

A Heart Bound by Grace Unfettered

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[0 : 0 0] now as we begin i want us to just i want you to imagine with me one of your neighbors so after the long lockdown one of your neighbors invites you into their house now you remember what it used to look like 15 months ago it was crowded and colorful filled with lava lamps and funky wallpaper it's like an exhibition from the 70s but when you walk in you see that they have gone all in on the contemporary aesthetic what could once have been called chaotic is now marked by a minimalistic simplicity the color scheme is a toned down palace of white and black and for splashes of color they've added in bits of gray here and there but your eye is drawn to the corner of the room where there's still a pink fluffy lampshade you think to yourself well that's a little out of place something from the old has stayed in the new and it just doesn't look right what we're going to be looking at today as we work through this passage in moments paul is writing to this church and in this chapter he is wanting us to understand that the old life has no place in the life of the justified believer and have a look with me at the question that paul is fielding here in verse 1 he says this what shall we say then shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase by no means we are those who have died to sin how can we live in it any longer or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into christ were baptized into his death and this question comes off the back of 5 verse 20 and the second half it says but where sin increased grace increased all the more you see paul has been preaching the gospel all across the known world and what he's been saying is where there was sin there was even greater grace and so some of his opponents are saying so what you're essentially asserting paul is that where there is where people sin then there's more grace so what you're saying is we need to sin so that we can see more grace and paul is saying you are totally and utterly misrepresenting me because you totally and utterly are ignorant about what grace itself is what it does and what it calls us to as god's people now let me just say here as we begin i'm not saying that sin won't be a consistent experience in the life of the christian that's why we confessed earlier on or that we will no longer desire it no i'm wanting to say something different here sin is not just something that is harmlessly or humorously out of place like a tennis ball in a bowl of apples or britney spears on classic fm no it does not belong like a lion in a penguin enclosure at the zoo or a gun at a peace rally it is totally out of place and now i wanted to speak to those maybe there are some in here some who are listening this morning where we just feel overwhelmed in the battle against sin some might be in that position some might have been in there all of us will be there at some point and we struggle to connect the gospel to our christian lives and we want to think to ourselves

how do we battle sin how do we kill sin and paul says here that first first we must recognize that in christ we have died to sin see by the power and the aid of the holy spirit we are enabled to kill and to mortify sin but first we see in our passage today that in christ we are ennobled by the grace of god to reign with jesus and to cast aside the reign of sin in our lives you see it's not guilt or grind that drives the christian life the christian life is rooted in shaped by and fueled with grace so today i've today i've got two big points for us first offer yourselves sorry second offer yourselves but first consider yourselves have a look with me at verse 11 of chapter 6 the passage we read in the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to god in christ jesus so our first point consider yourselves consider yourselves freed from sin as christians as christians as the church our hope is rooted in a historical event there's no there's near universal agreement among historians that there was a man named jesus from the galilean town of nazareth who lived and taught and traveled the biographical accounts of his life informed us that he was killed by the ruling roman authorities on a wooden cross jesus died as the results of the machinations and the falsehoods of the religious authorities and the the hive mentality of the people of jerusalem but there was more significance behind it for his alistair mcgrath a theologian down in oxford he says this that jesus died is history that jesus died for our sins that is the gospel that is the good news that is the core of the christian faith you see jesus did not just die as the result of the sinful conduct of others look at paul's language in verse 10 for the death he died he died to sin paul's language here is provocative does this mean that jesus was prone to sin like us no and this is where we get to the crux of the gospel jesus bore the sins of his people in his death jesus absorbed the wrath that was due to his people he was their atoning sacrifice he is our propitiation that is he bore our punishment in our place on the cross and troy deeney he's the captain of watford football club and he has a checkered past at one stage went into prison for an altercation outside of the nightclub while he was a professional footballer but he's in the last few years he's ended up becoming one of the more articulate speakers in the game and in an article for the times last year he said this my college my psychologist said something that hit home really well to become a new person the old you has to die and here he he lands on the truth and here in the passage we're looking at today we see how that can actually happen

because it happens through union with christ for in jesus's death we are united to him in this by faith paul points to their baptism to help them to comprehend this profound truth of us being freed justified from sin baptism is a picture of our incorporation our joining in to christ by faith in baptism it's a seal and a sign of a spiritual reality where believers where followers of jesus receive all his benefits and the first of those benefits is the death of our old selves as a result of being baptized into christ paul says we have been buried with him crucified with him and died with him each of these speak not of an ongoing reality but a definitive moment when we heard the gospel of grace and receive jesus by faith in the passage before this in chapter 5 verses 12 to 21 the word rain was a key word it described us when we were not in christ not of christ that we were under the rain of sin and death that was the realm that we lived in we were slaves to sin this is what jesus said to those when he was walking on the earth he said those who sin become slaves to sin but here we see that being but that by being united to jesus we are taken out of that realm the outcome of sin which is death is nullified by our union with jesus the point is important here we are not freed in this from the desire to sin but from the dominion of sin from the rule and the reign of sin we are given a new identity a status and citizenship no longer are we in adam and subject to sin but we are in christ and under the reign of grace where sin has no place at all if you want to become an american citizen that the final step is reciting the naturalization oath of allegiance to the united states of america and as part of that this is what you have to say i hereby declare on oath that i absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince potentate state or sovereignty of whom or which i have heretofore being a subject or citizen so to become a citizen of america you have to renounce your old life and that's the same here what paul is saying we have been brought into a new kingdom and we have to abandon everything that was associated with the old as paul says we know their 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 therefore we renounce any and all allegiance and fidelity to sin and to the deceiver because the sixth verse four says as g just as jesus was raised from dead through the glory of the father we too may live a new life and so we have been we must consider ourselves freed from sin and risen to new life you see next to the the cross at the heart of the christian

