

Romans

Chapter 6

I. The Doctrine of Sanctification

Romans chapter 6 marks the beginning of Paul's development of the doctrine of sanctification. As noted in the previous chapter, sanctification is nothing more than the present results of justification. In fact, justification and sanctification are inseparable. It is not possible to be justified without being sanctified, and it is not possible to be sanctified without first being justified. More importantly, it is necessary to understand that sanctification comes *after* justification, not before. Many of the false systems of belief, such as the Catholic, arise because of a misunderstanding of this essential truth. We are not justified because we are working on our sanctification, but we work on our sanctification because we are justified.

Paul presents the doctrine of sanctification in Romans 6 and 7 by developing four basic themes. These are 1) we are dead to the sin principle (Romans 6:1-14), 2) we are freed from sin (Romans 6:15-23), 3) we are dead to the requirements of the law (Romans 7:1-13), and 4) our struggle with indwelling sin (Romans 7:14-25). The first of these two themes are the subject of chapter 6.

A. Sanctification Implies We Are Dead to Sin - Romans 6:1-14

The theme of Romans 6:1-14 is the fact that the one who is justified by faith is dead to sin. Paul develops this theme by 1) asking a question, 2) proposing an answer, and 3) proving the validity of that answer.

1. The Question - Romans 6:1

6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

As we have already noted previously, Paul often pretends to spar with an imaginary antagonist to make his point. This is exactly what we find in Romans 6:1 and 6:15.

The logical conclusion for the reader of Romans at this point is "If we are justified by faith, then we have no deterrent to sin." In other words, if we cannot save ourselves by the law, and we are justified by the mere act of believing God, then there is no inhibiting factor for sin in our lives. The law cannot save us, therefore it cannot condemn us once we are justified. The word translated "continue" in verse one is the Greek word *epimena* which means "to abide in." The question then is "Shall we continually abide in a state of sin so God's grace can be manifest?"

This question is at the heart of a great theological debate that is being raged at this very moment. There are some who would say that once a person confesses Christ as their Savior, their subsequent behavior cannot do anything to condemn them, and is in fact not even an indication of whether

they really believed or not. In other words, they would say that a person can be a believer but have no change in their life.

Unfortunately, this viewpoint runs counter to Scripture. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 5:17, "**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**" As Dr. Vance Havner says, "Christ is not a new page in your old book, He makes you a new book altogether." A person who says that they believe in Christ and yet lives a life that is totally characterized by the flesh with no appetite for spiritual things has deluded themselves. It is not possible for God to make us a new creation without there being some change in our lives.

2. The Answer - Romans 6:2

6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Immediately after asking the question, Paul blurts out the answer in no uncertain terms. The Greek construct rendered "God forbid" is the strongest negative in the Greek language, *me genoito*. We may understand it as "no way Jose", "not a chance", or "heaven forbid." Paul wants his readers to not be uncertain in the least regarding the answer to the question.

An answer without a reason is no answer at all so Paul goes on to state the reason we should not continue to abide in sin. The reason is simply that we are dead to sin. But we immediately say "wait a minute, if we are dead to sin then why do we continue to commit acts of sin in our lives." The answer to this question is to understand that Paul is not referring to individual acts of sin but to the sin principle in our lives. The word translated "dead" is *apothnesko* which refers to a single act at a particular point in time where we died. In other words, we are not dying to sin, we are dead to sin.

This is an essential and important point that will be developed in the remainder of this chapter and the next. We have been crucified to the sin nature within us, it is dead. However, we are still incarcerated in a body of flesh, where no good thing dwells. It is this flesh that causes us to sin when we submit to its desires and lusts. We are not a "spiritual schizophrenic" with an old and new nature battling for supremacy, but we are a new creation in a body of flesh. It is in this flesh that the real battle takes place.

3. Proving the Validity of the Answer - Romans 6:3-14

Paul now proves the validity of the answer he gave in verse 2. He does this by discussing 1) our identification with Christ, 2) our freedom from the sin principle through death, 3) our position in Christ, 4) our reckoning of sin, and 5) our submission to God.

a. Our Identification With Christ - Romans 6:3-5

6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 6:5 For if we have been planted

together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

The first thing to understand in considering our death to the sin principle is to consider our identification with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The word translated "baptized" and "baptism" is the Greek word *baptizo*. This word carries the idea of total immersion in water and came to refer to complete identification with something. For example, the baptism of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers to the Holy Spirit placing us into the body of Christ and identifying us with Christ by doing so. In 1 Corinthians 10:2 Paul speaks of the Children of Israel being baptized into Moses. What he actually means is that the Children of Israel were fully identified with Moses as they wandered through the desert. When we are baptized in Jesus Christ, we are identified with his death.

