

The Gospel of Freedom

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[0 : 00] We're still in the New Year, I think, and I'm hoping you still got New Year type of vibes. You know, that question of like, when do you stop wishing everyone a New Year?

I think it's after you've seen them for the first time. But many people start their New Year with those New Year's resolutions of getting into better shape. You often head to the gym, maybe you've started walking or started running or started new activity.

You want to get rid of all those Christmas puddings. You know, and the main reason that people do this is to obviously get healthier. But the reason they want to get healthier is to withstand the stresses of everyday life and the sickness that we're very often prone to.

You go to gym or you work out to change how your body reacts to negative inputs to make it stronger. Of course, the inevitable happens.

Sometimes gym attendance drops off dramatically after the first few weeks and very often people go back to being the same old stressed lives that they used to live.

[1 : 03] Prone to sickness, prone to depression as they were before the first few weeks in January. So the question is, is there real change available to us? Change that's going to really change.

But I think change that lasts. And people don't realize that to get that kind of change, they need to do an entirely different kind of exercise. They need to hold on to change.

It doesn't come from anything that we do, but from what God has done for us. And that change comes from the gospel of grace as we saw last week.

And we saw what the gospel does for us. And this week we're going to focus on what the gospel does to us. And so we'll see that the gospel doesn't only free us from the penalty of sin, but it also frees us from the power of sin.

It changes how we interact with sin, with all the negative things in our life that tends to bring us down and gives us the power to withstand its poisonous effect and influence in our life.

[2 : 09] And so the way the gospel does that, the way that the gospel changes us, is it does that by uniting us with Christ in baptism, so that we're actually counted dead on the one hand, but alive on the other.

And so we're going to spend our time unpacking how the gospel does that for us. The first thing I want us to see from the passage is that the gospel unites us with Christ. The gospel unites us with Christ.

So stay in Romans 6. We'll get to a few verses in a moment. But what does that mean to be united with Christ? So being united to Christ means we are so fully identified with Him that whatever happens to Him can be said to happen to us.

It's an incredibly close union. Some will call it a covenantal union. It's not unlike a marriage, where the two parties become so closely identified that you can't think of them as being separate, but they share all things and do all things for each other for their mutual benefit.

And unity language is used throughout this section, and it reinforces that close, indissoluble connection between Jesus and the Christian.

[3 : 28] So I'm just going to run through that very quickly. So in verse 3, we are baptized into Christ, depending on your translation, baptized in or into Christ.

In verse 4, we are buried with Him. In verse 5, we are united with Him in His death and united with Him in His resurrection.

Verse 6, we have been crucified with Him. And that is a profound statement. And verse 8, if we died with Christ, we will live with Him.

So you can see all that unity language. Anything that says we're in or into or with, that's all unity language and unified with Him in His death, unified with Him in His resurrection.

And so the gospel brings us into the closest relationship with Christ our Savior that we can have. But it's not merely a deeply personal relationship, although it is that.

[4 : 42] I said earlier, it's a covenantal relationship. And that's why Paul brings in baptism to explain how it works. So look at verse 3 and verse 4. It will probably come up on the screen.

So the question that Paul is answering is, well, we've received grace. We've received forgiveness. God has said that we're justified. The criminal has said that you're innocent.

Well, can I go on living a life of crime? And verse 1 and 2, Paul says, no, you can't do that at all because you're dead to sin, but you're alive to God. You're dead to sin.

How can you live in it any longer? And then he says, don't you know, verse 3, that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.

We were therefore buried with Him through or by 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.

[5 : 46] And so we're not just united to Christ in a relational kind of a way, a personal relationship. There is that. But specifically, we're united to Christ through our baptism.

We just need to spend a few minutes thinking about that because we're sometimes a bit confused about what baptism is and what it does and what it doesn't do. And so some churches teach that baptism means nothing.

They will say things like, nothing happens in your baptism. The only thing that happens is that you get wet. You would have heard that, I'm sure, yourself. There's other churches that teach that it means everything.

And if you're not baptized, you can't get any of the graces of God and they won't even consider you as a Christian. Some, if you've only been baptized as a child, will want you to be baptized as an adult again.

But the Bible teaches that both those positions aren't accurate. Baptism is not nothing, but nor is it everything. It is something.

[6 : 48] And that something is significant. That's why so often in the Bible, baptism is coupled with the preaching of the gospel. So in the Great Commission, in Matthew 28, Jesus doesn't say to just preach the gospel, but to preach the gospel and to baptize the nations.

