

# The Reign of Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] This is God's Word. Please do keep that passage open in front of you if you can. But let us pray once more before we come to it. Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for your Word.

We thank you for these wonderful words in Romans. And we pray now, Lord, that you would help us to understand them, to see the glory of your work in Christ and what it means for our lives. May you shape us evermore into his likeness, that we might live to your praise and glory. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Christ has risen.

That is the wonderful truth we remember today, is it not? Christ has risen indeed. I wonder how much that has changed the way you have gone about your day.

Or your past week. Does it change the way you live now? Maybe it changes what we speak to people about. We have good news to share, don't we?

[ 1 : 22 ] And that is a wonderful thing. But this evening, I hope we're going to see why the death and resurrection of Christ should change everything about the way we live.

Because it is, isn't it, an event in history that changes absolutely everything. When Jesus died and rose again on Easter Sunday some 2,000 years ago, in his death, he bore the judgments we deserve.

And as we were hearing this morning, by his resurrection, he brought us hope of life everlasting. That is the heart of the message of Christianity, isn't it?

We are sinners who have done what is wrong. We have not obeyed God's good commands as we ought to. We have not loved one another as we should have.

We have been prideful, selfish, deceitful, greedy, lustful, angry. But the wonderful message of the cross, the wonderful message of Christianity is that we who have messed up everything find forgiveness for everything at the foot of the cross and hope forever at the empty tomb.

[ 2 : 44 ] If you're here this evening and you are not a Christian, maybe you've never been amongst a church before, that is the message you need to hear.

And Jesus is the person you need to put your faith and hope in. That is the heart of the gospel. Forgiveness for everything at the foot of the cross, hope forever at his empty tomb.

When we put our faith and trust in him. For this evening, I just want to take one very kind of small half step from the epicenter of the gospel.

Because the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything, everywhere. The death and resurrection of Jesus paid for our sins in the past.

It gives us hope for the future. But I just want to spend a little bit of time during this evening is considering what the death and resurrection of Jesus means for us now.

[ 3 : 55 ] How we live in the present. And we're going to do that by considering these amazing words of Paul we just read a minute or two ago in the book of Romans.

In the five chapters before the one we read, Paul has basically been explaining the gospel much better than I have for the last few minutes.

He's done a much better job of it, but he did take a lot longer as well. But what he has done is presented to us the beautiful gospel that we who are all sinners deserving of God's wrath are justified.

Made right by our faith in Christ who gave up his life for us. But now here in chapter 6, Paul considers for a moment what the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ changes about the way we live out our lives now.

So we're going to unpack what impact Easter has on the life we live today by just going through these verses kind of slowly together.

[ 5 : 07 ] I say kind of slowly because these are incredibly rich verses that wade really into the deep ends of theology. And we don't have time to plumb their full depth, but we do have time to at least peer in and see the gold glimmering.

But before we get into our two points this evening, we first need to lay the necessary foundation that Paul is speaking from. And we can do that by just quickly scanning through these verses and seeing what holds them all together.

So just if you've got a Bible in front of you, please just follow through with me. Starting in verse 3. See if you can join the dots here. Verse 3.

Don't you know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Carrying on to verse 4.

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death. Down to 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.

[ 6 : 27 ] Verse 8. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

Verse 11. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Did you get it? I didn't try and hide it. Those who have faith in Christ are united to Christ.

Those who have faith in Christ are united to him. I wonder how you would describe your status as a believer in Jesus.

Maybe imagine you were describing it to someone else, maybe even another believer. Most of us, myself included, would default to the words Christian.

[ 7 : 38 ] That's the way we normally speak of ourselves, isn't it? Maybe some of us would say I'm a born-again believer or I'm a disciple or follower of Jesus.

None of those are wrong. Okay? Let me emphasize that. But they appear relatively sporadically through the New Testament. The word Christian, least of all, actually, by some distance.

If you want to describe someone who has put their faith in Jesus, the New Testament will far more often than not speak of that person, not as a Christian, not as a born-again believer, but as someone who is in Christ.

This is no kind of like secondary issue that only people with a particular keenness on theology should be concerned about. It is what it means to be a Christian.

Let me just explain for a couple of minutes. It's only a tiny fraction of what we could say. Let me just explain very briefly what it means for us to be united to Christ.

[ 8 : 55 ] Because all that we speak of as Christians, everything we talk about, everything we enjoy in terms of our justification, our adoption, our sanctification, our glorification, all of it is grounded in our union with Jesus Christ.

And so the more we understand what that means, the better we will understand every other aspect of our life as believers.

So here's just kind of three ways that smart people helpfully talk about our union with Christ. I'm going to try and give each part kind of a one-sentence summary.

Do your best to hang on. These are heavy, kind of weighty topics we're dealing with, but they are well worthwhile trying to grasp onto.

