

Newness of Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 November 2025

Preacher: Matthew Capone

[0 : 00] In the letter of Romans, the book of Romans, you'll remember that Romans was a letter written by the Apostle Paul in the 50s AD.

And it is called Romans for a very simple reason, which is that it is written to the churches in the city of Rome. And it is foundationally, fundamentally about the gospel.

It's about the good news of Jesus' life and death and resurrection. We are coming this Sunday, this week, to chapter 6.

So we're moving fast. It just seems like yesterday we were starting out chapter 4. And like last week, like the end of chapter 5, the passage before us right now is a little bit detailed, a little bit technical.

In fact, Romans happens to be like that sometimes. Romans is, at moments in places, a lot of work. That's the bad news. The good news is, it's worth it.

[0 : 59] I continue to meditate on that quote I told you all about in September from Andrew David Nassali, where he says Romans is the greatest piece of literature in the history of the world.

And the longer we spend, and I spend in Romans, the more I believe that. But so we are, again, up against some technical things. I'll say what I said last week. This is the beginning of the conversation, not the end.

My goal is to say something, not everything. We're happy to talk more at length afterwards. The question before us this morning is this. If God forgives sin, and he does, why don't we just sin more?

If God forgives sin, why not just sin more? One commentator points us to two different poets who express this idea.

A man named Heinrich Heine, a German poet, and he said this. God will forgive. That is his business. Of course, what's unstated there is, and I will do whatever I want.

[2 : 10] Another poet, a British-American poet named W.H. Auden, wrote a poem about Christmas. And in that poem, the character Herod, and yes, that's the same Herod from the Christmas story, mocks Christianity, and in mocking it, he says this.

He says, Christianity allows criminals to say this. I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really, the world is admirably arranged.

And both of those are getting this same idea, right? If God is a God of mercy and grace, man, isn't that great news because we can sin as much as we want?

What do we do with that idea, that objection? That's the question of this passage. So with that, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 6. You can find it in your Bible. It's also printed in your worship guide on page 7.

Remember that this is God's word. And Jeremiah chapter 23 tells us that God's word is like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces, which is a way of saying that there is nothing so powerful that God's word is not more powerful still.

[3 : 26] And so that's why we turn now to Romans chapter 6, starting at verse 1. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you again for your mercy and your love.

We thank you that in Christ you have made us one. We thank you for your word that you've given to us to guide and instruct and challenge and encourage us.

[4 : 38] We ask that you would do that this morning. We confess that we need your spirit to understand spiritual things. We need your spirit to soften our hearts.

We need your spirit to be at work in our minds that we can understand. And so we ask that you, as we read just words, that you'd be at work in a powerful way by your spirit in our lives and our hearts in this moment and this time, that you would use an ordinary man to proclaim your word.

It would cut us to the heart. That most of all, we would see and love more and more your son and our savior, our Lord Jesus. We ask these things in the mighty name, his mighty name.

Amen. So I just mentioned that Paul here is responding to this charge that God's grace, his forgiveness, will lead to more sin.

That's the idea he presents here. This is verse one. Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? The logic is this. This is something that Paul had said back in chapter five.

[5 : 52] I believe it's verse 20. It says, Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. Okay, so if increased sin means increased grace and grace is good, then more sin means more grace and more sin is good.

You know, we're actually helping God when we sin. We're giving him a great opportunity to show off his grace. Wow.

We can give God so much glory when we sin. Paul immediately responds to that objection in verse two. By no means.

How can we who died to sin still live in it? What Paul is saying is this. What in the world are you talking about?

That in fact makes zero sense. Is the Pope Protestant? No, of course not.

[6 : 55] Can you buy your lunch today with euros? No, of course not. You're not in Europe. You're in America. You need dollars. Is a panda bear a bird?

No, a panda bear is a bear. What are you talking about? Panda bears are mammals. Like, did you even go to elementary school? You're asking a nonsense question.

Die to sin but live in sin. It is silly. And it's silly for this reason. It is a contradiction. You can't be a bear and also be a bird.

You can't be in America and buy your lunch with euros. Sin, being dead to it and living in it. You can't do both of those things at the same time. That's silly.

And it's silly for this reason. Death and life are a contradiction. Everyone knows, at least we hope, you can't both be dead and at the same time be alive.

[8 : 00] That seems to be basic logic. And so Paul is, in a sense, saying, wow, what a silly question. Do you know anything?

You cannot be dead to sin and also live in sin. That raises the next question for us, though, which is what does Paul mean by died to sin?

In what sense are you, if you're a Christian, dead to it? To answer that question, we need to remember three critical categories, three different ways of thinking about sin.

Sin has three components. Sin has a penalty. Sin has a power. And sin has a presence.

Sin has a penalty. Sin has a power. Sin has a presence. Sin has a power. Paul is not, so we're going to do a process of elimination here.

[9 : 09] Paul is not talking about the penalty of sin here, although it is true that Christ's death does pay for the penalty. That's part of our justification. We've talked about this many times.

Justification means both that Christ takes the punishment for our sin and he gives us his righteousness. That's not the point of these verses, though. That was actually the focus of chapter 5.

