



Have you ever heard of cheap grace? Many years ago, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book called *The Cost of Discipleship* where he talked about this. He wrote, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

There've been many examples of cheap grace in church history. In the 19th century a Russian monk named Gregory Rasputin taught salvation comes through experiences of sin and repentance. Why? Because those who sin with abandon will have greater joy because they get to experience more forgiveness. Therefore, it's the believer's duty to sin as much as he can. It sounds crazy but how often do we give in to sin or at least take it lightly precisely because we know we can always confess and receive God's forgiveness on the other side?

This kind of thinking was precisely what the apostle Paul was being accused of. I can understand why. In chapters 1-3 Paul argued that all people are sinners without excuse and stand before God guilty and condemned. Then towards the end of chapter 3 and into chapter 4 he showed how Jesus paid for our sins, making it possible for us to be forgiven and declared righteous before God. He used Abraham as the prototype of one made right with God by faith alone, apart from works. Then in chapter 5 he exploded with joy over all the benefits we possess through grace alone: peace with God, the hope of glory, God's love shed abroad in our hearts through His Spirit, and assurance of our salvation. He also showed how sin and death entered the world through Adam, but Jesus more than made up for the damage he did. He even said in 5:20, "*where sin increased, grace increased all the more.*"

With that in mind you can see why someone might say, "Well, Paul, grace is a good thing, right? If sin makes grace increase all the more, why not sin more? And if our good deeds are worthless to earn salvation, why be good at all?" Don't forget up to this point Paul has said nothing about how to live the Christian life, how to grow, what discipleship or even obedience to God means. So, maybe it doesn't matter.

It's this issue Paul deals with in Romans 6. Look how he starts out in verse 1,

### What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

His answer comes without hesitation: "By no means!" There's no room for the idea that God's grace encourages sin. The rest of the chapter goes on and explains why. Why does the gospel of grace **not** encourage sin but actually allow for a life that's empowered over sin? And not only does he explain **why**, but he explains **how**. How can we live the kind of life that's growing and advancing in genuine Christlikeness? What this text says about this can be summed up in three words: know, reckon and offer.

### Know: You've Died and Been Raised with Christ

#### Dead to sin

In verses 2-10 the key word is **know**. Three times in these verses that word is used. Before we try to **do** anything, there's something we need to **know**. Specifically, we need to know who we are. Paul makes a statement in v. 2 that's true for all believers:

#### We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

Do you know that about yourself? When confronted with sin, do you say to yourself, "I'm dead to that"? When you're confronted with lust or greed or jealousy or resentment, do you say, "I'm dead to that"?

You're probably thinking, "That sounds great, but what does that mean? I don't feel dead to sin. Someone who's dead is totally unresponsive. If I'm dead to sin wouldn't that mean I'm totally unresponsive to it? In fact, I find myself very responsive to it." But that's not what Paul means. First, that's not consistent with our experience. In case you haven't noticed, we all struggle with sin! Not only that, later he'll talk about how to deal with what he calls our "evil desires." If we were totally unresponsive to sin we wouldn't have evil desires! So Paul doesn't mean we no longer desire to sin or that temptation has no influence over us. What he means is sin no longer rules us. Apart from Christ, we were slaves to sin. But in Christ the power of sin to rule us has been broken. Not only are we free from the condemnation it brings, but we're free from its power to dominate us as well. Why? Because we died to it.

When I was in high school I had a legendary football coach who defined old school. He was a strict disciplinarian and perfectionist that instilled fear into his players. I was his quarterback and he was particularly hard on me. I never felt like I could please

him and I often had nightmares about messing up and incurring his wrath. But I didn't realize how dominant this man had become in my life until I played my last game for him. Walking off the field, it was like I'd been set free. And when I went on the play in college I had a new coach and new obligation to him. My old coach had no power over me. Now, I hadn't died, but as far as his domination of my life was concerned, it was over. I was dead to him. And that's the sense in which we died to sin and its power to dominate us. Does that mean I never sin? Of course not. It means I no longer "live in it." It's no longer the main tenor of my life. I may sin, but it repulses me and grieves me. I may sin, but I can't remain in it permanently.

### United with Christ

This is such an important concept Paul unpacks it for us in the next few verses. He wants to explain **how** we died to sin and what difference that makes in our lives. Look what he says next.

**Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.**

**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 (verses 3–5).**

This is talking about our union with Christ in both death and resurrection. We talk about how Jesus died **for** us, but did you know you died **with** him? So when Jesus died on the cross, you died. And when he was raised, you were raised. Baptism symbolizes this. When you put your faith in Christ you get baptized. It's like you go under the water and die, and then you come out raised to new life. The water itself doesn't do it, but it symbolizes the spiritual reality of dying with Christ and being raised up with him to live a new life. You can't have one without the other. You can't die with Christ and not be raised with Christ. That's why we can't continue in sin!

