

# 2 – “Christians Aren’t Just Forgiven” // Romans 6:1–23 // Phantom Faith #2

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## Welcome ALAMANCE County Campus

I want to say a special welcome to our brand new Alamance County Campus. Last week, they met for the first official time. They’ve been meeting informally now for the past few months—but last weekend they officially launched in Mebane as our 9th Summit campus with over 300 present for their 1<sup>st</sup> service.

About 200 of that number is new to TSC—it included a bunch of teachers from the school they were meeting at plus a bunch of students from Elon University there.

Join me in thanking God for, once again, doing more than we could ask or imagine.

## Introduction:

If you are new to Christianity, one of the things that you notice pretty quickly about the Christian subculture is that we love bumper stickers. If you see someone with the whole back of their car plastered with bumper stickers you know they are either tree hugger or a Christian. Here are some of the worst ones I’ve seen (PICS) -

- **Confrontational evangelism Christian:** “This fish won’t fry; will you?”<sup>1</sup>
- **Passive aggressive Christian:** “Are you following JESUS this closely?”

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<sup>1</sup> <http://theboeskool.com/2013/12/05/the-unforgivable-sin-of-bumper-stickers/>

- **Cheesy Christian:** “CH\_\_\_ CH What is missing?”
- **“I glorify God even with my fast food choices Christian”:** “Freedom of speech: Christian values”
- Then there’s **Pastor’s favorite church member Christian:** “Tithe if you Love Jesus; Anyone can Honk.”
- **Politically Sensitive Christian:** “Pray for Obama: Psalm 109:8.” You say, “Oh, that’s nice.” But if you look up Psalm 109:8, it says, “May his days be few, and another take his office.”<sup>2</sup> (Put on bottom of pic after I read it).

I took all of these pictures just walking through our parking lot today... just kidding, but if you have any of these, you might want to stage a bathroom run and go take them off...

Here’s one more bad one, and I share it because it sets up a misconception I want to talk about today: “Christians aren’t perfect, just forgiven.” Now, part of that bumper sticker is true. Christian’s aren’t perfect, but they are not just forgiven.

We’re in a short series called *Phantom Faith*—in which we are discussing a handful of things that people just don’t get regarding Christianity, that keep from having the soul, the heart of Christianity...

- **A zombie is...**

The 1<sup>st</sup> week we went through Romans 4, and I showed you how so many people just don’t get what the Bible means when it says we are saved by faith... if you weren’t here for that, I’d encourage you to go back and listen to it.

- Because we talked about the one thing you have to understand if you are going to know for sure you will go to heaven...
- (And the one thing that separates the Christian message from every other religious message in the world)
- ...namely that salvation is received, not achieved: *God credits* to us Jesus’ righteousness when we trust, personally that God

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.zazzle.com/funny+christian+bumperstickers>

accomplished what he said he accomplished in Jesus' death on the cross—the full and complete payment for our sin.

**This week I want to deal with another misconception that people have about Christian salvation**, and that is that Christian salvation is “just forgiveness;” that the gospel is *just God's agreement* to wipe out our sin debt.

- **You can hear it in how we phrase the question...** “If you died tonight...” as if all the gospel was concerned about is the answer to that question.
- I want to show you, however, that in the gospel are **not only the resources to be delivered from the penalty** of sin, but also the resources we need to be delivered from the *power* of sin, too.
- **It's not “just forgiveness,”** it's the power of new life.
- The **question is not just “If you died tonight...”** but also “**if you wake up tomorrow...** how is your life going to look different because Christ is in it?”

**I'm really excited about this...** because what I'm going to share with you today has the potential to radically transform some of your lives. **There is a power available** to you that some of you don't even know about. (You *don't automatically get it* when you become a believer... you have to learn how to access it!

- Let's face it: Some of you, if you were honest, would admit that you **feel plateaued in your spiritual life—that you are not** making any real progress—you are not growing in your love for God; you have the same temptations, same temper, same foul moods—I want to show you why and how to change that.

