

## 96-05-31a

Proverbs chapter 2 tells us, My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding, yes, if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.

He is a shield to those who walk uprightly. He guards the paths of justice and preserves the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.

That's the subject of our study in Romans, the righteousness and justice and equity, the good path that God has designed for us as believers. So as we prepare this evening to continue our study in Romans, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we look at these things. Father, we are grateful for the privilege of living in this age, of being united with Jesus Christ in his death, his burial and his resurrection.

We thank you that we are members of his body, we are members of the church, we are members of one another. We pray this evening that as we fellowship together in your word, that God the Holy Spirit will enlighten us and that as a result of studying these things we will be transformed and draw closer to the image and the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name.

Amen. We reviewed in some detail last time the flow of the argument of this letter and as we continue tonight in chapter 6, we have seen that what Paul laid as a groundwork in chapter 1, the last half and then in chapters 2 through 5, is a foundation of truth, a foundation of observations and the communication of God's viewpoint with regard to man, sin and righteousness. We have seen that God's standard for believers is no different than it is for any of the rest of his creation.

God is absolute righteousness and he demands righteousness, he seeks righteousness in us. So the question for us becomes, how do we stand before God worthy? How do we stand before God possessing his righteousness? This is the single most important issue in our life as human beings and especially as believers. How do we walk in a manner that is worthy of our Savior, that is pleasing to God? So Paul is addressing himself to this subject in this letter to the church at Rome.

He has made many significant points here and he has talked about the fact primarily that righteousness for us in this age comes through faith. We have reviewed many times the elements of faith. Faith is simply trust.

It is looking at something and treating it as a reality. Whenever something becomes real to us in our mind, it often changes the way we view the world or the way we establish priorities, the way we behave. When science tells us a truth about a food or a habit or a substance, we take that to heart and many times we alter the way that we live.

Many people have gone on numerous diets or have given up various habits or various pastimes or various practices because science says this will lead to cancer. People got scared of mobile phones just a year or two ago because someone decided that the radiation from the antenna was so powerful that it could cause tumors in the brain. Immediately there was a panic and an outcry about cellular phones and the industry hastened to assure everyone that they were benign and that this was nothing to fear.

Do you remember when the scare about apples came out? They were using Alar when they were growing the apples and this was linked to something bad, cancer or whatever, and then the apple industry went into the dumper because people accepted that as a reality. The apples looked the same, they tasted the same, but someone communicated a fact and it completely changed the way people viewed apples and viewed their own health in regard to apples. God has put this truth before us.

Paul is communicating truth in this letter and the desire of God is that it have the same effect in our lives. It's not enough for us to look at this and say I'm really glad that I'm starting to understand what Paul is talking about in Romans. The goal is for our minds to change, for our priorities to change, for our lives to change.

As a result of this study, as a result of the corollary and parallel truths that we are seeing as we go through this letter from Paul, we should be different. Something ought to be changing in our soul. We ought to be hot in pursuit of the righteousness of God that comes through faith.

It should shift our perspective in our daily life. It should shift the way we view our circumstances, the way we view people, and especially the way we view trial and suffering. It's one of the things that recurs in this book.

One of the threads that we follow in the argument here is that Paul is telling us about the results of the work of Christ. He talks about the fact that because of Christ coming and because of what we have available to us as believers in this age, we can be free from wrath. We saw this in chapter 2. It was continued in chapter 3 that in the pursuit of righteousness by faith, we can be pleasing to God and we won't be standing before the Lord Jesus Christ at the judgment seat trying to explain why we frittered away His death on the cross and all of the work that He did on our behalf by failing to pursue the goal.

Paul reminds us that we have new opportunities. We have access in a unique way to God's grace that we haven't had before. It ought to make a difference.

It ought to show up in our thinking as we go through the day when we stop to make decisions, when we deal with people, when we face circumstances. There ought to be something different in our priorities, in our view, and in our goal as we go through these. I was thinking about this just this afternoon watching children play out in front of the house and thinking about the discipline

that we apply to children and the training that we give to children and especially the mothers who spend the bulk of the day with small children.

There are things that need to be done, trips and errands that need to be accomplished, tasks that need to be fulfilled, and one of the great things about discipline and rules and training of children is that it keeps them in line, keeps them out of trouble, so that these things can be done. But one of the dangers that can sneak up on us unaware of it is that we look at these things and we say, as long as the tasks are getting done, unconsciously perhaps we say, the goal of this training is accomplished. The children are not getting in my way.