And please do come and ask me afterwards if you want any clarification. Here we go. Three ways. We are united to Christ legally, organically, and mystically.

[ 10 : 01 ] Our union with Christ is a legal union. It is an organic union, and it is a mystical union.

So it's worth holding onto here, okay? Each of those three things in a sentence or two. We are legally united to Christ. That means everything, everything that belongs to Jesus now belongs to us too.

Everything that is Christ's is now ours. So God now looks on us and sees not our pitiful attempts at righteousness, but Christ's righteousness.

God looks at us and sees not wandering sheep who have strayed from him, but his sons and daughters.

He sees his righteous children because we are united to Christ. And so what is Christ's is ours, and we are heirs to all things with him.

[ 11 : 24 ] But our union is not just one that is recorded on paper somewhere. It is legal, but it is also organic. What on earth does that mean? Jesus says in John 15, I am the vine.

I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

Here's what I think this glorious reality reminds us of. We don't just try and copy Jesus as Christians. We abide in him, and he abides in us.

Here's how one theologian puts it. Believers bear fruit that is not the result of their imitation of Christ's life, but of their being incorporated into Christ himself.

[ 12 : 33 ] He is not just our outward example. He is our living head. As Christians, we do not only live to follow Christ, we live in Christ.

That is how the New Testament almost always speaks of what it means to be a Christian. Not just for Christ, but in Christ, with Christ.

When we put our faith in Jesus, he comes and dwells in us, and we in him, by his Spirit. Now, when we wade towards these kind of glorious depths of God's Word, we sometimes begin to find ourselves failed, don't we, by the capacity of human words and concepts.

And so we must confess that this union is also mystical, isn't it? Another quote from a different theologian called A.H. Hodge.

He says, Our union with Christ so far transcends all the analogies of earthly relationships. In the intimacy of its communion, in the transforming power of its influence, and in the excellence of its consequence, that we can only call it mystical.

[ 14 : 01 ] Let me just read that again, maybe breaking it down a little bit for us. Our union with Christ so far transcends all the analogies of earthly relationships. There is nothing else like it.

In the intimacy of its communion, there is no closer relationship that you know in this world than the one you have with Jesus Christ, even if you don't feel it, or feel like you're experiencing it.

In the transforming power of its influence, it is a life-changing union. And in the excellence of its consequences, it is a union which comes with incomparable benefits.

That is why we can only call it mystical. We cannot put words on its beauty and its glory. It is above and beyond every other relationship we have ever known.

But do not think our inability to explain it perfectly with words makes it any less real. To be a Christian means we are united through Christ.

[ 15 : 14 ] And Christ is united to us. So let us come now, eventually, to Romans 6. We spent a while thinking about that, okay, because Paul is working from the assumption here that we understand our union with Christ.

But now from that understanding, Paul says, and we're going to track this through the chapter in a moment or two, Paul says, if we are united to Christ, that means we are united to Him in His death and in His resurrection.

Those are the two truths that Paul wants to remind us of, wants us to dwell on, wants us to know so that we would live in the present as God has saved us to.

So first of all, we see that because we are united to Christ, we die with Him and so die to sin.

That's our first point this evening. I should say the points are short because I recognize the introduction was very long. Don't panic too much. In dying with Christ, we become dead to sin.

[ 16 : 37 ] Look at verse 3 there with me. Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Verse 6, For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with.

The death of Jesus does not just cover the cost of our sins. It also destroys sin.

And if we are united to Christ by faith, if He has destroyed the reign of sin, then the reign of sin is destroyed in our life too, isn't it?

Because we are so closely united that there is no relationship like it. He did not just pay our debt. He shattered sin's hold over us.

[ 17 : 42 ] This is a momentous thing. Okay? We think we can't resist sin. Know this. We are not on our own.

We are not left alone with only a good example to follow who will forgive us if we fail. We are in Christ.

He is our head and with Him as our head we have died to sin with Him. Its reign is destroyed in the life of every believer. It might still tempt you daily but it holds no power over you.

If you have faith in Christ you are abiding in Christ and if you are abiding in Christ sin has been destroyed. It cannot hold you. And you in Christ now have power to rule over it.

To reject its whole advance and stand as a righteous redeemed child of God part of Christ's body on earth. who not only covered sin's consequences but conquered its power over you.

[ 19 : 01 ] The old self died with Christ as surely as Christ himself did. If you believe Christ died on Good Friday and you have put your faith in Him as the Son of God come to save you then as surely as He died so did the old you reigned over by sin die with Him.

That person is gone. But as surely also as the old has gone so has the new come.

Because not only did we die with Christ and so are dead to sin but as Christ was raised that Easter Sunday two millennia ago so we are raised with Him to an everlasting life of righteousness.

righteousness. And that life starts now or it started the moment you put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now is the moment you can start living to glorify and honor Him with all that you are. Brothers and sisters we do not have to wait until the new creation before we live to the glory of God.