**6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (After what Paul taught about salvation being a free gift that we simply receive, not achieve, this is the natural question. Do we have this **divine visa card** called the blood of Jesus with an unlimited balance that we can just ring up sin whenever we want?)**

**2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

**Alright... What does Paul mean** that we have “died to sin”?

- Well, he **doesn't mean that we are gradually moving away** from sin throughout our life, gradually getting more and more righteous. No, he says we are dead to sin. You don't have degrees of deadness. You can't be mostly dead. You are either dead or you are not.
- **Nor does he mean we have merely renounced sin**, saying, we are dead to it like an Italian mafia boss might say to his wayward son, “You are dead to me.”
- Something **much bigger** is going on.<sup>3</sup>

**3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

- Putting sin to death was something **Christ did for us when he died** on the cross.
- **When we were baptized into him**, we were joined to his killing of our sin.

**4 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 baptism he speaks of here, specifically, is **Spirit baptism**, where the Holy Spirit takes us—the moment we trust in Jesus—and unites us to the death of Christ, so that **his death on the cross became** my killing of sin, and **his burial became** the burial of my sin forever.
- That Spirit baptism is **mirrored by water baptism...**
  - Baptism should be an **external depiction** of an inward reality—that **just like we were joined to Christ** in his burial, so we are put under the water... and just like we were joined to Christ in his resurrection, so we come up out of the water.
- An external depiction of an inward reality...

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 139.

- Occasionally someone asks, “**Why don’t you sprinkle?**” Not to be catty... but it is supposed to picture a burial.
  - Or, they ask: Why don’t you do with babies? Because babies haven’t been put into Christ yet. Water baptism is the external symbol of what happens internally, in the Spirit, when we believe on Jesus.
  - TODAY? NOT READY

That unification, Paul says, gives us access to Jesus’ *newness of life*.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be **united** with him in a resurrection like his.

- “**United**” is a horticultural term, where you’d graft in a branch into another tree. Our plant was dead; so our dead branches were inserted into his living root and life was drawn up into us.

**Let me stop here for a moment: Do you understand the power and potential God gave you when he put you into Christ?**

- Christianity is not turning over a new leaf. It’s about the power of new life.
- **Some people are looking for so little** when it comes to salvation.
  - *They just want inner peace*, or to feel like **their lives matter**. *Some are just looking for a ‘get-out-of-hell-free-card.’*
  - *He’ll give you all those things, but there is so much more!*
  - Union to Christ means that everything that is true of Jesus is legally now true of us, too. You’ve not only got his perfect record, you have the power of his resurrection.
  - **Eternal life is not just a length of time he lets you live, but a quality of life he gives you now!**
- **Doesn’t that change how you see the potential** of your life?
  - *There is no brokenness or no corruption in you that the power of his resurrection cannot remove, heal and redeem.*
- Think about this: The **greatest people God used** to change the world had been deeply flawed people.

- **Peter** was a coward. **Paul** was harsh and abrasive. The **Apostle John** was arrogant and vengeful. **Several of the prominent women** in the early church had very shady pasts.
- The new birth made them men and women of incredible power.
- *They changed history, and they **were not made of more promising material** than you.*
- *It’s not about what you are able to do FOR Christ, but what he can do through you...*

Look to that person to your right and left... that person, if they are a believer, have the power of resurrection in them. *Do you want to touch them real quick; to see if you feel anything?*

- FRIEND – he’s not telling me to learn more and live the Christian life for him...

**Here we go—Paul is about to get practical: \*\*11 Likewise you also, reckon (logizomai) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)**

This whole passage is built around two commands. The first is **reckon**. Some translations say, “count” or “consider.” I like reckon... not like Southerners use it, “I reckon it’s gonna rain.”

### **(1. Reckon)**

- Reckon is an accounting term: “logizomai.”
  - If you remember, when we were going through Romans 4, “logizomai” **was the word Paul used to talk about how God credits** righteousness to when we trust Jesus as the substitute penalty for our sins.
  - It’s an **accounting term** that means you count one thing as if it were another.
  - I compared it to a **Wild Card** in poker where you count one card as if it were another.
  - **When God sees our faith in Jesus as our sin bearer**, he *logizomai* (reckons, or counts) our faith as righteousness.

