

Romans 6

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Preacher: Cameron McCartney

[0:00] Well, good morning everyone. I'd like to extend my welcome to any visitors who are here to celebrate with us the baptisms of Kylie, Matt, Mackenzie, Kirsten and Anna.

! Whether you're a friend or family member, whether you've been going to church for decades or whether this is one of your first times at church, we're delighted to have you with us today to celebrate with us.

I'd also like to thank those who are being baptized for sharing their testimonies with us. That was just wonderful. And thank you for doing that and for giving such a powerful witness of the work of Jesus in your life.

Let me pray briefly before we start. Lord, we thank you today for this Easter Sunday. And we pray today that you will rekindle your light in our hearts.

God, you are greater than all other idols that may take place in our life. So please use this special day to remind us of you, our one true Lord and Master.

[1:08] Amen. Well, today on Easter Sunday, 2025, I have one question for us. Why did Jesus rise from the dead?

This morning, I'm not going to get so much into the how, but focus on the why. This passage in Romans does not give us everything, but it does give us something which I think might be helpful for us all, and particularly for our five friends being baptized today.

Matt, Kylie, Kirsten, and Anna, and Mackenzie. This morning, I speak to you as you make this most wise decision today to be baptized.

Congregation, I also speak to those of you who continue to press on in this new life in Christ that has been made alive in you. And I also speak to those of you who are visiting today who perhaps aren't Christian.

Please spare me just 20 minutes of your time, and I hope this gently prods you to think about what Jesus' resurrection could mean for you as well. For my two points, I'm going to suggest two potential responses to this question and work through both of them in the next few minutes.

[2:25] Why did Jesus rise from the dead? Well, first suggestion, did Jesus rise for us to keep on sinning? Or, second suggestion, did Jesus rise for us to live a new life?

Let me start with the first one of those. The Apostle Paul raises a good question, and I'm sure some of you will have asked it. Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase?

No. By no means. And why not?

Well, verse 2 is striking. We are those who have died to sin. How can we live in it any longer?

Friends, allow me to be a bit blunt just for a moment.

If you see a dead animal on the road, it is very much dead. We do not expect it to run away from cars anymore. If a person is dead, it would be unnatural to expect them to get up and start walking again.

[3:49] If sin has died, if Jesus Christ has already killed the power and rule of sin in our lives, we cannot shake it and bring it back to life again.

It's not about continuing in a life of more and more sin so that Jesus' grace is shown more and more. No. If Jesus' resurrection has expelled the power of sin in our lives, then the exact opposite effect ought to take place.

The question we should ask is not, shall we go on sinning? But indeed, how could we keep sinning? And pulling on that string, verses 3 and 4 give us a bit of an idea as to what baptism is.

Friends, I'm aware that some people in the room may be a little bit confused about what baptism is. There's lots more to say about baptism in the Bible than just these verses. But I'd say this is a pretty good starting point.

What are our five friends doing here today? Well, we're using water as a physical sign of a spiritual reality. Let me read verse 3 again.

[5:01] Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We often leave that bit out. Baptism is a sign that connects us to Jesus' death.

Jesus was a real person who lived, and those of us who are baptized with him are identifying ourselves with him in that we are human. We die. Like Jesus, we have died to our former life of sin in this broken world.

But the illustration of baptism does not stop there. Because in verse 4, Friends, we do not believe that there is a decayed body that still remains somewhere in a tomb in the surrounding area of Jerusalem with the inscription Jesus of Nazareth on it.

No, we do not believe that. We are all convinced that he really died. No breath. No heartbeat. And that he really did come back to life again.

And not only that, friends, but we believe that he is still alive. Still living. We believe that Jesus is a real man. That he is an immortal man. He lives seated at the right hand of God the Father in the heavens.

[6:32] We believe that baptism is the physical sign which shows the spiritual reality. That the Christian person has died like Jesus has.

And we have also become like Jesus in his resurrected immortality. Verse 5, 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.

Let me read that again. 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.

So my second point, and I guess the other response we could have, did he rise for us to live a new life? At the front today, we had five people who are demonstrating to all of us that they believe that this is true in their own lives.

Matt, Kylie, Kirsten, Anna, Mackenzie, God wants you to know that you now have been set free from the consequences of sin and death has no grip on you anymore.

[7:41] When you became a Christian, the relational status between you and God changed. It's no longer judge and sinner, but it's master and servant.