And in Acts 2, verse 38, Peter says that those wanting to be saved must repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So how does baptism work? Why does it do these things? Well, maybe an illustration from a wedding ceremony will help us understand how baptism works.

So in the wedding ceremony, the relationship, the couple have a relationship, obviously before they get to the wedding, but there is a definite change in their relationship after the wedding.

You'd all agree. The wedding ceremony literally changes the status of the couple getting married. A wedding is not nothing, nor is it insignificant.

[7 : 58] If a husband afterwards would say to the wife, yeah, you know, the wedding didn't really do anything, you know, I just wrote my name on a piece of paper, you're going to have quite a difficult time explaining how you actually do love your wife after that occurrence.

So wedding is not nothing, nor is it insignificant, but neither is the wedding the sum totality of the relationship. So we don't believe in arranged marriages where the only reason you love each other is because you saw each other for the first day at your wedding ceremony.

You've got a relationship before the wedding. The wedding confirms it and establishes it and actually grows it. And so ceremony doesn't detract from personal relationship, but it enhances it. Specifically wedding ceremony, because when the relationship gets rocky, like it sometimes does, you go back to the vows you took at your wedding ceremony to remind yourself of the commitment you made to each other.

Wedding is called a covenant in some churches. It is a covenant. It confirms the relationship that the two have for each other. And I think that's why Paul is using baptism here to explain how Christians are united to Christ.

[9 : 10] He wants Christians to have the assurance in their moments of doubt that they have actually been united to Christ. There's physical evidence proof that you and Christ are united.

You've gone through a covenant ceremony where oaths are taken on your behalf if you're a child or if you do it as an adult, that God is with you. Your sins are forgiven and you're in good standing with Him if, of course, you trust in the promises that are signified.

Perhaps you don't know that baptism is important. Perhaps you haven't considered it for you or your children. So I want to let you know that you're robbing yourself and others of assurance in God's abiding and irrevocable oath.

It's a very deep ceremony if you look at the words and you take it seriously. And the promises that he makes is that He will be with you and He will be for you in all things, all ways.

And so, maybe you haven't been baptized or maybe your children aren't baptized. If you want to be baptized, come and speak to me or Nick and we're glad to teach you more or to tell you more about that. But just to make the point that baptism is your proof that you have indeed had a change of status.

[10:28] You used to be alive to sin. Now, you're dead to sin. You used to be dead to God but now you're alive to God. And so being united to Christ both kills you and makes you alive because whatever happens to Him happens to you.

And so we're going to look at each of those in turn. So the first thing we're going to look at is that baptism kills us or rather being united to Christ kills us.

It makes us dead to sin. Dead to sin. What does that mean, dead to sin? Because I'm not dead.

And sin is very much alive. I'm sure you can all attest to that. But have a look at verse 6. For we know that our old self was crucified.

We haven't just died with Christ. We've been crucified with Him. What is the purpose of that? What happens? So that the body ruled by sin or the body of sin depending on your translation might be done away with or might be made powerless.

[11:44] That we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. So being dead to sin means your old relationship with sin is ended and your new relationship with God and righteousness has begun.

And this is not just a temporary boyfriend-girlfriend breakup with sin. It's more like a divorce. It's a totally... Being united with Christ totally annuls your contract with sin.

The Greek word behind the phrase that you're... In verse 6 so that your body... The body ruled by sin might be done away with or might be rendered powerless.

There's just one little Greek word behind that phrase. Depending on your translation it says might be done away with or might be made powerless. But what it means is to make something that was active completely inoperative.

It has now no effect. There was something that had an effect there's now a decisive change and it no longer has any effect on your life. It is totally without force.

[12:56] It is to make something invalid to put out of use. And that is what it means to be dead to sin. Sin used to have a very active role in our lives and now because you've been united with Christ if you trust him for his redemption and your justification there's a decisive break between you and your sins of the past.

It's like ending a relationship like a toxic one. I don't know if you've been through a toxic relationship many have and you know the only way to get the toxic person who's always manipulating always trying to pull you into the orbit of influence and manipulation the only way to stop a toxic relationship from having any effect on you anymore is to completely and utterly ignore them.