- **Well, now, in Romans 6, it's our turn to do the reckoning.** We are to count ourselves as already dead to sin, and when we do, God infuses the power of new life into us.
- Here's the process:
  - **We put faith in Christ** as the substitute for our sin
  - **God reckons** our faith as righteous
  - **When we agree with God and reckon ourselves as righteous,** God infuses the power of new life into us
- You say, **"But I don't feel dead to sin.** Sin and wrong desires feel very much alive in me." You are missing the point. When you believe what God has declared to be, then he infuses the power into you.
  - **Abraham, again, is your example...** He was infertile at 90. God declared he would have a son. **When God said that,** Abraham didn't say, "You know, I think you're right. I have been feeling kind of frisky for the last few weeks... I believe you."
    - **No, Romans says he believed** what God said, *even though he didn't feel it,* even though he knew his equipment was way out of working order, and when he believed what God said he "received strength."
  - So we will receive strength to be dead to sin when we believe that God had made us dead to sin.
  - This is **not** some kind of **mental trick...** where you tell yourself "I'm brave" enough times until you become brave; God gives you actual power when you believe that what he says is true.
    - When you say, 'I am dead to sin. I am alive in the resurrection,' that power comes into you!
  - **We always want to feel first, and then we'll believe.** God says, "No, you have to believe first, and then you'll feel."
  - **This is "name it/claim it" sanctification.** The "name it/claim it" crowd, you see, has one major thing right—you can claim Jesus' power even when you don't feel it (NAME IT – YOU BELIEVE SOME PROMISE FROM JESUS AND IT

BECOMES YOURS). What they have wrong is what you claim.

- **His promises are not so about our material prosperity but about our growth in Christlikeness,** because that is a MUCH more valuable possession than an elevation in lifestyle.
- **Holiness, not a Hummer,** is the greatest gift God can give you.

So Paul continues... **12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.**

## (2. Restore)

Here's your 2<sup>nd</sup> command. The Apostle Paul tells us that after we **reckon** ourselves dead to God, we should **2. Restore** God as the center of our lives.

- (He **doesn't use that word in this text, per se,** but this is what he's talking about when he tells us to "present" the members of our body daily to God.)

**You see, something, Paul says, will sit on the throne of your heart,** and every day you'll present the members of your body in service to that thing.

Now, at this point **some of you may object...** and say, "Wait, Paul, I'm not a servant of anyone or anything. I do whatever I want."

- **Paul anticipates your objection! (BTW, trivia...** For a long time at Harvard they studied the book of Romans because of how carefully it is argued—how Paul senses every objection and deals with it).

**16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of**

sin, which leads to death, or of obedience (to God), which leads to righteousness?

- **Something is at the center of your heart.** Something commands your obedience. It's whatever is most important to you; whatever you feel like you have to have to be fulfilled, or happy. Whatever you feel like you can't live without.
- That thing controls you. It is, functionally, your master.

Christian counselor **David Powlison** and other identify core idols at the center of every human heart. Depending on your personality or time of life, different ones of these feature more prominently in you.

**(ONE AT A TIME)**

1. **Power:** Some people are driven by a desire for influence or recognition
2. **Control:** Some people long to have everything go according to their plan
3. **Approval:** Some crave to be accepted or desired. They can't be happy unless certain other people are happy with them.
4. **Comfort:** Some long for pleasure, whether that is sexual pleasure, eating, or just creature comforts

*Which is your biggest one?*

- There's nothing wrong with **any of those things in and of themselves**. It's when they become **central** in your life—**ultimate**—something we can't live without; something that commands our obedience more than God does—that they displace God as our Master and become wicked.
- John Calvin said that evil is not typically desiring something wrong, but wanting something good *too much*. Not loving a bad thing, but **elevating a good thing to a God thing**

In fact, Paul uses a very illuminating word in vs. \*12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

- The word Paul uses for sinful passions here is ***epithumia***. "*Thumia*" just means desire, strong desire. Adding "epi" means that desire becomes so large that controls you.<sup>4</sup>
- **I want money... and if I can't have it...** I'll be bitter and feel like I have a second-class life, or maybe even that life is not worth living. So I'll worry all the time about not getting money. I'll be jealous of those who do have it. I'll overwork; maybe even cheat, to get it.
- **I want a family...** and if I can't have that... well, life doesn't even feel like it's worth living. So I'll feel sorry for myself and ask what I did that would make God hate me like this. Or I'll obsess about finding a boyfriend or girlfriend and be willing to compromise all kinds of standards just to have someone with me.

