discernment, the desire, and the victory over our struggles with our residual sin in our present mortal bodies

1 / And now, Paul answers another question: **What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means!** He says this because he has just concluded a section in which he has bemoaned and blamed the Law back when we were **enslaved to the law**—that the Law couldn’t satisfy us or make us **righteous**, or even inspire us to want to be **righteous** with the **righteousness of God**. [Though we made every attempt to keep it with the hopes that we could ‘earn’ **righteousness**. No! The only thing our Law slave-master / marriage partner did was to **stir up more and more sinful desires and passions in us** [5]. So, does that mean that **the Law itself is sin? By no means!** [Have you been keeping count? This is now the fourth time he has used this strong, bold, and adamant negative assertion [6.2, 15; 7.7, 13]. “**Certainly not!**”

2 / **NO! The Law in itself is not sin!** Because the Law is the expression of God’s own personal holiness and **righteousness**. And the Law is the code and standard of **righteousness** that God requires from us—which we cannot attain, earn, or work out by our own efforts in our born human nature. Paul will go to

say in v 12: **So the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.** But that's precisely what this personal testimony is all about. Paul will describe in graphic and painful detail how the Law performed its **holy, righteous, and good** ministry in his own conscience and life.

3 / There are two time-frames of his life that Paul will testify about—how the Law worked in his religious life to bring him to a knowledge of his sin and his need of the **righteousness of Christ**. [1] vv 7-14: He testifies to his former life—leading up to his conversion to faith in Christ. NOTE how he uses past tenses in this part of his testimony; [2] vv 15-25: he testifies to his present experiences and struggles with his residual, still-indwelling sin that still remains in his mortal, physical, human body and life. He uses 'I' and present verb tenses—it is still going on! As we all can testify from our own painful experiences.

4 / vv 7-14: **how the Law of God worked in his former life up until his conversion by faith in Christ and His righteousness.** Remember that all this time, Paul was exceedingly religious and self-righteous—thinking he was 'good,' Law-abiding, and attaining a righteousness by his own efforts and works [see **Philippians 3.4-11**]. **Yet if it had not been the Law, I would not have known sin.** So, what the Law did in his conscience was to bring him to the realization that he was a sinner before the **righteousness of God**. All of us must come to this conviction of our own personal sin, unrighteousness, guilt, and unworthiness of the grace of God. [This, too, is my own personal testimony as a very 'religious' young boy ... before God convicted me of my sinful unrighteous, self-righteousness—a guilty sinner in need of repentance...] So what did the Law do in Paul's conscience?

[1] First of all, **the Law of God defined his sin.** With Paul, it was the sin of **all kinds of covetousness** [8]. Here is an interesting truth about **covetousness**. It is the last of the Ten Commandments. And, it is the only commandment that deals exclusively with *the innermost desires and motivations of our hearts*. The other commandments are *external*. We can make every effort to do all the outward works and activities to give the appearance, at least, that we are living up to them. Yes, we know that Jesus interprets them to convict the deeper spiritual violations of even the external commandments: lust in our hearts is tantamount to adultery, bitterness and hatred in our hearts is tantamount to murder, etc. But, we can still attempt to live up to the external compliances with the other commandments. But **covetousness** will slay us every time—as it did Paul [8-11]. The Law *truthfully and righteously defines our sin for what it is*.

[2] Secondly, **the Law of God reveals and exposes our sin—as it did Paul's.** The Law revealed and exposed to Paul how his **covetousness** worked itself out in his conduct. *Even the very attempt to work out our own righteousness before God and others is covetousness.* Because what we are coveting is God's own righteousness—except we will work out our own! We covet the sovereignty and Lordship that God alone has. We covet mastery over our own lives. And, we covet the approval and praise of others. And on and on... And so it is the **goodness, holiness, and righteousness of the Law** that defines and reveals the hideousness of our sin to us—**“in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure.”**

5 / vv 15-25: **how the Law of God worked in his present experience—even as a justified, righteous believer in Jesus Christ.** “For I delight in the Law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” [vv 22-23]. All of us can say “Amen!” to Paul's struggles. Even while we do not **continue in sin** [v 1] or **live in sin** as the ruling 'law' of our lives, sin still remains in us. It is grievous and painful to us. But we struggle with it. Yes! we are **united with Christ in His death to our sin and His resurrected life for our eternal life**, yet we, too, have to moan “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out” [v 18]. We share Paul's confession here: that the ability and power to live **righteously before God** is not in our fleshly, human ability. **But it is possible through our union with Christ—to Whom we are united by faith! And it shall be done by the life of the Holy Spirit of Christ who lives in us!** And Paul will begin to draw this out in **chapter 8**.

6 / So now, let's give thanks to God again for His amazing Grace. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death! Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the Law of God with my mind, but with the flesh I serve the law of sin.”