We're getting things finished. We're able to get things done and so forth. And we view the guidance and the encouragement that we give children in the light of getting things done.

Well, they have good manners so we can go out in public and we're not embarrassed. They have finished their food and taken their place to the sink and that enables me to get the kitchen cleaned up a little quicker. They're playing quietly in their room and that's keeping my time and my attention free so that I can do these other things.

And we view the behavior of children and the obedience of children in the light of the household running smoothly or being able to accomplish these tasks. But when we really step back and think about it, our goal as parents in maintaining these standards and requiring this obedience is to train the child, to teach them self-discipline, to teach them respect for authority, to teach them order and manners and what's right and what's wrong, what's safe and what's dangerous and so forth. And if we lose sight of that goal, then we become content that as long as the household is running smoothly, everything is fine.

When in fact, the children may simply have found the ways to avoid the red flags waving or have found the ways to keep mom and dad from yelling or mom and dad from being unhappy and yet they haven't really learned the lessons that are going to serve them later on in life and make them productive members of society and give them happiness from a human standpoint because they have self-control, because they understand how to function under a structured environment. And so if we begin to measure children by lack of static in the household or lack of that we're not really having any problems, we're not measuring with the right yardstick. What we really need to be measuring is are they truly exhibiting self-control, are they truly coming to understand the way authority works and penalties for crossing the line and getting outside of authority and so forth.

And it seems like sort of an esoteric point, but it really does make a difference. And one of the reasons that people are surprised by their children as they get older and enter their late teen years and go off to college and suddenly seem to fall apart, they say, well, but we had such a happy home and we had structure and we had order and I don't understand why my child has just gone to the dogs and doesn't have any inner strength to combat the opportunities and the temptations that are leading them astray. And I think this is the reason.

Why does that come up? It isn't just that I was staring out the window, but I think that that is God's goal for us as believers as well. It's not enough for us to avoid the static that comes up when we exhibit antisocial behavior or grossly sinful behavior. I think many of us as believers settle for moral behavior and acceptable behavior and righteous behavior, quote, unquote, as it is viewed in the Christian life, rather than realizing that God wants to train our minds.

He wants to transform our thinking and give us something inside so that we can function in a wide variety of environments or circumstances, including the future, the millennial kingdom, and the kingdom of God the Father. And the opportunities that we have in this life to seek right thinking and to pursue right thinking because of what God's Word does in our soul is important for that reason. So many of us as believers are looking for the happy life.

We don't want to make bad decisions. We don't want to wind up being unhappy. We don't want to bring disaster on ourselves or on others.

And we're looking for the answers to make life go smoothly. And if we find our life going smoothly, we feel like we've accomplished the goal, rather than realizing that even when life is going smoothly, and sometimes that's the greatest challenge, when life is going smoothly, is to realize who we are and why we're here. We're here to seek the righteousness of God by faith.

We are here now so that the glory of God will be reflected both now and in the eternal future. And the fact that circumstances are going smoothly is no indication of where we stand in that arena. So we want to take advantage of this great opportunity that we have through Paul's teaching in this letter and by extension, this is the teaching of God through the Holy Spirit, revealing His truth to us in this way.

And that's what Paul has communicated through these first five chapters of Romans. And he is now going to draw a conclusion. And in chapter 6, we began last time, he says, What shall we say then, after we have established what God is looking for in terms of righteousness, and that righteousness doesn't come by the works of the law, and that there was a different function for the law.

The law was designed to give us a measure for our sin and to point out the inadequacy of our righteousness, the inadequacy of our energy and our efforts, and that we need God, we need His grace, we need His power. It's only His righteousness that counts, and we can't produce it on our own. That was the purpose of the law.

And what was the law? The law was a standard of behavior on the external. And God says, simply conforming your behavior in the external doesn't constitute righteousness. God is looking for righteousness that comes through the transformation that takes place on the inside.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And this was a reference back to the end of chapter 5, that the law came in and increased the trespass, but

where the trespass was abounding, grace much more abounded. And it threw God's grace and God's righteousness into bold relief because we saw it in contrast to our own inadequacy and our own failure. And so as a result, we know that this age is different.