**Tim Keller says that there are 3 tests** to show you what your spiritual masters are:<sup>5</sup>

- **Anger:** When something blocks you getting a good thing, you get upset/angry. That's normal and fine.
  - But if something blocks you from getting an ultimate thing, you get epi-angry. You snap.
- **Fear:** If something good in your life is threatened, you get worried. Found out my kids were in danger... I'd be worried. Natural.
  - But if something ultimate in your life is threatened, you are paralyzed. Your fear has become epi-fear. You are so anxious that you cannot think right.
  - You develop worry or anxiety problems. Panic attacks.
- **Sadness:** If you lose something good in your life, you grieve and weep.
  - If you lose something ultimate, you despair; you fall apart; you feel like life is not worth living; you want to throw yourself off a bridge.

<sup>4</sup> <http://biblehub.com/greek/1939.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Tim Keller, Sermon, "Perfect Freedom: Romans 6:1–7, 11–18."

These three emotions point to where God has been displaced as the Master of your heart. What triggers these 3 emotions most for you?

- Where have you gotten the angries?
- What causes you the most worry?
- What has caused you the most sadness?

### Two of my biggest: money and approval.

- Money: Like many married couples, we argued about money. I was worried we'd spend through our safety net... money for me is security.
- Approval: Fearing failure in the church

Paul says, "Everybody's gotta serve somebody." Or maybe that was Bob Dylan, but he got it from Paul. So, Paul says, put God back at the center, because...

**\*16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?**

- **Whatever Master you choose**—and you're going to choose one—leads to a certain destination...
- And **every master besides God** leads to death.
  - If you are enslaved to **approval**, your life will be plagued by constant self-pity, envy, hurt feelings (people always on eggshells around you), and inadequacy...
  - If you are enslaved to **comfort**,
    - Or you won't be able to say no to the pleasures of food, or sex or pornography; **ADDICTED**
    - Unwilling to ever sacrifice for others, for the mission—sharing doesn't come naturally—because those inconveniences keep you from your comforts. You'll always spend the majority of your money on nice things for you.

- If you are enslaved to **power**, you become domineering and vengeful. Harsh, even abusive. You'll talk about yourself all the time.
- If you are enslaved to **control**, you'll worry all the time, obsessively. You'll lose your temper a lot. People around you will feel manipulated.

**\*23 For the wages of sin is death...** You know this verse... but the CONTEXT? A HELL YOU EXPERIENCE ON EARTH BEFORE YOU GET TO THE ONE IN THE AFTERLIFE... THE ONE IN THE AFTERLIFE IS JUST AN EXTENSION...

**23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

- **There is another master**, Paul says, who doesn't require you to work to get his pleasures. It's God. He gives it to you as a gift.
- You see, every other master threatens, "If you don't work enough for me, I'll make you miserable."
  - **Money** says: "Fail to obtain me, and you'll be poor and cursed. If you don't work hard enough or are not smart enough, I'll curse you."
  - **Relationships** say, "You better work for me. If you are not pretty enough or skinny enough, and you don't find the right relationship, I'll make you lonely and miserable."
- But God says, "I give you all my joy and my blessing as a gift. You don't have to do anything. You don't have to earn it. Mine is not a wage, it's a gift. I'll give you every blessing I have in Christ, for free." RECEIVED, NOT ACHEIVED

Tim Keller has a wonderfully simple way of saying this: **Jesus is the only Master who, if you find him, will satisfy you, and if you fail him, he will forgive you!**

**Jesus is more satisfying and reliable than money...** he owns the cattle on a thousand hills and he promises to supply our every need and he never crashes or dips below 10,000.