Read verse 6 to 7. We knew 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 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

What he means is this. At one time, sin ruled you. At one time, evil desires, however strong or weak they may have been, had shaped your character.

Sin was your master. And sadly, it is still the master of everyone who remains in it without Jesus. However, since we have been crucified with Christ, and notice the past tense, death is not just something still to happen to us, but in a spiritual sense, it already has.

Our old selves have been done away with, and we are now no longer enslaved to sin, but we have been given a new master. This immortal, heavenly realm, it's not just something for the future.

[9:01] Wonderfully in a way, it's actually something for the present. We are set free from the chains of the previous life. Our course of life is no longer ruthlessly directed by our sinful passions and our misplaced idols leading us to death, but we are set free from sin and its eventual consequence of the punishment of death and live in the realm of everlasting life.

I'll read verse 9 to 11. We know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again. Death no longer has mastery over him.

The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. F.F. Bruce, one of the greatest Scottish theologians of the 20th century, commented on these verses saying this, this is no game of let's pretend.

Believers should consider themselves to be what God in fact has made them. Friends, the marvelous thing about the resurrection is that even if we don't always feel that we are particularly free from sin, the truth is that God no longer sees us as sinners, but as his worthy servants.

[10:37] We don't need to pretend that we are Christians. We should just be who we truly are as Christians. We are united to Christ.

We are no longer held culpable for our sins for that reason. And so we should no longer allow temptation to sin and its consequences be the rudder for our lives anymore.

But we should offer ourselves more and more to the service of God. Friends, let me return to my original question. Why did Jesus rise from the dead? Well, perhaps one reason was because Jesus wanted to make a way for helpless folk to find a better purpose for life.

Perhaps he knew that there are people out there who know that sin is an ever-present, inescapable, unshakable thing that has always and will continue to bring them down.

Guys, if Jesus was an historical figure, he remained in a tomb. He would only have been made like us in that we shared death with him. Since he rose from the realm of the dead, we too can say goodbye to the worldly way of living and live with a new purpose for life, a life beyond the scope of this world.

[11:53] It's a life lived to honour the eternal God who has always been and will always be. Not to live life first for success on the earth. Not to live life first for fun in our younger days.

Not to live life first for me and for my comfort. Given all that God has done, given that Jesus was happy to come down and live in our broken world and to be called a sinner and die on sinner's behalf.

Given that Jesus has risen from the dead over his mortal body and now he lives in heaven eternally. We can now share with him in this baptism. This simple, physical sign of a very profound spiritual reality.

This visible sign of a presently invisible substance that we are living as eternal beings on an earth which will pass. That we are living as heavenly beings in an earthly body which will one day slow down and stop working.

Folks, I wonder if you're a bit worn out by the effect that sin has had on your life. The only way for us to experience real, lasting freedom is to wake up to this new life.

[13:08] Resurrected with this man, Jesus. This is why Jesus died and was raised from the dead. Because there is only one way for us to be in a right relationship with the eternal God as his faithful servants and not as his enemies.

In the earthly lives of sin that we live in now, we have not got a hope if we were to stand before the Lord of Lords unless he gives us an entirely new life in the name of Jesus Christ, a Christian.

Friends, if this is true, that we can be seen as servants to God rather than sinners, if we are reborn in the risen Jesus Christ, then this is good news and ought to be responded to appropriately.

Shall we go on sinning then that grace may increase? No. But instead, we shall, verse 12, we shall not let sin reign in our mortal body so that we obey its evil desires.

We shall not offer any part of ourselves to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, offering every part of ourselves to him as an instrument of righteousness.

[14:24] Folks, these are the words of the living God. The response to the amazing grace that that God has shown us in giving us a new lease of life in his resurrected son is not to keep on sinning as if we were controlled by sin, but to offer every part of our living body to the service of the living God.

Our thoughts and actions are no longer controlled by sin, but are more and more going to be controlled by the precious grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. I love the American Bible commentator Douglas Moo.

If I had a pet Highland cow, I think I would call it Douglas Moo. That's beside the point just now. I love one of his closing comments on this passage. We can forget the true holiness of life comes only as the outworking and realisation of the life of Christ in us.

Be who you are. That's what that song we often sing says. I am chosen, not forsaken. You are for me, not against me. I am who you say I am.

Mackenzie, Matt, Kylie, Anna, Kirsten, let's be real here for a moment. When you come up out of the water later on, you may not feel any different to how you felt before.