### Crucified with Christ

Paul wants to make sure we get this so he expands even more on the meaning of dying and living with Christ. Verses 6–7 focus on the dying part.

**For we know 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.**

The old self is who you were apart from Christ. It's the old you. It's you B.C. It's your pre-conversion self; the unregenerate you who lived under the rule of sin. That person no longer exists. That person was crucified with Christ. And the result is the "body ruled by sin" is done away with. A better translation of that is it's

been "rendered ineffective" or "made powerless." Sin expresses itself through our bodies; it reigns in us by getting our bodies to obey its dictates, but since we died, we're free from it. So we no longer have to be controlled by it.

### Raised up with Christ

Then Paul expands more on the idea of being raised up with Christ in verses 8–10:

**Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For 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.**

Notice how he says once again, "For we know..." Again, we have to know who we are. And if we know **we** died when Jesus died, then we know we'll also live with him—both now and in heaven. How do we know that? Because Jesus was raised to life and he can't die again. Death has no power over him. He conquered it. And when he died, he died to sin once for all. That means for you and me. So what's true of him is true of us. The life he lives he lives to God or **for** God, and so do we. Being raised up with him we can no longer live for sin; we live for God.

It's kind of like a marriage. Marriage changes everything in a person's life. A single man gets married and he behaves differently. He acts in a way that's consistent with his new status. It's like the old is gone. He doesn't date or flirt with other women. A good marriage, where love is shared, not only demands different behavior, but it inspires it.

Why can't we continue to live in sin? Because of who we are. We died to sin and have been raised with Christ to new life. How can we live the kind of life that's growing and advancing in genuine Christlikeness? First, **know** who you are.

### Reckon: You are Dead to Sin and Alive to God

The second word is **reckon**. Look what Paul says in what's the first real command in the passage.

**In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11).**

The word "count" means to reckon. I like that better. Reckon means to press your mind down on something. Press your mind down on the reality that you're dead to sin. Whatever sin you struggle with—self-pity, lack of self control, jealousy, envy, greed, lust—reckon yourself dead to that.

You might wonder, why should I reckon myself to be something I already am? The answer is being dead to sin is kind of like a legal right to do something. Though it might be there, it doesn't really matter unless you reckon it to be there. For example, as a result of the Civil War slavery was abolished in the United States. Those who'd been slaves were free. But many slaves found it

hard to adjust to their new status. They heard they were set free, but didn't reckon themselves as free. So when they saw their old master coming near them, they'd tremble, wondering what he might do to them. In the same way, you can live like a slave to sin even after you've been set free from it. So you need to reckon on the fact that, regardless of what you feel like, you're no longer under the power of sin. You've been set free. When I fall into sin, it's simply because I don't reckon on who I am.

By the way, this works both ways. If you haven't been united with Christ in death and resurrection, you **will** still live in sin whether you know it or not! If you're a slave, no matter how hard you try to change you can't be free unless someone else comes along and frees you. You can dress different, but you're still a slave. You can talk different, but you're still a slave. You can join Slaves Anonymous, but you're still a slave. Something needs to happen. Either you need to die and come back to life or someone must pay for your freedom. That's what Jesus did. He paid for it, but you have to trust him as your Savior to experience that.

### **Offer: Yourself to God Rather than Sin**

The third word is **offer**. This is laid out in verses 12–13.

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 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.**

Finally, Paul is talking about how we live our lives: the choices we make. Our union with Christ demands we take responsibility. As someone has put it, the indicative (what we are) always comes first, but that always leads to the imperative (what we must do). Some believers only want to hear about the imperative—what we must do. It's like they want to by-pass the indicative—what we are. I know others who only want to hear about the indicative—who we are—and never want to get down to the reality we must **do** something; we must make choices.

Notice again it's assumed we're going to struggle with sin. Why else would he command us not to let sin reign in our mortal body? That wouldn't make sense if it weren't possible. Part of the reason we struggle with sin is as long as we're here on earth we'll have bodies. Bodies aren't bad in and of themselves. Jesus had a body and he didn't sin. But our bodies are the place where sin seeks to control and rule us. As long as we're in our earthly bodies we'll have to deal with the "evil desires" he talks about. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "**I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**" If we don't have that attitude, our bodies will rule us.

Notice also there's a positive and negative aspect to the choices we make. There's a **do not** and a **do**. Do not let sin reign in your

body or obey its lusts. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin. That's all negative. But, on the positive side he tells us what to do. Offer yourself to God! Offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

Use your feet for him. Romans 10:15 says, "**How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!**"

Use your mouth for him. Ephesians 4:29 says, "**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.**"

Use your hands for him. Paul writes, "**Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need**" (Ephesians 4:28).

Use your mind for him: "**Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things**" (Philippians 4:8).

