

**The Gospel as it Really Is:**  
***Romans simply Explained***  
**Sanctification (2) - United to Jesus Christ**  
**Romans 6:1-14**  
**June 29<sup>th</sup> 2025**  
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For many people in our world, “wellness,” the pursuit of bodily health and mental wholeness, has become a priority in life. From nutritious groceries to fitness classes; from treatment for chronic pain to skincare products; from therapy to a subscription for a meditation App. According to the Global Wellness Institute, Brits spend around £2559 each per year on pursuing “Wellness.” That’s about £50 a week.

What should a Christian think about the Wellness Movement? No doubt there is value in taking care of our general health and wellbeing. The apostle Paul tells young Timothy who suffered frequent illnesses, *“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”* (1 Timothy 5:23). And the apostle John writing to his friend Gaius, wishes: *“I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”* (2 John 1:2). The Lord Jesus himself had great compassion on those who were sick in body, and healed them.

But we have to say that the focus of Scripture is not really on wellness but on holiness. And the divine logic of this priority is this: if we seek the kingdom of God first, then the rest of life will work itself out: I don’t mean that if we put holiness first, we will necessarily be more healthy and wealthy, but we will have the divine resources of inner strength and future hope to cope with life.

If you are a young believer coming out of the world, this will be an enormous paradigm shift for you: the world you have left behind prioritised bodily and mental health, but as a follower of Jesus Christ your main pursuit must now become spiritual wellness, which means living a holy and godly life that is pleasing to God.

On Sunday mornings we’re making our way through Paul’s letter to the Romans. Paul has spent five chapters outlining the Gospel of justification by faith alone, and the spiritual blessings the Gospel brings to us—

- Peace with God
- The hope of heaven to come
- A brand new attitude to suffering
- The knowledge of God’s love for us
- Complete security in this world and the next

Where is Paul going to go next, we wonder? As he unfolds the Gospel for the whole world?

Holiness, sanctification, that's where. For the next 2 and a half chapters, Paul is going to explain that God's people, once saved by God's amazing grace are called to live a holy, godly, righteous life, to pursue holiness.

May I ask you, brothers and sisters, what priority holiness plays in our lives? Are we earnest, keen, to live a life that is pleasing to God, in thought, word and deed? It's a searching question for 21st Christians, immersed in images of good looks and bodily health which populate social media. What matters to God is not what we **look like**, but what we **live like**.

Paul gets into his lengthy discussion of holiness like this: He had just written, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more." (5:20) The grace of God is seen most brightly when God saves the worst sinner. That's the wonder of the Gospel! God delights to save wretched people (like you and I) to display his outstanding grace: *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life."* (1 Timothy 1:15-16)

Never say of anyone: "he or she could never be converted!" No-one is beyond the grace and mercy of God. Keep praying for them.

But Paul, the ever-wise pastor, is aware of how someone might twist this "where sin increase, grace increases more" Good News: "If lots of sin in a person's life reveals just how great God's grace is, then why don't believers just keep on sinning—because won't that will manifest God's grace even more! "where sin abounds, grace does more abound?!"

This misunderstanding is how Paul gets into the subject of holiness, v.1: *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?"*

- "I used to steal before, I'm going to continue"
- "I used to tell lies, I'll keep on lying"
- "I used to hang around the wrong crowd, I'm not giving up that old company."

...because my continual sin will magnify God's magnificent grace!

*"By no means!"*

No way! Christians can't think that way! "I'm just going to live in my old ways!" Why not? *"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"*

Something happened when we were converted, when we first believed, which forever changed our relationship to sin. We died to sin. *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?"*

See that “don’t you know”? People who say “I’m just going to continue in my old ways are lacking a truth, there’s something they “don’t know”, there’s a doctrine they don’t yet understand!

Let’s pause here for a moment. When a believer is behaving wrongly in their marriage or family life or work place or neighbourhood, the likelihood is that there is a truth, a doctrine, that they’re missing. What they need is a new or deeper understanding and by God’s grace, godly behaviour will follow. This is one of the reasons churches like ours give ourselves to preaching on Sunday, and the study of God’s Word in our home groups. We are convinced that godly living flows—or should flow—from truth.