[15:48] And let me state the obvious. Stopping sinning is not going to happen overnight. You are still going to remain in your mortal body for now and not one of us for as long as we live in that body will ever cease to feel the effects of sin.

The reality is that we're going to keep sinning to some degree. But what once defined you has died inside of you. What once actually directed the course of our lives has actually been removed and now we're walking toward a different goal which is 180 degrees in the other direction.

Friends, live as who God says you are. Not as a dead sinner, but as a new creation. Even though it is wise for us to be aware of the ongoing but hopefully weakening effects of sin in our lives, we must understand that we ought to act in conformity with how God sees us.

Because he does not see us as sinners anymore. That part of us has died to him. So let's not focus on the dead bit, but let's focus on the bit that's alive and well.

I encourage all of us to focus on the positive here because as I hope I've made clear, Jesus did not rise from the dead in order for us to keep on sinning. So let's not talk about how we can sin more just now.

[17:05] He rose that humans could come alive to a completely new meaning for life. So let's think carefully for a moment. But what areas of our new lives are to be offered? to our new master.

Well, I'm going to go ever so slightly rogue here, but later in Romans, God tells us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, that this is our true and proper worship.

So I'm going to encourage us to think about four different body parts that can be offered to God. I would encourage us to use our heads, use our brains to think about the things of God and make some sort of meditation on his word part of our daily routine.

I would encourage us to follow our heart. And I say that because I do believe that God gives us a new heart which convicts us of sin and helps us to follow the law of God naturally through his grace. And so we ought to follow our heart's urges when we feel sympathy for the sick and poor, when we feel convicted that we ought to give more of our time and money to service of his kingdom.

[18:05] When our conscience reveals to us what the right thing to do is, brothers and sisters, we ought to do it. As Christians, sometimes following our heart is just the most sensible thing to do.

How are you going to use your hands? I was so challenged by our visiting speaker a couple of weeks ago, I'm never going to forget that illustration. Are you going to use your hands to scroll and kill your soul?

His words, not mine. Or are you going to offer a helping hand and use those hands to take care of others, to use the skills that God has given us in our life to bring all the glory to him?

And perhaps most importantly, how are you going to use your mouths? Friends, we cannot keep on going in gossip and slander and scoffing, which is all too common in the world around us.

Jesus did not rise again for us to talk about the latest gossip on Snapchat or on the Scottish Sun, because we knew that the words that Jesus spoke when he was on earth were never empty, but were always full of grace and truth.

[19:12] Brothers and sisters, there is a better way to use our tongues. Let's speak the truth in love and not speak falsely with hatred. Let's speak to God in prayer and not walk around begging ourselves up like we're the bee's knees.

Let's season our conversations with goss, and I mean the gospel. not gossip. Being made alive to God means we stand before God as his servant, as his child, as holy before him.

It's a serious thing. It's no small thing, but it's the greatest joy, and it's the greatest source of freedom. If we really are united to Christ in his resurrected life, that means we have already died to our former life of sin.

What is our response ought to be? to keep offering ourselves completely to God as those who have been brought from death to life. As I finish, I want to address those who are maybe on the fence.

Perhaps there is something that our five friends have said at the front today. Perhaps there is something I've said that has shaken you slightly. Perhaps some of the words of the songs that we've sung have spoken to you. Perhaps seeing these baptisms soon will really strike a chord with you.

[20:25] Please do think about everything that you've seen and heard today. Please think, if the resurrection is true, then when the great God of highest heaven comes and visits us at the end of this confusing life, will he see you as one who is alive in sin or alive in Jesus Christ?

Really, I have only said very little this morning and there's much more that could be said. So if you're in the Stirling area, please consider coming back. Come to our Christianity Explored course that we'll be starting very soon.

There's so much more to say about Easter. But friends, I hope that these few things are helpful for us this year. Jesus did not rise from the dead for us to keep on sinning. In fact, he rose from the dead for us to live a new life.

Let me pray. Lord, this is a surprising portion of your word. Please help us to remember that sin is dead.

And so we ought to continue to put it to death. Please direct us and guide us in our new lives made possible only because of your son's resurrection.

[21:42] We thank you for our brother and our four sisters here today being baptized. baptized. Be very close to them just now. Lord, today, in the week ahead, in the months ahead, and in the years ahead.

Lord, we pray that you would go before us and be our guard and our shield as we seek to live every day in honor of your resurrected son. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. D