

# Gamma

## Romans 6a

### Study 10 Union with Christ

#### Case 1

Lim Eng Hock had just attended an Alpha class at the the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baptist Church and had just heard about salvation by grace based on the work of Christ on the cross. He was absolutely incredulous exclaiming “ What, you mean I don’t have to work at it and Christ just gives me the righteousness for free?? In that case, if it doesn’t depend on what I do but on what Christ has done then I can do as I like after all salvation is free by unmerited favour right? His Bible study leader corrected him “ You cannot just live or sin as you like” But you said salvation did not depend on my own works of righteousness? How can it be free and not free now that you are saying I must live a righteous life?

1. How do you explain to Eng Hock based on Romans 6 that he cannot just simply sin continually secure in the salvation that Christ already has given

The gospel of “received righteousness” (as opposed to “earned righteousness”) is radical — it says our moral efforts cannot contribute one bit to our salvation. This message is unique and unparalleled among world religions and philosophies. Paul knows from lots of experience that a question immediately comes up in any discussion of this gospel; if our good deeds are “worthless” for earning our salvation, why be good at all? If the gospel says: “You are saved by grace, not by a good life,” won’t that message leave the recipient morally unchanged? In sum: Paul is asking, **“Does the gospel message lead you to change the sinful patterns in your life? And if it does so, how does it do so? Won’t the message just encourage us to keep on sinning, so grace will keep on covering?”**

In one sense, Paul’s answer to this question is not a detour or a digression. In the critics objection to justification there is embedded a fundamental understanding of the doctrine. Paul’s essential answer is, “You can only say a thing like that if you do not understand the teaching. If you understood the teaching of the gospel, you would not draw deductions like that.” It leads him

to simply re-apply and explain the doctrine of justification and of our union with Christ (5:12-21).

Yet in another sense, this does introduce a new section. It leads Paul to discuss how the gospel *does* lead to a holy and changed life. In other words, chapters 1-5 explained what God has accomplished for us in the gospel, but chapters 6-8 tell us what God will accomplish *in* us through the gospel. These chapters tell us how to “experience” the gospel. They tell us **how the gospel is dynamite that produces deep and massive changes in our actual character and behavior.**

his phrase is crucial to the whole chapter, for Paul re-states it repeatedly.

A. Typical inadequate answers:

- A. “Died to sin” **means we no longer want to sin**; sin has no more power or influence over us. But if this were the true meaning, Paul would not have had to write 6:12-14. If a Christian doesn’t want to sin, why urge him/her not to? Also, 7:18 shows that a Christian still has lots of sinful desires.
- B. “Died to sin” **means we no longer ought to sin**; sin is now inappropriate to the Christian. But as the first interpretation goes too far, this one doesn’t go far enough. Paul says boldly *we died* not *we ought to die*.
- C. “Died to sin” **means we are slowly moving away from sin**; sin is weakening in us. But the term “dead” that Paul uses surely means something stronger than that. Besides, the Greek tense used on this verb is the aorist tense. That refers to a single, past, once-and-done action. Paul is not referring to a continual process.
- D. “Died to sin” means **we have renounced sin**; at some moment (such as our baptism) we disavowed sinful behavior. This is unlikely, because vv.3-5 explain that this “death” is the result of our union with Christ. It is the result of something done *to* us, not something we have done.
- E. “Died to sin” means **we are no longer guilty of sin**; that our sins cannot condemn us, for they are pardoned in Christ. That is true, but that probably is not the meaning here. The question before Paul is: “If guilt for your sin is totally gone, what incentive does anyone have for *living* without sin?” So Paul is trying to explain how the gospel effects the way we live.

Answer: the moment you become a Christian, you are no longer under the “reign” or “ruling power” of sin. Explanation:

This is the same as saying (6:14) that sin does not have the “mastery” over us

because we are “under grace!” This is the same as saying (6:12) that we no longer have to obey

sin, and thus it no longer reigns. “Let not sin reign...that you obey its evil desires.” Paul has just said in 5:21 that, “Sin reigned... so also grace might reign.” In other words, sin still has power, but it no longer can force its dictates on you. In 1:18-32 Paul says that outside of Christ we are “given up” to our sinful desires. Previously, those sinful desires so reigned and ruled over us that we could not see them as sinful, and thus we could not resist them. We were completely under their control. Now however, sin no longer can domineer us. We have the ability now to resist and rebel against their dictates.

**2. Eng Hock then tells of his manager who attends church regularly and is even a deacon in the church. “ He has a bad temper and is curt and too direct with the staff making everyone unhappy” He is also incompetent and always hides his mistakes or blames everyone else ..he basically a spineless weasel” Are you telling me that a Christian is someone like him? How can I respect him and the faith he represents? How do you answer Eng Hock?**

First of all , we cannot tell for sure whether someone is a Christian or not just based upon his profession of faith or his attendance at church or his Christian heritage. Hence we don’t know if his boss is really a Christian.

Lets assume he is one then look at verse 2 and compare with Col.1:13 – “He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.” Acts 26:18 – “...to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.”

This does not mean that sin is no longer within his boss, or that it has no more influence and power within him. It does. But sin no longer can *dictate* to him and this applies to all of us Christians

.Verse 7 says, “Anyone who has died has been freed from sin.” It means that, though you *may* obey it, and though (the Bible predicts) you *will* obey it, the fact remains that you no longer *have* to obey it. Your boss have the freedom to obey sin or not if he is a Christian whereas a Non Christian has no such freedom.

“ — the moment we become Christians we are dead, completely dead, to the *reign* of sin. We are out of sin’s territory altogether...