Finally, use your eyes for him. The psalmist prayed, "**Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law**" (Psalm 119:18).

So even though we're dead to sin we have to make choices. And it's hard. It's a battle. Martin Lloyd Jones wrote: "Where you and I need to go to grow in holiness isn't a hospital, but a barracks, a military center. The church today is too much like a hospital. We go around feeling our own pulses, feeling miserable, talking about our weaknesses. And we say, 'What I need is a doctor; I need to go to the hospital to be made whole.' But, that's not what we need. There's a place for this, we come to Jesus not because we're well but sick. But it's not the sum total of what we need. We need a sergeant major doing what Paul does here. Commanding us to get out of bed, stand on your feet, realize who you are in Christ, a soldier enlisted in his army, and then to go out and fight. Many of us have taken this idea of our weakness to an extreme and made it an excuse for doing nothing. We quote such verses as 'Without him I can do nothing' but we avoid such verses as 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' We'll remain children who won't make our spiritual beds, and clean our spiritual rooms."

This is a lifelong process for all of us. Often it feels like two steps forward and one step back. At times you'll feel like you've taken three steps back. Something the Lord has been working on in my life is my struggle with becoming frustrated and even panicking when things don't go according to my little plan. The Lord has been working on me in this area, but recently I fell flat on my face. All of us have to manage extra expenses around Christmas and I was trying real hard to be careful and plan and manage our accounts and not overspend. One night I looked at our checking accounts before the 8:00 pm deadline and everything looked fine, but then I woke up the next morning and checked

my account and saw an overdraft charge of \$34. I was livid! I thought, I'm going to call my bank and get that charge reversed. That was a bad decision. Have you ever tried to call a bank? I dialed the number and was given a bunch of different options, none of which was to contest an overdraft charge. I just wanted to talk to a real person, not a robot. I tried to explain to the robot why I was calling, but it didn't work. I was getting more and more frustrated because I budgeted ten minutes for this, not a week.

Finally, someone picked up and asked, "Can I have your name please?" I gave her my name and then she asked me how I was doing today, and I said I was fine, which was a lie. She then asked how the weather was out there in California. I wasn't trying to make a new friend here; I wanted to talk about my bank account. Finally I told her about the late charge and she said there wasn't anything they could do about it. It turns out we'd written a check I failed to record. The 8:00 pm deadline only applies to debit card charges and not checks. So technically she was right but I kept on fighting it because that \$34 wasn't in my little plan. I asked to talk to her manager and went on to tell him what a great customer I've been for decades and he really wouldn't want to lose my business. Losing me would put a major dent in their profit margin. I was so frustrated. I finally hung up.

My wife was watching the whole thing. She had that look on her face like, really? So there I was, knowing I'd slipped back into an old pattern. You see, one of the things God is teaching me is not to sweat the small stuff. There are bigger things in life than a \$34 late charge. So I finally just gave it up, confessed my sin and remembered I'm dead to that. Sometimes when we fail like I did, the enemy will say things to you like, "You haven't changed. You're the same as always." But I can talk back to him. In fact, I can trash talk: "Get out of here. You're a loser. I have changed. In fact, I'm dead to that!"

### **We are under grace and not under law**

One of the things we have to keep coming back to in all of this is we're not under law but under grace. That's what Paul says next in verse 14,

### **For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.**

He says "Sin shall no longer be your master." That's like a promise. Sin **shall** no longer be your master! Why? "because you're not under the law, but under grace." Why does that make all the difference? Because, as we battle sin, knowing we're under grace and not under law helps us deal with sin's power. The law system keeps us under condemnation, which in turn causes us to seek our identity and sense of worth in other things besides God, like keeping a perfect bank account. But knowing we're under grace, that we're completely loved and righteous in his sight because of what Jesus did for us, saps our motives and desire for sin. The result is sin no longer masters us.

Three words to remember: Know, reckon, offer. First, know who you are. You're dead to sin and alive to God. Second, reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God. Third, offer every part of yourself to God. Serve him rather than sin.

It's like this: Imagine you're a big, beautiful oak tree in a meadow, planted about 30 years ago. Imagine a vine has grown up around the trunk and branches. The vine is everywhere, and it represents sin. When you came to Christ, it's like God the Father took an axe and chopped the base of the vine. The vine is dead; the sin in your life is dead. It no longer has power. It can't control you like it did, but you have to spend the rest of your life ripping all the vines out of the tree with the strength God gives you through his Spirit. As you do that, remember you're under grace and not law. Some of you might be thinking, I've always had these vines. That's the way I am; that's why Christ forgave me. But Jesus didn't just want to forgive you; he wants to change you. The power of sin is broken, but you have to choose not to offer yourself to sin.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

© 2016 Central Peninsula Church, Foster City, CA  
Catalog No. 1418-13