**God is more fulfilling and more comforting than romantic love.**

Earthly marriage was just a dim shadow of his love. It turns out that the arms that we longed for in marriage were his arms. The tenderness and affection and security we longed for is in him.

**God is better than any earthly pleasure.** He is the fountain of all pleasure (Ps 16:11).

**Knowing God is better than earthly power.** What greater power can there be than to know that the sovereign God who controls every molecule in the universe has commandeered them all for your good?

**God is better than popularity.** To be known and honored and esteemed by the God of Eternity, that is honor indeed.

Everything you compare God to, he wins!<sup>6</sup>

**So, Paul says, after you reckon yourself dead to sin, you need to fight to restore God back on the throne.** Daily, present your members...

- **ILLUSTRATION: Epi-pen...** One of our campus pastors told me recently that he has a **bad shellfish allergy**. Problem is he loves shrimp. But it takes over his whole system... He has to inject in himself an Epi-pen to overcome **shrimp's dominance**.
- In the same way... sin, *epithumia* takes over your whole system. And it is killing you. You need to **inject into yourself with a vision** of the glory of God and a heavy dose of the promises of God.
- God needs to become **"epi" again** in your life.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justintaylor/2010/09/03/having-god-is-better-than-money-sex-power-or-popularity/>

<sup>7</sup> Puritan John Owen: Be killing sin (with Scripture) or sin will be killing you.

So Paul **began this discussion** with a question: *If we're really saved by grace, as a free gift, should we just go on sinning like we have an unlimited spiritual budget to cover sin?* God forbid. Why?

- Because sin is a trajectory that leads to death. And **if we've really repented**, we won't want to be on that path.
  - And if we are, Paul would say, that begs the question: **Have we really repented?** If you look at salvation as only a "get out of hell free" card, you probably have never really repented toward God for your sin! **Repentance means "metanoia"**: a change of heart or nature. You just tried to use him. NEW PATH

But assuming you have repented of your sins, how can you escape its power? **Two steps:**

- **Reckon** (yourself dead to sin and alive to God; that the price is already paid and the power is already provided)
  - **You don't have to walk around like a slave anymore!**
    - They say there were slaves in the United States who, after Abraham's Lincoln **Emancipation Proclamation** and even after the Civil War, could still not shake their identity as slaves, and when their old masters would come around they would tremble, and quake, and become subservient to whatever their former master said.
  - **You, Christian, when you listen to the voice of your old master that tells you** that you are nothing but an addict, or you'll never be anything but a failure... you're doing the same thing.
    - *Whatever you may feel, whatever your experience may be, God tells us here in his word that if we are in Christ we are no longer under the reign of sin. And if we fall into sin, it is simply because we have forgotten who we are. Remember, and reckon yourself, according to your new identity!*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones on this passage.

- **Restore** God as the center of your life.

### **It starts with trusting Christ... have you done that?**

- **The gospel is...** the only ones who get better are those who understand God's acceptance of them is not conditioned on their getting better...

### **The symbol of all this is baptism... the first act after you are saved.**

And we are going to give those of you who never have a chance to be baptized today.

- Some of you have **trusted Christ for the first time** in the last several weeks—your initial step. Some of you need to do so today.
- Others have never taken this step:
  - **As a baby?** Why not ratify?
- **Going to give you the chance** today.
- We have everything you'd need.
  - Change of clothes
  - Get wet? Will get wet on way to car anyway...
  - Your friends will wait—I talked to your friends, they said they'd wait... not one on one, in a group. Look at them... right now they are nodding their head "yes." If not, point at them and say, 'You need to get baptized, too.'
  - You'll talk to a counselor

### **Prayer:**

- Trust Christ?
- Need to be baptized? I'm ready.

Now, I'm going to stand you; they come. We have everything you'll need.

### **Stand and call: J.D.**

**Worship leader mid-call:** "If you know the person next to you is thinking about this, just turn to them right now and say, "Hey, if you

want to go, I'll go with you," and then the two of you come together. Do that right now. If you know them. If you don't... hey, say it anyway. Could be a tad awkward but that may be just the motivation they need. Go ahead, right now, if you can tell they are thinking about it and haven't come yet, say that to them..."