Chapter 5 was about justification. We're now in chapter 6. Paul is also not here talking about the presence of sin. We know he's not talking about the presence of sin for a couple reasons.

First, as we look at the Bible, we realize we will not be fully and finally free of the presence of sin until we are in glory. And you'll remember we've talked about the fact that glory is when we are fully and finally in the presence of Jesus Christ.

We shall be like him, Paul tells us, because we shall see him as he is. The other reason we know he's not talking about the presence of sin is because if you have your Bible and you look forward to verses 11 through 14 of chapter 6, Paul is going to talk about the continued fight that the believer

has against the presence of sin.

[10:26] The process of elimination then leaves us with one and only one option. When Paul says, you have died to sin, he means you have died to the power of sin.

Paul says that you have died to sin, he is saying that you have died to the power of sin. The power is broken.

The idea of sin as a power actually was introduced last week as well. The very last verse of chapter 5 tells us, sin reigned in death.

Now, to reign, to have a rule like that, sin has to be more than just individual actions. Individual actions can't have a rule or a reign.

To have a rule and a reign, you have to be a power. You have to be something greater than one thing that someone did. What Paul is reminding us of, what we saw last week in what it means to be in Adam, is that if you are not a Christian, if you have not transferred over from the reign of death to the reign of grace, sin controls and owns the power center of your heart.

[11:54] If you are in Adam, if you do not follow Jesus Christ in faith, sin controls and owns the power center of your heart.

And if you are a Christian and you do follow Jesus Christ in faith, you may look back and remember what it was like before that was true of you. And you can remember that there was a power over you that no longer has control.

Theologians talk about it this way. People who are under the power of sin are not able not to sin.

People who are under the power of sin are not able not to sin.

They are not capable of not sinning. That's how powerful sin is. To explain the power of sin, one pastor uses the illustration of an invading army.

So imagine there's an army. This army has taken over a country. It has toppled the capital city. It is now in the capital building. The police force is run by this invading army.

[13:10] But then there is a liberating force. The liberating force shows up on the scene. The invaders are definitively defeated.

They are kicked out of the capital building. It is no longer their police who control the streets. They have lost. But some of the soldiers of the invading army are still running around in the woods.

So the battle continues. The battle against the invaders continues. But it continues now from a place of strength. The capital city of your heart is no longer the seat of power for the reign of sin.

The capital city of your heart is the seat of power for the reign of life and righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Yes, the battle continues. Yes, there are skirmishes sometimes. Yes, there are moments when you are surprised by an invading soldier hiding out behind a tree.

[14:26] But the battle with sin no longer has the upper hand. You can, in moments and at times, do the right thing for the right reason, which is for the honor and glory of God and for your good.

The presence of sin continues. It still has some soldiers that are trying to continue the fight. The power of sin is broken.

As I said, it doesn't mean sin never wins. It doesn't mean there isn't an ongoing battle in your life. But it does mean this.

The overarching theme of your existence. The overarching theme of your existence is one of growing obedience and holiness.

The desire of your heart, even when you fail to bring it about, is to obey God for your good and his glory.

[15:50] The desire of your heart, even when you fail to bring it about, is to obey God for your good and his glory.

If the power of sin in your life is broken, and if you are a Christian, it has been, you will begin to see new fruit springing up.

As painful as it is to admit at times that you were wrong, you're now willing to do it. You're willing to confess your need and your sin.

As much as you used to keep a list of grudges and hurts, a tally of all the ways that people had wronged you, you now find yourself with the power to overlook an offense.

And as you find yourself tied more and more into the community of God's people, you find that it's possible for you to actually speak out loud about your need.

[17:08] That you can fight and leave addiction. Of course, we could go on and on with all the different ways that God's work springs up in our hearts as the power of sin is broken.

John Wesley, a pastor in the 18th century, said this, Sin remains, but it does not rain. Sin remains, but it does not rain.

You have died to sin. That raises the next question for us, which is this, How did you die to sin? How did that happen? Paul tells us in verse 3, You died to sin in your baptism. Now, verse 3 here has become a flashpoint of debate theologically about the meaning and the mode of baptism. I don't want to dismiss that on the one hand. I don't want us to get dragged into that on the other hand, because we are in fact headed to verse 4, which is about newness of life. So there's only a few things I can say in the books and pages that have been spilled over this verse without a whole other sermon.

[18:31] One thing I'll say is that as a good Presbyterian, I do believe Paul here is speaking not about the mode of baptism, but about the meaning of baptism. But let me just summarize here what Paul is saying very briefly.

He's saying this, When you become a Christian, you are baptized. Okay? We can track with that. Baptism means and represents and teaches a number of things.

Okay? When you become a Christian, you're baptized. Baptism means and teaches and represents a number of things. I list some of these off when we have a baptism like we did today. Titus 3, verse 5, Baptism represents a cleansing from sin.

I said this morning, Romans 6 says this, and I'm getting ahead of myself here. One of the things that baptism means and represents and teaches is our union with Christ.

One of the things that baptism means and teaches and represents is our union with Christ. Union with Christ is kind of this technical theological term that can be at times hard to understand.