[ 20 : 26 ] We are united to Christ now we have been raised in Him now. Yes there is a new resurrection body to look forward to and we should look forward to it but what Paul is saying in these verses is that we do not have to wait until that day to live for God in Christ.

Just look at verse 8 and 9 there. 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.

That is the resurrection we are resurrected with. That is the Christ we are united to the one who was raised from the dead and cannot die again. Death has no 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 Paul says in the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Here is where I think we might sort of miss the mark on this sometimes and I say this because it is certainly where my own thinking has been and has wondered before and I know I am not alone in it.

[ 21 : 53 ] We think sin kind of reigns in our lives like it is maybe just a bit weaker than it used to be and then and then some point in the future when we die and rise again then it will be defeated completely.

but Paul is saying you have died and you have risen again. That has already happened for the believer in Christ Jesus.

You do know brothers and sisters there is there is a very real chance you will never die because you have already died and risen in Christ and one day soon perhaps before any of us die a physical death.

he will return to gather up his people and he is not going to put them through death again in order to purify them because he has already done it.

If you think we have no choice but to sin if we think there are even moments like that what we are saying is either that Christ's death and resurrection did not really defeat sin not yet anyway or we are saying we are not really with him and neither of those are good places to be.

[ 23 : 17 ] The resurrection to a body that lives for holiness and righteousness in God's people has already happened. Holy living can and should and must start now because you you sitting here in Bonacord this evening if your faith is in Christ you are already united to him.

There is a glorious new creation to look forward to. There is a resurrection body that will be free from the mortality of this world and will live in a place where we are not even tempted by sin but we do not have to wait until that day to be united to our saviour by his spirit through faith and because that is true of us now we can as Jesus does live to God the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are united to is life changing for how we live right now because sin's hold has been shattered and grace is what now reigns in us.

Just read those verses just at the end of chapter five again. Verse 21 just as sin reigned in death so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Again in verse 14 of chapter six sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law but under grace. We live now not under the reign of sin but under the reign of grace and so Paul says verse 12 therefore therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body.

Hear those words carefully therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body. What we learn there in part isn't it is that we can and will still sin.

[ 25 : 38 ] What Paul is not saying is we will never sin again. sin. What he is saying is we are never compelled to sin again. We will sin so long as we allow sin to reign but those chains have been broken.

That is what Paul said don't let that happen because you have died and been raised with Christ. We can and should cast off sin's reign from us and so Paul carries on do not obey its evil desires. You know in Christ having died to sin and being raised alive to God can resist sin's advances. 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 yourselves to him as an instrument of righteousness.

The death and resurrection of Christ changes our lives now because it changes our master now. No longer sin but grace.

And so what do we do? Well we do just that don't we put to death what is sinful in us.

[ 27 : 12 ] Put to death in your life hatred because you have died with Christ and so have died to sin.

Put to death in your life sexual immorality because you have died with Christ and so have died to sin. put to death in your life selfish ambition because you have died with Christ and so have died to sin.

Put to death in your life impurity and idolatry and jealousy and envy and hatred and drunkenness and division. Put them all to death because you have died with Christ and so have died to sin.

but instead we go and live under the reign of grace. Put on then as God's chosen people holy and beloved put on compassion for your brothers and sisters in Christ because you have been raised with God with Christ and are alive to God.

clothe yourself with love and kindness because you have been raised with Christ and can live under grace.

[ 28 : 40 ] Grow in joy and peace and patience above all else love because in Christ you are to live for righteousness not to earn anything from God but because that is who you now are.

Paul wants us to change the way we live not under the reign of sin but under the reign of grace and he assumes we will do so as long as we know two things.

Verse 6 we know that our old self was crucified and verse 9 we know that Christ was raised from the dead.

we know that Christ died and we know that Christ rose again. So verse 11 if that is true of Jesus then that is true of you and you must also consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

us. It is wonderful to spend this weekend focusing on the death and resurrection of our Savior but if there is one thing Paul is sure of it's that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ should not be on our minds just one weekend in the year but every moment of every day because it was the most momentous event in all of history that will continue to change the way people live even this very day.

[ 30 : 32 ] Let us pray as we close together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father we thank you and praise you that we come before you in Christ.

We thank you that Christ gave himself to die once and for all for all sins and to destroy sin's reign over us.

And so we pray as those in Christ that we would live in that reality knowing that sin has no lasting power over us.

And we thank you and praise you that Jesus rose from the grave to life everlasting and that he can and does and always will live to God in all righteousness and so we pray that as those in Christ we would live to God in all righteousness.

Help us now to live out this wonderful calling by knowing and remembering each and every day that Christ our Savior died and rose again and so do we in him.

[ 32 : 02 ] In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.