God has made that point in the age of the law, in the age of Israel. He has pointed out our inadequacy, our sinfulness. His righteousness and the greatness of His grace has been put into bold relief by that contrast.

But Christ has now come and died and there is a new system. There is a new point that God is making in His plan. So by way of review, I have a few points here.

They're in point form. You can either listen to them or take note of them. But the first point is we review what we covered last time in chapter 6, verses 1 through 13.

First of all, and this harks back to chapter 5, in this age, rather than sin reigning in the lives of believers with a view toward death or bringing out the death that is a part of our experience because we are fallen and we are human, rather than sin reigning in the lives of believers with a view toward death, it is possible now for grace to reign through righteousness with a view toward eternal life. And this is basically an expanded translation of chapter 5, verse 21. Just as sin reigned in death or with a view toward death, even so grace may reign through righteousness with a view toward eternal life.

What is the contrast, death and life? And this is in the lives of believers. We know that by extension this applies in the realm of salvation. We are certainly headed for death and the permanent separation from God that the lake of fire represents.

And we know that through faith in Jesus Christ we have been delivered from that and we will live forever with God. But we know that in this context, talking about those who lived under the law, those were believers in Old Testament days who lived under the law. And it was in the lives of believers that this death was manifested.

We are going to see that clearly tonight. And it is possible in this age because of the work of Christ for grace to reign through righteousness with a view toward life that partakes of the eternal. In both the age of Israel and the church age, there are those who believed in God, believed the promises of God, who trusted God for salvation and were saved.

And there were those who did not trust God and who were condemned. And this is one of the things we have thought about in Romans that we need to keep straight when we are talking about salvation and when we are talking about the life of believers. Paul has said that in the past, the law increased the trespass that sin reigned in death, death reigned in sin.

He states it both ways. And this was true all the way up until Christ. Well, what about believers? Why is this such a universal statement? Because he is talking about even in the lives of believers

that this took place.

Because if you compare the age of Israel and the age that we are in now, what has changed in the old days, in the patriarch days, in the days of Moses, the days of the prophets? We had, where salvation is concerned, we had two kinds of people. We had people who trusted God and who were saved. And we had people who disbelieved God, who refused to trust God and who were condemned.

And they will be judged at the great white throne, those who refused. So we had those who trusted and those who did not, those who were saved and those who were not in the traditional sense, right? Is that any different today? We have those who, we have a clearer view of how God saves and we have personal faith in Jesus Christ as the object of our faith. But fundamentally, we've got two classes of people when it comes to salvation in the traditional sense.

Those who trust God, His plan, His promise, and are saved. Those who refuse to trust God and are condemned to the lake of fire. So in the salvation arena, the ages are the same.

Faith leads to deliverance. Refusing to trust leads to the eternal future and the lake of fire. That has not changed.

But Paul is pointing out a great contrast here in Romans, isn't he? He says, look back before Christ, there was death reigning. There was sin reigning. There was condemnation and it was magnified through the law and the law was given to believers.

He says, now grace can reign through life because of Jesus Christ. So there's a big contrast in the things that Paul is talking about. How do we explain that? It's very simple.

He's not talking about salvation. He's talking about the lives of believers. The purpose, and this reminds us of where we stand before God because the purpose of the lives of believers in the Old Testament ages, one of the emphases that came out of that life was sin, inadequacy.

We could have been born in that age and our life might have served in God's great plan to point out the inadequacy of human effort, the inadequacy of a system of rules to produce righteousness. We could have lived under the law as David and the Israelites did who lived in the land. Our lives would primarily have been a demonstration of our inadequacy and that serves God's purpose and that fulfills God's plan.

In one sense we might say, well, that's not the age to live in. I'd rather live in an age where I can be on the positive side. Well, we have that opportunity.

That's the age that we do live in. And so we are called to make a different point and it's the point that righteousness comes through faith. So as we think about this transition into chapter 6 from what Paul has said in the preceding, we have to keep in mind that Paul is talking about the lives of believers.

These things by extension apply and we don't change any of our understanding of how salvation works and positional truth and all of that. But this is important for us because we have the opportunity to live a different kind of life because Christ has come. Before Christ came, this life that we have access to was not possible.

Paul is going to go on here in chapters 6, 7, and 8 and talk about the fact that this life was not possible before Christ came, even for believers, especially for believers because that's who he's talking about. So in both the age of Israel and the church age there were those who believe and are saved and there are those who refuse to believe and are condemned to the lake of fire. What changed in this age is that in this age we have the option for believers to experience the reign of grace through righteousness rather than the reign of death through sin.