faith is an empty tomb the accounts of jesus's life the gospels make us make us absolutely sure that jesus dies on the cross he was not merely asleep or unconscious his lungs had failed him his heart had stopped beating he was dead and buried in a tomb and six verse nine tells us the significance of the resurrection of jesus for we know that since christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again death no longer has mastery over him literally has no lordship over him because jesus has died death has no hold on him and our union with christ then sorry a very reliable stand in front of me our union with christ does not stop at our joining with him in our death we are united to the crucified and risen lord have a look at me at paul's reasoning in six verse five sorry my bible fell down as well it just feels like one of those days you know where everything is going wrong but if we have a look have a look at me at six verse five you might even be able to read it out before i do six verse five tells us here six verse five 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 we are united to christ in everything he took whatever was ours and nailed it to the cross but at the same time he also gives us everything that is his and so we are given his life as well brothers and sisters for all those who are listening whether you are a believer or not whether you're someone who's just wanting to find out a little bit more about the christian faith who's tuned in today or has come along because a friend has invited you there is liberty here there is overwhelming joy i mean six verse eleven paul names the implications for the christian we are to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to god in christ jesus this language for consider here it's the same language that paul used back in chapter four verses three to six there he was talking about that all those who believe in god in his promises in jesus christ they are reckoned they are accounted righteous there the picture is that in god's sight we are reckoned righteous and the idea then here is that we are to adopt god's view of us we are to look through his lenses of the world verse seven because anyone who has died has been set free literally has been justified from sin and so we are called then to look at ourselves to consider ourselves to count ourselves in the way god does it's not our opinion that matters it's god what god has achieved definitively in christ on the cross

is now what defines us it is what shapes our identity our status and our citizenship and think of it this way imagine you're in prison and you try to escape you've climbed over the walls and a prison guard catches you he says sorry but you need to come back here this is where you're meant to be but what paul is saying is what we do is we walk out the gates of the prison and a prison guard might say to us you're meant to be back here we say no we're not we have been set free we have been justified god has made a definitive legal statement and that is now what defines us if we are a believer in jesus i've talked to many people i can think of a couple in particular those who are not long christians those who know that their past their past which still plays so much in their minds ghosts which haunt them who struggle with the habits that they used to have from their old life now that they've become a christian and here's a truth that helps them it's not that they now have this great power it's not grounded now that they've got this great power to overcome sin but it's this knowledge that there's great power in christ that helps us to defeat sin that we are no longer those who are defined by sin we now live under grace and in those who live in the realm of grace there is no space for sin because we have been called to something better something more beautiful something more glorious something that cultivates flourishing and health and life and what we need to hear over and over again is 6 verse 6 our old self was crucified with him and so the question maybe to pose ourselves this day is do we view ourselves in this way have we grasped the implications of what it means to be united to christ do we understand that this altar is the very foundation of who we are and what we are called and commanded to do you see if we recognise and consider that we have been crucified with christ but we have also been risen to a new life then we see that we are called into something better and that's the second point this morning our second point this morning is we are called to consider ourselves free from sin and alive to godly christ jesus and we also to offer ourselves to offer ourselves as instruments of righteousness i think there's probably two types of gardener i know i'm in the first category which is the reactive gardener you know we're the ones who normally first act when we know that our landlady or our in-laws are coming to visit or maybe we lose sight of our children playing in the playing out back because of the long grass for us gardening tools are just they're instruments of maintenance and that's probably the way a few of us think of the christian life it's when we spot a sin which has grown too much that's when we deal with it when we see an area of our life which does not conform to the good word and will of god that's when we start to get active but then there's