It's the same with sin. You know in the past sin would have come calling sin would have called you up on your phone let's say for example ring ring hey there sin appears and like in the past if you're not a Christian when sin comes calling you're like wait sin hey how's it how's it how are you it's been a while what's up man what's up hey you wanna go you wanna go you wanna go hang out you wanna have some fun sounds like a plan to me you wanna you wanna do what hey you know what that sounds like a party count me in ooh it is gonna cost a lot hey man I've got enough money but let's see how it goes oh it's gonna cost me my soul hey dude totally worth it and then off you go and you have a great time or so you think but because sin is poisonous it actually ends up hurting you and hurting others damaging you and damaging others and you return back from your party with sin like those guys that get back from a late night party many of us would have been there and the next morning ooh everything is aching you're full of regret you're full of pain oh man that was a bad idea but in a few days you've forgotten about the whole thing when sin calls you up again you're ready to go party but now because of being united with Christ when sin calls you up because you're dead to sin because the power of Christ has ended your relationship with it what do you do with sin you ghost him now for the adults it means you just write him off you don't respond okay sin calls up you look at your phone hey it's sin you're like whoa no

I don't want to be bothered by you anymore stop calling me but you don't enter a conversation you don't go hi listen I know it's been a while I feel really bad listen I'm sorry about this but I'm just a bit busy no excuses nothing like that you don't respond you don't do anything no conversations no apologies you just keep on killing that relationship with sin I don't want anything I don't want to do have anything to do with you anymore go away leave me alone and the amazing thing is if you continue to do that sin's power and influence like every toxic relationship eventually goes away and leaves you alone it just requires consistency in trusting God and consistency in saying no thanks I'm not into that anymore it's amazing how you'll lose friends in life who are pulling you and dragging you down you might have friends that are like hey let's go party let's go drinking let's go do this if you just keep saying no you know that they disappear they don't hang around for long it's the same with sin that's why in verse 11 and 12

Paul says to consider ourselves dead to sin and to not let sin reign in our bodies so just have a quick look there so you've been crucified with Christ so that your sinful I'm just going to read from verse 6 again then I'll look at verse 11 and 12 so verse 6 says your old self was crucified with him now that means that you're dead now you're actually dead to sin okay so that the body ruled by sin might be made totally powerless so that your response to sin becomes inactive totally cut off totally divorced not interested at all in that side of things anymore so that you don't have to be a slave you don't have to obey its commands and demands anymore and so verse 11 Paul says in the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus and when you do that there's this promise and it says do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires and passions or passions but the way to do this the way to stop your relationship with the stuff that damages and hurts and poisons your relationship with God and everything the way to do that is to remind yourself you've been united with Christ's death that you've been crucified with him so that the penalty he paid you've paid you've literally died to sin and paid the penalty

[18:49] Jesus doesn't just pay it for you by being united to Christ in your baptism you've made the payment to sin that's how closely our unification with Christ counts you don't owe it anything anymore it doesn't have a claim on you instead God has a claim on you and he is far stronger than sin rather think of yourself as the rest of the verses teach us about being reborn or resurrected to a new way of life a life that has the power and strength to overcome sin and so that's the next thing we need to look at about what being united to Christ does to us it makes us alive we have this new life in Christ new life in Christ and so the point of dying with Christ is not just to stay dead but to make you more alive than you've ever been but alive to good things things that don't poison you the stuff that sin wants being alive to stuff that's good for you the stuff that God wants to give you things that make you healthier things that make you happier things that make you stronger things that can change your life let's have a look at verse 4 we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order so here's the reason why you're baptized into his death the reason why you united him in his death just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father we too may live a new life or walk in newness of life depending on your translation again you die

Christ has died you die Christ is raised from the dead and just as he was raised from the dead through God's glorious power you've got that power working in your life if you're united to him now before we look at the power focus on this word new we may live a new life so that we can walk in newness of life it means to do good things to live the Christian life to live a life towards God and not towards sin but that word new is a strong word in the Bible in the Old Testament it's used to speak about the new age that God promises that he would unleash in the world giving it new life or unleashing his new life or creative life giving power into the world to make things that were old and dying and give them new life there's lots of imagery in the Old Testament of parts deserts and springs coming to life of dry land becoming gardens of hearts of stone becoming hearts of flesh of death becoming life and that's the new age that has been unleashed by Christ into your life the old is gone the new has come you can live a seriously changed life because of this kind of power and it takes this kind of power it takes the life the power of the living God to change you from being attracted to sin to being attracted to him remember John in John 10 verse 10