That is the opportunity we have that the Old Testament saints did not. Secondly, as we review chapter 6, verses 1 through 13, we recognize that the law of Moses came in to define and magnify our inability to produce righteousness. That was the purpose of the law.

It showed our lack of righteousness, showed our sin, showed the penalty for it, brought us under the penalty, made it clear to us how severe a problem our sin was. And it emphasized, by contrast, God's grace and God's righteousness when Christ came and solved that huge problem. So the question now that is raised in chapter 6 is should we continue in sin and continue to make that point so that grace may abound? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Chapter 6, verse 1, *me genoita*, God forbid, heavens no, the strongest kind of negative in Greek.

It's interesting here because in chapter 6 and chapter 7 we're going to have four occurrences of this phrase, *me genoita*. If you wanted to render it in English it would be M-E for me, which is the negative, and *genoita* is from *genomi*, which means to be or to become, and *genoita* you would spell G-E-N-O-I-T-A. *Me genoita*, may it not be, may it never be, heaven forbid, something in English that renders a strong negative.

Certainly not is how the New King James translates this. This is the first of four of these and some people that have analyzed Romans have talked about the four *me genoita* cycles. Paul will ask a question, he will say certainly not, and then he will explain why.

He's going to do that four times. We'll see two of them in chapter 6 and two in chapter 7. The first question he asks is, shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? Shall we keep on making the point that was made in the Old Testament? Absolutely not. Why should we not? Why do we not? Because Christ has died and when he died we died with him.

Christ was buried and when he was buried we were buried with him. Christ was raised and when he was raised we were raised with him. That was not true in the Old Testament age.

Moses, David, Joseph, Noah, Abel, Enoch, none of those men are positionally united with Jesus

Christ in his death and burial and resurrection the way we are. That positional truth did not pertain during their earthly life. By the way, that positional truth is not required for salvation.

That is a truth that applies to our earthly life that changes our earthly life and they did not have it. We have it and it ought to make a difference. We have access to grace that those men did not have.

They will have. They will enjoy it in the future. And this is one of the reasons that Jesus said what he said about John the Baptist.

He said, He who is least in the kingdom of... He said of men born of women there is none greater than John, but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. Why is that? Because in the kingdom there is union with Christ and Christ had not died on the cross when John died and John as the greatest of the Old Testament saints didn't have union with Jesus Christ. And that union that is a part of our heritage and we are part of that first fruits, the first to enjoy that.

We get it even ahead of the Old Testament saints who will enjoy that in the millennial kingdom and beyond. So we are not to continue in sin so that grace may abound. Why? We have died to sin.

This would be the third of our review points. We have died to sin. This was not true of Old Testament saints because they were not united with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection.

They had not died to sin. And all of the points that Paul makes about being dead to sin and alive to God don't apply to an Old Testament saint, do they? Because the truth upon which that is based for us was not true for them. There is a profound operational difference in this age from the Old Testament ages and yet salvation is the same.

So this contrast that Paul is drawing out in Romans between in Adam and in Christ and under the law and under grace that is a living truth. And people who constantly try to go back and shove this into salvation miss a wonderful application which is what we're studying tonight. We have died to sin.

This was not true of Old Testament saints. Christ had not come. There was not yet a positional union with him as we enjoy it today.

Believers were identified with the first Adam. Now, we've been through that in Adam all dying, Christ shall all be made alive and so forth. Let me ask you a question.

Was Adam a believer? Will Adam be in the eternal future and be in heaven and so forth? He will, won't he? And yet, in Adam, all die. Old Testament believers were in Adam. Well, Adam was a believer.

So what does it mean to be in Adam? What was the problem with being in Adam? Fallen and not having access to the grace of God to produce righteousness by faith in the way that we do today. Was there righteousness by faith in the Old Testament? Yes, there was. But did we have the standing before God in the Old Testament that we have today? We did not.

Did we have the resources of the Scriptures and the filling of the Holy Spirit like we have today? They did not. So righteousness by faith, even though it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament and was witnessed by the law and the prophets, didn't come to fruition as the major emphasis of God's point until this age. That's what Paul is hammering into our heads over and over again in Romans chapter 5. We have died to sin.