[20 : 09] the second category of gardener they're the ones who realize the garden does not just need consistent maintenance but also needs positive cultivation so that the garden can foster beauty and order and this is closer to what Paul wants us to comprehend from this passage and when he uses the word instruments here it has a mixture of tools and weapons I think it's helpful to think of it in this context like garden tools they've got a twofold purpose don't they they cut away weeds and other things that would hinder growth but on the opposite side they're used in cultivating the growth of flowers and trees and shrubbery which make a garden fruitful and beautiful and so 613 6 verse 13 tells us that because of our union with Christ we are not to use our lives for unrighteous ends by unrighteous methods because unrighteousness was our problem instead in this new realm of grace in which we have been planted our desire is to see righteousness bloom and flourish in our lives and so 16b urges us to present ourselves offer every part of ourselves to him that is God as an instrument of righteousness that language there it's worshipful language it's the same language that Paul used in chapter 12 verse 1 where we are to present ourselves offer ourselves as sacrifices of worship and it's important then for us to observe our lives and to see where the roots of unrighteousness of sin of hypocrisy of corruption are still hidden in our hearts we must be aware of where they grow into weeds and infect our lives and our relationships with others but on the other side we should also be anticipating and fashioning opportunities for acts of righteousness maybe this week should be a time where we examine ourselves confessing our sins and praying to God for the power and aid of his spirit in killing sin but while also asking for guidance and how to present our members as instruments of righteousness and in this passage we've seen these this language of the body of sin here we've talked about the members of our body and so what I think what we might do is we close our time working through this passage is we might think of just five different members of limbs parts of our bodies and think about the ways in which we might use them as instruments of righteousness now I'm not going to say everything needs to be said and here's the encouragement for you to take this on to think about this at home over lunch to talk to one another over this coming week but to think about how can we utilize how can we leverage what God has given us for his glory and for the good of our neighbors and our communities so first thinking about our ears thinking to

ourselves what is it that we are listening to and how are we listening in the gospel of luke jesus said to martha who sat down in his feet while her sister mary was working hard he said to martha that she had chosen the good portion in sitting at jesus feet listening to his words that is what he commended that is what he encouraged is for god's people to hear what god is saying to us to be tuned in to what it is that he would have us to hear so we might even think to ourselves even the sermon today that are we listening in a discerning manner are we seeing if our guest preacher today in his room who's holding up his pulpit are we seeing if our guest preacher is preaching in line with the text he might be an inspiring orator or he might be riding the same hobby horse as you enjoy but is he faithfully expounding the text well what about thinking not just of our ears but of our eyes think to ourselves the ubiquity of screens and how deeply they are baked into our everyday lives much of it is harmless in and of itself but it's the sheer volume and how much of our days it consumes

British children back in 2019 were spending 44 hours every week in front of screens and over this last 15 months you can imagine that that number has only trended upwards but there is stuff that is detrimental to our Christian lives those things which cause covetousness lust or lust so it's asking ourselves questions are we spending too long watching those housing programmes seeing how far short our houses fall compared next to those or are there those websites that you frequent that cause the flames of lust to arrive to see things which cause you to commit adultery but then thinking about our mouths words can be weapons or medicines they can be used to cuss and to hurt and they can also be used to heal and to encourage and to comfort around the dinner table can be one of the most telling places with our family in particular here's the challenge is maybe in your family it's all about pants around the dinner table but is there ever a word that encourages one another might cause you to stand out people might think that you're cliché or cheesy but maybe it's saying can we speak the truth and love to one another and are we telling the truth do we tend to exaggerate or to manipulate the truth or are we loose with the truth when we are under the microscope asking questions ourselves are we speaking with kindness empathy and grace thinking about our hands are we using our hands are we using our lives for the benefit of other people how about hospitality and generosity as life opens up of course there's still the fear that you might get

COVID contacts but God has given us so much for many are we using what he has given us for his glory and for the good of others are we opening up our homes or are we heading out to see people giving what we can so that we can help those who are less fortunate or maybe even the question of what about basic chores are you doing the jobs around the house that you have promised to do and then maybe the final limb the final member of our body that we'll think about this morning and there's many others and I'd encourage you to think through them but what about our feast think about how this impacts in the decisions of where we go now that we live under grace now that we are called to live in God's ways where do we go what about going on holidays where are we going to go is it the right use of our money to go on the great big one or are we going to a place where we know there's no decent church nearby what about who we visit or maybe for even for some of us it's thinking about going into missionary work or into gospel ministry going to the places where no one else is

I'm aware that there's a lot to think through there and let me encourage you not just to rush past that but to really think upon those things to dwell upon them to ask yourself those questions over this coming week but I want to finish where Paul roots all of this which is that we are now to consider ourselves new you see the logic that Paul has presented for us here what God wants us to know and to hear and to see and to live out is that we have been justified so we are called to live a just life we have been declared and reckoned righteous therefore we are to live righteously we have been adopted into a new family so we are called to adapt to the new life that we now live we have been made new we have been raised to new life and so we are called to live in that new life and to walk in that new life let's pray together

[30 : 12] God our Father what wonderful good news it is that united with Christ you have dealt with our sin that you have cast our sin as far away as the east is from the west no longer are we defined by that identified with us but solely with your son Jesus who is risen again what grace and joyous news that is help us now as we live under grace fuelled by grace to live a life that is worthy of your gospel a life where we put ourselves to death and seek the good of our friends of our neighbours of our families grace and to do all things to the glory of your holy name in Jesus name we pray all of this amen amen our together we you can't anything you can't do teh