Christians who say or think “I can go on sinning,” “my sin does not matter” are lacking a truth, and that doctrine is *union with Christ*: they have not heard, they don’t realise, that they are now united to Christ: *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life”*

The Christian who says “I’m not giving up booze or a sharp tongue or porn” does not know that they are united to Jesus Christ. Their water baptism was a symbol of this union! When they went under the water they died with Christ; they died to sin. When they rose out of the water they rose with Christ, rose to a new life.

Let’s spend a few moments considering this wonderful truth, that believers are united to Christ.

### Union with Christ

Many times in the New Testament we read that believers are “in Christ” or “with Christ” or even that “Christ is in us.” For example:

*“God raised us up **with Christ** and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”*  
(Ephesians 2:6)

*We were “**created in Christ Jesus** to do good works”* (Ephesians 2:20)

*“**Christ in you**, the hope of glory.”*  
(Colossians 1:27)

Union with Christ is a deep spiritual, mysterious, essential, life-giving, relationship with Christ that every believer enjoys. It’s not like any human relationship we may experience in this world. In Scripture union with Christ is likened to the relationship between *a vine and it’s branches*, the sap from the vine gives the branches life; or *a human head to a human body*, directing the body; or *foundations to a building*, supporting, whole. It’s so deep Paul can write in Galatians 6:20: *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”* Paul’s whole identity was

now “in Christ”, the old Paul was gone, and Christ, who loved him, now lived in Paul.

Union with Christ began in the mind of God before he created the universe: *“he chose us **in Christ** before the creation of the world...” (Ephesians 1:4)*

And then when the Son of God came into this world. We were united to Christ in his earthly life

- When he lived his life, it’s as if we lived with him!
- When he died, we in some way were crucified with him
- When he rose again, we also rose with him

We will be united to Christ in glory

*God “seated **us with Christ** in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6) where “we will reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12)*

And we are united to Christ today.

“The reason some of you think you can go on sinning”—let’s return from our short diversion - “is that you have forgotten this truth—or perhaps you were never taught it—that you were, you will be and now are united to Jesus Christ!”

Since you were united with Christ in his death, you also died to sin: *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, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”* The power of sin in your life has been broken, because you are united with Christ in his death:

*Verse 10: “The death he died he died to sin, once for all.” (v.10)*

Since you were united to Christ in his resurrection, you too have begun living a new life: *“just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.**” (verse 4).* Just as Jesus was raised from the dead to a new life, so you have been raised with him to live a brand new life!

If anyone says “I can keep on sinning” “It does not matter”, they don’t yet understand the meaning or the power of this grand truth—that every believer has been united to Christ. “Don’t you know?”

### **Union with Christ in Practical Godliness**

In verses 11-14, Paul shows us how to put this truth into practice, when it comes to holy living.

*(1) Every day count yourself dead to sin and alive to God. “In the same way count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (v.11)* It starts in the mind, it starts with new doctrine, new thoughts, it begins with us thinking, every day, “I am united to Christ in his death, so my old life of sin has died, finished, died, gone” & “I am united to Christ in his resurrection, I have a new life to live.”

*(2) Every day offer your body to God not sin. “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 God as an instrument of righteousness.** For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

Don't offer your brain, your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your feet or your hands to sin, because united to Christ in his death, **you died** to sin! Instead every day offer your brain (your thoughts), your tongue (your words), your eyes (what you see), your ears (what you listen to), your hands (your deeds), your feet (where you go), every part of your body, to God, to godliness, to holiness, to purity. Because united to Christ in his resurrection, you too are called to live a new life.

### **Final Thoughts – we need to work these things out**

Brothers and sisters, you and I must work these things out for ourselves. How can you and I, this week, every day, knowing that we have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection and new life, offer our bodies, every part, to God in righteousness?

May God teach us that we are united to Jesus Christ, and may he grant us both the will **and the power** to live an upright life for him and for his glory.

Amen.