We have a unique standing in this age because of our union with Jesus Christ. So our fourth point, as a result of this, we have access through a new and living way as the author of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 19 and 20. We have access by a new and living way.

It's new. It's living. It didn't exist in the Old Testament.

This is access to the presence of the Father. Christ, in His death and in His burial, have you ever wondered, I have wondered this many times, why does it say that Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree? We understand the concept of spiritual death and paying the penalty and so forth, but many times, it says that Christ bore our sins in His body, in His earthly body. Why does Scripture emphasize that point? He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. Those are physical sufferings. And Christ paid the penalty for our sin in His body.

When we celebrate the Lord's table and we partake of the cup, He says this is the new covenant in My blood. But we also partake of the bread. And He says this is My body which is broken for you.

Why the emphasis on His physical body? There are many reasons, but one that applies here in Romans is the fact that that body that Jesus Christ possessed in His earthly life died. And that body was buried. Those sins, all the sins of the world were poured out on Him in His body, judged in His body, and that body died on the cross.

And that body was taken down from the cross and entombed. It was buried in the earth for three days and three nights. What does that mean? That death is separation.

That death cuts the cord to sin. It cuts the responsibility for the penalty. It cuts the authority of sin.

That body, all of the sins went into that body and then that body died and was buried. And Jesus Christ, when He was resurrected in a resurrection body, although He bore the marks, it was a new and different body. It's very significant.

We saw this in the study of Mark that the disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus Christ. He wasn't recognized in the garden. He wasn't recognized on the shore of the sea.

He wasn't recognized on the road to Emmaus. Why? Different body. It's got the marks.

He bears the scars of the suffering that He endured. And I would submit to you just as an aside and a free no charge point, some people have said when we are resurrected there will be no more pain and no more tears and no regrets and so forth and therefore we probably won't remember this life because if we could remember this life there would be sorrow and disappointment and so forth. I would point those who want to think that to the example of Jesus Christ.

When He was resurrected He bore the scars of His suffering and He remembered the cross and He remembered His life. He remembered His disciples. He remembered Peter's failure.

Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs. He remembered things that we might think would bring sorrow. And we will in a sense bear the scars, bear the results of the suffering that we have undergone in this life and it will be the productive results of that suffering.

We know that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces approval and that approval produces a confident expectation in the future. Romans 5, 1-5 and the suffering that we undergo here is beneficial and we hope that we will bear the marks of the trials and the challenges and the suffering of this life in the eternal future. Jesus Christ does and we are going to follow in His footsteps and be raised just as He has been raised.

And it's a wonderful opportunity because I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ would not trade those scars in His side and in His back and on His hands and His feet for anything in the world because they are the badge of approval. He endured in pursuing the will of the Father those things that were unpleasant and that didn't seem to be in His personal best interest and as a result He is seated in the highest place in God's throne room. He is at the right hand of God.

He is the greatest person in the universe and always will be and His scars are a testament to the power of God to sustain us through faith and the power of God to save us through what Christ has done. So we ought to look forward to the battle scars that we accumulate in this life being reflected in the next. Jesus Christ has them and we have them.

Remember when Paul says let no one trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. I expect that in some sense Paul understood this principle and that he would be carrying those marks forward and those are his badge of faithfulness, his badge of obedience. So anyway, back to the idea of being identified with Christ in His death and in His burial.

Burial, and we touched on this last time, burial signifies separation. When you go to the funeral and it's an open, it's a gory thing but sometimes we have these open casket funerals and you've

got the carcass laid out there and you're still thinking about and memorializing this loved one that has departed but when they close the casket and they turn those screws and they carry it out to the cemetery and lower it down with the straps and throw the dirt on top, you're now separated. You will not look on the face of that body anymore.

Everything that that body had with it is in the grave. The clothing, the personal effects, the roses or whatever were laid inside, they're in there and that is separation. Going into the grave implies separation.

Let me offer you a thought to muse on. Notice here that in chapter 6, verse 4, Paul says, we were buried with Him through baptism into death. Now, we know how baptism works.

You get in the water, you've got the preacher or some other person qualified or strong enough to do so, holds you, dunks you under the water, brings you back up. That's the only kind of ritual baptism that we recognize, the pouring, the sprinkling, and all the other, the effusion and all that where we lay aside for the moment. Dunking, deep water baptism, that's the biblical example and it serves because what happens? You lay down under the water and it's a picture of being in the grave.