[19:40] The way I summarize it is this, What's true of Jesus is true of you. Now, that has some limitations to it. Okay? I've oversimplified it a little bit.

Jesus is God. You will never be a God. I've given you page 7. There's a quote there you can look at later that breaks out really technically three different things that union with Christ means.

I want us to move, though, and look here at this into word. He tells us you were baptized into Jesus Christ. That one preposition does a lot of heavy lifting for us.

If you are in Jesus Christ, you've been baptized into him, it means you are represented by Jesus and you are connected to Jesus.

It means you are represented by Jesus and you are connected to Jesus. Another way of thinking about it is this.

[20:37] Union with Christ is the opposite of being in Adam. I'm pulling back here from last week.

Last week, remember, we talked about being in Adam or being in Christ. Being, having union with Christ is the opposite of being represented by Adam. You remember, last week we talked about this.

God chose Adam to officially represent all of mankind. And so, in Adam means what's true of Adam is true of you. When Adam sinned, you sinned as well.

Now, verse three, if you've been baptized, in other words, if you are a Christian, you are not in Adam, you are in Christ. Those who have been baptized are represented not by Adam, but by Jesus Christ.

How did you die to sin? Remember, that's the question I started verse three with. How did you die to sin? You died to sin when you became a Christian.

[21:44] And you died to sin because Jesus died. Jesus' death is your death because you are in him.

Jesus' death is your death because you are in him. Jesus' death breaks the power of sin in your life. Jesus' death breaks the power of sin in your life. That takes us, then, where we've been driving verse four, where we'll end, which is about newness of life.

There's really two movements to this passage, this section. We've spoken, the first movement is negative. Okay, negative is what's not true. You're no longer in Adam.

Negatively, sin, its power has been broken. Positively now, and we'll talk about this more next week, you have been raised with Jesus Christ.

[23:11] So you died to sin because Jesus died. You now have new life because Jesus rose from the dead.

Paul says this explicitly in verse four. First of all, he says what we've talked about. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death. That's the negative. Here's the positive.

In order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God, we too might walk in newness of life.

Remember, justification has two movements. In justification, Christ not only pays for our sins, he doesn't just pay the debt, he also gives us a credit. He credits us with his righteousness.

This union with Christ also has two movements. It involves dying with Christ and the power of sin being broken. It also involves being raised with Christ and the power of life being given.

[24 : 13] It involves dying with Christ and the power of sin being broken. It involves being raised with Christ and the power of life being given.

This phrase here in verse four is critical. Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God. When Paul references the glory of God, he is talking about the power that raised Christ from the dead.

And so what he is saying is something I mentioned a few weeks ago that is also repeated in Ephesians chapter 1. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul says, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in you.

Resurrection power now controls the capital city of your heart. And street by street, and block by block, and building by building, year after year, the invading army is fully and finally being pushed out.

The presence of sin grows less and less. That's what Paul means here by newness of life.

[25 : 48] You as a Christian, because of your union with Christ, because you have been baptized into him, because his death is your death, and his resurrection is your resurrection, now live a life characterized by, empowered by, reflecting the resurrection power of God.

That is the life of God to and for you in Jesus Christ. He uses that phrase, too, in verse 4, that we might walk in newness of life.

This walking here means this is the way you're living day by day. This is the power that's at work when you get up in the morning, and when you go to bed at night.

It's a life that's characterized not by the power of sin, but the power of the Holy Spirit at work in you. You are living a life that begins to show to yourself and others glimpses of the future.

Glimpses of God's future reign. The reign where he comes to the heavenly city and wipes away every tear from every eye. Glimpses of who you will one day be when the presence of sin is gone.

[27 : 17] Many people have summarized this passage in this way, with one sentence. Become who you already are.

Become who you already are. I've told you a number of times, and I'll tell you again, that Romans is the fifth gospel, which is a way of saying that what Paul teaches, Jesus taught first.

In his high priestly prayer, in John chapter 17, Jesus prays for what Paul teaches. Jesus says this, I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Us in Christ, Christ in us. All secured and guaranteed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And because of that, he offers you newness of life. will you receive it?

[29 : 05] Will you walk in it by the glory of the Father? Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you again for news that leads to joy that you have given us more than mere forgiveness of our sins.

You have given us a new life, a new heart. You've defeated the power and the reign of sin. We ask that it would be true of us more and more that we would embrace it and grasp it, we'd live into it, that your power would shine through us in our lives.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn. I once was lost in darkest night Yet thought I knew the way The sin that promised promise joy and life had led me to the grave I had no hope that you would own a rebel to your will And if you had not loved me first I would refuse you still But as I ran my hell-bound race indifferent to the cost You looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross And I beheld God's love displayed You suffered in my place You poured the wrath reserved for me Now all I know is grace Alleluia All I have is Christ Alleluia Jesus is my life Now Lord I would be yours alone and live so all might see The strength to follow your commands could never come from me Oh Father use my ransomed life in any way you choose And let my song forever be my only boast is you!

[32 : 22] Hallelujah All I have is Christ Hallelujah Jesus is my life Hallelujah All I have is Christ
Hallelujah Jesus is my life