Jesus says he came to give life and life to the full being united to Christ's resurrection means that we've got the same power that worked to bring Christ from death to life is now working in in our lives and what that achieves for us what that does to us it helps us to fight back against sins dominating and abusive power in our lives it helps us to say no to that toxic relationship so just to run through what it does for us in these verses in verse 6 it says we are no longer enslaved to sin in

verse 7 we've been set free from sin in verse 9 death will have no dominion over those who are resurrected verse 12 have we seen let not sin reign in your mortal body to obey to obey its passions and verse 14 sin will have no dominion over you because Christians have been united to Christ his resurrection is their resurrection his resurrection is our resurrection so that just like sin and death doesn't have mastery over Jesus they cannot and will not have mastery over you anymore they can't bother you anymore sin and death it's that sort of combined matrix of bad things that happen to us you can throw the devil in there as well they don't have the power anymore the only power they have over us is the power that we give them now the problem is they want to keep on taking sin and death and the devil they're like this little evil triumvir that's always gunning for you they're always looking to bring you down and often sin is stronger than us isn't it that's how we give in to it but in this decisive exchange sin used to be very strong and we used to be very weak before you trusted in Christ before you were united with him think of someone like Arnold Schwarzenegger sin is like Arnold Schwarzenegger you know in his prime Conan the Barbarian this huge muscly beefy guy that's what sin is like and you are that 90 pound weakling I don't know like you it's a skinny guy that doesn't have any muscles and he's only so high and here's sin and here's us and like all sin has to do is like look at you and you're like oh cool let's be friends but now you've got the resurrected power of the living God coursing through your veins so now when you used what you used to be is weak now you're Arnold Schwarzenegger and sin compared to that is powerless so if sin comes wanting to mess with you you can literally give it an Arnold Schwarzenegger type of just give it a backhand or give him an Arnold Schwarzenegger quote I had to let him go same as we saw earlier just say no you don't have to beat sin up you can't but just stand against it and sin will go scurrying off being united to Christ means you're now stronger than sin because you've got the power of Christ in you but we do keep on sinning and so one way to think about what happens there is that now you're big and strong you're Arnold Schwarzenegger sin is the tiny little dweeb that can't do anything now imagine Arnold Schwarzenegger walked in and was covered in bruises and scrapes and scratches and he's like I lost this fight and they're like gee dude who beat you up and he's like oh this little thing over here and you're like what what's wrong with you guy you could have just flicked him and he would have gone running so it means if we sin we're letting a 90 pound weakling 90 pounds by the way is like 40-45 kilograms like a little kid if we sin it means we're letting a 90 pound weakling boss an Arnold [27 : 13] Schwarzenegger sized person around it's ridiculous to say we're unable to stop it that it was just too strong for me you don't have that excuse anymore so don't let him do that so in conclusion if you're looking to start your new year changing your old bad habits into godly new ones if you want any change of lasting value you need to do what Paul says spend time thinking about who you are in Jesus you don't have to work out harder you don't have to work for it verse 11 and 12 gives you the answer count yourselves dead to sin count there means think reckon logically spend time working out what Jesus has done for you where you are what has happened oh wait sin wants me to go party with him I'm dead to sin

I've severed that my body is dead I've severed that relationship wait I'm stronger than sin it can't pick on me anymore remember those things bring them to mind think about who you are in Jesus think about the fact that you're a new creation that the old is gone and the new has come that you've died to the power of sin and been raised to a new God empowered way of living and then verse 13 and 14 spend time presenting your members the various parts of your body to God's service have a look there verse 13 do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness for sin shall not be your master because you're not under law but under grace now interesting word instruments of righteousness that word instruments is the Greek word we get for hoplite it can be translated weapon weapon of righteousness now you remember the movie you might have seen it the movie 300 it's about the Greek Spartans the warrior class Greeks standing against this mighty army just 300 of them and that's because they are so well trained and they've got this cool armor and they know how to use their weapons you've got that kind of ability now against sin and all evil things offer present your members the various parts of your body to God's service think about what your eyes what you look at think about your mouth what you say think about your hands the things that you do think about your mind what you spend your time thinking about all of that can be changed to not serve a power that will harm you

but harm others but serve a new king who only wants to do you good and through you to do good to others and when doubt creeps in as it inevitably does remind yourself about your baptism assure yourself that you are in fact dead to sin and alive to God in Christ let me pray heavenly heavenly father thank you for your word again lord for this great gospel message that in Christ we have been crucified to sin the penalty has been fully paid and not only that but you've been we've been saved from its clutches we've been raised to life just as Jesus has been raised to love lord in the year ahead will you help us to remember these gospel foundations that we are saved freely by your grace that we don't have to work for it we can't work for it that we've been set free from the power of sin as well lord to live a new life of real change and we ask for your blessings in Jesus name amen