When you're pulled up out of the water, it's a picture of resurrection. Now, let me ask you something. In baptism, where is the picture of death? Where's the picture of the act of dying? Baptism could have been constructed any way.

You look at the rituals in the Old Testament, God can specify any kind of ritual that He wants. Why do we not sprinkle someone with blood before we baptize? Why don't we put a big red ink stain on their chest and have this as a part of the ritual? Here's the death. Here's the burial.

Dunking. Here's the resurrection. Pulling them back out.

We don't symbolize in baptism the act of death. It's the status of being dead. When you're dead, you're buried.

But, do you catch what I'm getting at here? We don't, in ritual, recreate death. We don't put blood on the palms and on the feet and say you're identifying with Christ and His death. Why is that? Because that occurs at the point of acceptance.

And His death accomplishes redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, all of the theological constructs that tell us we don't have to pay the penalty for sin. God's righteousness and justice are satisfied and we are now qualified to stand before God and to begin the process of learning how to have His righteousness produced in us. So now, the death part, that identification takes place at the point of salvation.

So now that we are saved and in the early days, especially, but water baptism was a teaching tool. So, okay, you've come to faith in Christ. The eunuch, the Ethiopian eunuch, Philip, out in the

desert, he's reading Isaiah and Philip explains to him about Jesus Christ and he trusts Christ and is saved.

And then he sees some water and he says, what is to prevent me from being baptized? Philip says, let's go for it. So they get down from the chariot and he baptizes and he's already saved, he's already a believer. So why the ritual? The ritual of baptism does not look at Christ's work on the cross, does it? It looks at the burial and the resurrection.

So it's very important for us to keep in mind the difference between the significance of the cross and the significance of burial and resurrection. What is the significance of burial? Separation. You cut the cord from the old life.

Burial of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the body that he bore sins in. That body was buried and those sins were buried with it. And when he was raised early in the morning on the third day, he had a different body and those sins did not come out of the grave with him.

He left those sins behind. The death that he died, he died to sin. And when he was buried for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, those sins and that body were separated.

And now that he is raised, the life that he lives, he lives to God. And when we are identified with Christ in baptism, which means the inception of our life as believers, what the significance of baptism is, not only do I want to identify with Christ in his death and get my ticket out of the lake of fire, I want to identify with Christ in his burial. I want to identify with Christ in his resurrection.

Baptism was a sign that the person who had been saved wanted to pursue identification with Christ to its fullest extent. I don't want to live my old life anymore. I don't want to continue to live in sin and to yield to sin and to make the point that the old dispensation made.

I want to die to sin and I want to live to God. I want to take advantage. Have you ever noticed that baptism was not a part of the Old Testament age? Of all the rituals they had, baptism was not one of them, was it? And why is that? They identified with death.

They were still looking forward to the death of Jesus Christ. Now, Judaism had a baptism, but it wasn't a part of the law. They had the mikvah, they had the dunking in the water and so forth, but water baptism, going under and coming back up, was something that John the Baptist started and it was a foreshadowing.

There's one coming after me who is greater than I. I'm not worthy to touch his shoe latchet. I baptize you with water. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

And it was a preview of what would come through Jesus Christ, that there was going to be a new economy. John summed up the law. We saw that in our Mark study.

His ritual showed the inadequacy of an external ritual. He said, there's somebody coming that's

going to do a real baptism on you. You will be able to be separated by identification with Christ in His burial.

You will be able to identify with Him in His life. So that's what we have going on here. We have access through Christ, a new and living way, Hebrews 10, 19 and 20, to the presence of the Father.

Christ separated Himself from sin in His burial and He now lives His resurrected life with a view toward God. The life that He lives, He lives to God. We should do the same.

And this is the point that we're seeing in chapter 6, verses 10 and 11. The death that He died, He died to sin once for all. By the way, that ephapax, word there, e-p-h-a-p-a-x, puts a spike directly through Catholicism and the idea of the perpetual sacrifice of Christ and that every time the mass is observed and every time the elements are served, this is the body and this is the blood of Christ.

He's once again dying on the cross. This is one of the major elements of Catholicism that the Bible clearly teaches against. In the Catholic view, the mass and the elements are an actual re-crucifixion of Christ.