As to Eng Hocks objections over his boss ‘How can you possibly say such a

thing? We still sin, we still feel the power of temptation and the power of sin; how therefore can you say honestly that you are dead to the rule and to the reign and to the whole dominion of sin?

We must differentiate between what is true of our position as a fact and our experience... what he says is that every person in the world at this minute is either under the reign and rule of sin or else under the reign and rule of grace... It is either one or the other, he cannot have a foot in each position... [Why?] He is either 'in Adam' or 'in Christ'."

■ D.M. Lloyd-Jones

Hence a person who is under the rule of grace will display signs of change in his life, signs of a struggle to reject sin, of sadness and regret over sin and its effects and an earnest desire to please God. This will be apparent over time Eng Hock must not be too quick to judge.

## Case 2

**Ricky Yeung was a Buddhist for many years and had lived a very pure and disciplined life and when he came to faith in Jesus he did not find living a righteous life difficult at all. He said "I just have to focus and to deny my self and my desires and try my hardest to focus on abstinence"**

**1. Look at Romans 6: 3-10 and hear what Paul has to say about the secret of living a righteous life is it based on discipline as Ricky applied or is it based on who I am and what Christ has done for me ?**

All through this passage, Paul repeatedly says, "For we *know*" or "now... we believe" (vv.3,6,8,9). This shows that any Christian who continues to sin or falls back into sin has failed to "know" or think out the implications of what has happened to him/her in Christ. How can we use this approach on our sin? (This is not stoicism — "just say NO!") Paul is showing us here that sinning comes from a lack of understanding and rehearsing our position and a lack of reflection and rejoicing. We could think like this:

**A. We are bought with Christ's blood**, and if we remember that, we will not treat ourselves as if we belong to ourselves. We owe Jesus Christ our lives and salvation, and we cannot live in disregard to his will.

**B. We have been delivered out of the "dominion" of sin.** This means the Spirit of God is within us and though sin may seem too powerful to resist, that

is not the case. We are children of God, and we can exercise our authority over our sinful desires.

**C. We were saved by Christ specifically so we would not sin.** Titus 2:14 says, “Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” Now if all the suffering and torture of Jesus was for that reason, any Christian who gives in to sin is forgetting that. We should ask ourselves, “Will I defile the heart Christ died to wash? Will I trample on the very purpose of his pain and will I thwart the very goal of his suffering?”

Paul seems to be saying that if you can see and think about these things and still sin, it shows that you don’t understand the gospel, that your “old self” was never crucified, that you are still thinking and looking at life the old way!

So we see that the gospel gives us a *new* and *different* incentive for godly living than we had when we were under the law as a system for salvation. When we were using the law to save ourselves, our motive for being obedient was fear and self-confidence. Now, however, we know that Jesus died for us so that we wouldn’t sin. When we realize the design of the death of Christ as we think of it in gratitude, we find a new incentive to be holy! (6:13 – “But yield yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.”)

**2. How do we apply this in our own lives can you share with the group how each of you deals with this struggle with sin in your life? Share the breakthroughs and set back you each experience and learn to pray and support each other in this.**

**Exegetical question**

**Romans 6:11-14.a Why MUST we “count ourselves dead” if we already are?**

**b)How does being “not under the law” help us break the power of sin in our lives?**

Being “dead to sin” or “no longer under the dominion of sin,” is like a privilege or a legal right. Though it may be true or in force, a person may not realize or utilize the privilege. One example: you may have a trust fund put into your name, but unless you draw on it, it won’t change your actual financial condition. The trust fund *should* mean the end of your financial troubles, but it won’t have that effect unless it is used. Thus, we *must* “count ourselves” dead to sin, because unless we act on this great privilege, it will not automatically be realized in our experience. We have to appropriate it.

Here is a vital illustration that depicts our condition:

There is all the difference in the world between being in a given position and realizing you are in that position... Take the case of those poor slaves in the United States of America about a hundred years ago. There they were in a condition of slavery. Then the Civil War came, and as the result of that war, slavery was abolished in the United States. But what had actually happened? All slaves, young and old, were given their freedom, but many of the older ones who had endured long years of servitude found it very difficult to understand their new status. They heard the announcement that slavery was abolished and that they were free: but hundreds, not to say thousands, of times in their after-lives and experiences many of them did not realize it, and when they saw their old master coming near them they began to quake and tremble, and to wonder whether they were going to be sold... You can still be a slave experientially, even when you are no longer a slave legally... **Whatever you may feel, whatever your experience may be, God tells us here, through his Word, that if we are in Christ we are no longer in Adam, we are no longer under the reign and rule of sin... And if I fall into sin, as I do, it is simply because I do not realize who I am... Realize it! Reckon it!**

– D.M. Lloyd-Jones

b) This is something we will deal with more next week. But here’s a start. Verse 14 shows us that to be “under sin” is the same as being “under law” (cf. 5:20-21 with 6:14). Verse 14 tells us that it is our freedom from the law as a salvation-system that makes us free from the mastery of sin over us. (“Sin *shall* not have mastery over you, for you are not under law...” ) Why? It is only as we break away from works- righteousness that the power of sin is really broken.

We are righteous in God’s sight and if we remember this, the *motives* for our sin will be undermined. Individual sinful acts have sinful motivations. When we ask *why* we are moved to particular sins, we discover that our sins come because we still seek to find our “justification” (our identity, our sense of

worthiness) in other things. Thus, to remember that we are completely loved and righteous in Christ undermines and saps our motives and desires for sin.