But what does it say here? Christ died once for all. It's hapax. We have a term hapax legomena, which means it's only one time that this word is used in the whole Bible.

Well, this is a hapax death. It's a once-for-all death. Once and no more.

And Christ died on the cross in the three hours of darkness and on that day so long ago and he has never died since. He will never die since. And anybody that tries to say that he's dying in a ritual fashion or he's re-dying every time the mass is served hasn't read the New Testament or doesn't assign it sufficient weight.

And that's the problem in the Catholic Church. The life that he lives, he lives to God and that is our example. And that's why in chapter 6, verse 11, we have the imperative reckon yourselves dead to sin.

We have gone through six and a half chapters of Romans and this is the first imperative mood in the letter. It's the first time Paul has given a command. He has spent fully six chapters talking about the truth of God's plan, the truth of the work of Jesus Christ, the truth of our opportunity through Christ in this age.

And having planted all of that as a foundation in our mind, he now says, here's the command. Reckon yourself dead to sin. First command in the book.

Reckon yourself alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Nobody in the Old Testament could claim to be in Christ Jesus our Lord. It's unique for us.

And as a result of that in verse 12, therefore do not let sin rule. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body. That you should obey it and it's lust.

And we think, well Jesus Christ, He died to sin and He was free from sin and separated from it when He was in His resurrection body. So that's probably what we're going to do, right? Paul says, no, you don't have to wait for physical death and the resurrection body. You can reckon yourself dead to sin now and sin's power is broken.

And this is one of the ways that God is magnifying His power and magnifying His glory in our lives is showing that I can give these people life. They can start to generate righteousness and reflect glory before they ever get to the point of physical death when they're still in a fallen world, when they still have an old nature and they still have a corrupt body. The power of God is so great that we don't have to wait for the death that Christ died and the resurrection that Christ experienced and wait for the power of sin to go away when we receive our resurrection body.

It can happen now. We have access to God's grace now through Christ because He's alive, because He's in His resurrection body and we're in Him. We can already access that.

There is no reason for us to submit to the power of sin. There's no reason for us to have a life of death, a life of non-productivity, a life that's characterized by failure and by sowing to the flesh. And why is it that we can reckon this? We can't just say, okay, I reckon myself dead to sin, I'm going to make that decision and now everything's fine.

How can we make that reckoning? We saw this last time. The reason we can do this and it really make a difference in our life is because we know something. We saw in verse 3, do you not know that as many as have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death? If you knew this, it would make a difference.

In verse 6, we know that our old self was crucified with Him. Verse 8, we believe that we will live with Him. Verse 9, knowing that Christ having been raised dies no more.

Death no longer has dominion over Him. So the power that makes this reckoning happen is knowing and believing what God says. People in the Old Testament days didn't have access to that truth.

That wasn't even a truth for them. And many believers today have no idea of the power that is available, of the opportunity that is available because we're in Christ. We have to know these things and that's why we're so intent on understanding this letter that God the Holy Spirit superintended and that Paul sent to the Romans.

There are some things that if we know them, it's going to inject power for change and power for production of righteousness in our lives like the world has never seen. But we have to know something and we have to believe it. Righteousness comes through faith.

We say, okay, that's fine. I want to have faith. How do I do it? Faith means believing a truth, believing a statement.

God says, you died with Christ and sin and death have no power over you. We have to believe that. It has to be the same to us as a scientific report.

It's amazing. There would probably be many more believers who would start living the life of faith and having the righteousness of God produced in them if a team of scientists would come out with this and say, due to our exhaustive testing and research, we've discovered that down at the chromosome level and the human genome and everything else, we have concluded that there's a fundamental difference in people who trust in Christ. They apparently have died and sin and the desires of the flesh don't seem to have power over them like they do people that have not had this religious conversion experience.

We can't explain it, but science proves it. Christians would probably wake up and say, my goodness, there really is a different way of life. Science has proven it.

Why do we not have the same level of enthusiasm for what Scripture tells us as we do for what science tells us? We're willing to change our lifestyle and change our diet and change our habits and do many things because science says. And God's call to us is that He says some things about us and if we know those and if we believe them, it will transform us. It will make a huge difference in our life.

We're going to pause now and take our break and when we come back, we're going to see what some of the rest of Scripture has to say about these truths and we're going to finish chapter six. But let's pause now and take our break.