To be identified with only Christ's death means little unless it is coupled with identification with Christ in his resurrection. We need to understand that it is resurrection that ultimately gives us victory over sin. In 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 Paul writes, "**O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**" These three verses come after the most comprehensive treatment of the resurrection of the believer in the New Testament. Paul very explicitly states that we have victory over death, and hence sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The same concept is found in Romans 6:3-5. By understanding that we have been identified with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, we understand that we are dead to the sin principle in our lives. The required payment for sin is death, a death we paid vicariously in Christ. Because of this fact, that is, our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, we have paid the penalty for sin even though we did not die the death ourselves. Sin only needs to be paid for once. Christ suffered our death so we do not have to suffer death as well.

Note that it is because of this identification that we are to walk in newness of life. The word "new" is translated from the Greek word *kainos* which does not mean new in the sense of time, but new in the sense of quality or essence. We have a new life brought by a new covenant into a new and living way. We are dead to the old life and are become a new creation in Christ. For us to continue in our old lifestyle is a contradiction.

Not only have we been identified with Christ in his death, but we have been identified with Christ in his resurrection. This is the hope of every believer, that someday our mortal flesh will put on immortality. The redemption of man does not stop with his soul and spirit, it extends to his body as well. However, the body we will have in glory is not at all like the body we have now. Paul states in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 that "**flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.**" We do not know exactly the kind of body we will have in

eternity, but it will be a body perfectly fit for the realm we will live in. God does not redeem our current body, he gives us a completely new one.

b. Our Freedom From the Sin Principle - Romans 6:6-7

6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

The second great truth in this passage is that we are freed from the sin principle by the death of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, our old man was crucified with him. This crucifixion has the intended result that our body of sin might be destroyed. The word "destroyed" comes from the Greek word *katargeo* which means to "make useless" or "make void." It is the same word used in Romans 3:3 when Paul writes "**shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect**" and in Romans 3:31 where he writes "**Do we then make void the law.**" Paul is saying that because of our identification with Christ in His death, and the subsequent freedom from the sin principle that death provides, our body of sin is nullified, it has no more power over us.

This is an important concept to understand, namely, that those who are lost are in bondage to their bodies. They may consider themselves to be free, but they are not. Paul will analyze this in great detail later on in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point, that Christ's death has freed us from bondage to the sin principle in our bodies. This is stated very concisely in verse 7 where Paul states that the one who is dead is free from sin. In other words, the sin principle that lives in our bodies dies when the body dies. Because we have been crucified with Christ, we are dead and therefore we are freed from the sin principle that reigns in our bodies.

c. Our Position in Christ - Romans 6:8-10

6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 6:10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

The third great truth of this passage of Scripture is that of our position in Christ. Because we have been identified in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which results in the voiding of the sin principle in our bodies, we find ourselves in a new position; alive in Christ.

This new position is founded in the fact that the penalty for sin, death, needs only to be paid for once. If a man commits a murder and is electrocuted for it, and happens to come back to life 30 minutes after being pronounced dead, the law has no more dominion over him. The law requires the death penalty to be paid, which was when the man died. It is the law's tough luck that he came back to life.

This is exactly what happened to us. We died in Christ when He paid the penalty for our sins on the cross resulting in the satisfaction of the

law. However, it does not stop there since we are raised from the dead with Christ thus gaining complete victory over sin. Christ died for sin once and we died with Him. Now that He lives unto God, we live with Him also.

d. **Our Reckoning Regarding Sin - Romans 6:11**

6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Because of our identification with Christ and our new position in Him, we need to make our relationship to sin match our position. This particular verse is one of the most definitive verses in the New Testament regarding our standing and our state. Our standing is the new position we have in Christ, that of perfection and death to the sin principle. We need to understand very clearly that our standing before God is in the righteousness of Christ. We do not stand before God as sinners, we stand before God as righteous. In fact, if it were not for the imputed righteousness of Christ, we would suffer the wrath of God for our sin as any other sinner.

Our state, on the other hand, refers to the condition of our daily walk. Although our standing is in perfection, our state is not. Paul's cry in this verse is that we need to make our state match our standing. The word "reckoned" is the same word which occurs in chapter 4, *logizomai*. It is used to refer to the crediting of payment to one's account as well as a carefully considered reckoning of known truth. Paul says that we are to consider our position in Christ and as a result of that, understand that we are dead to the sin principle in our bodies.

The other great truth in this verse is that we are not only dead to the sin principle in our bodies, but we are made alive to God. Paul states in Ephesians 2:1 that "**And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.**" Death is separation. When we were unredeemed, we were dead, that is, separated from God. Because of our justification, we have been made alive, that is, quickened to God. Many people today think that they are alive when in reality they are dead. True life is life to God and death to sin. Those who do not die to sin will find themselves eternally dead in the sense that they will be eternally separated from God. This is in great contrast to our position which is "**alive unto God.**"

e. **Our Submission to God - Romans 6:12-14**

6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Having just shown that we are to make our state match our standing, Paul gives us an indication of just how we are to do that. The truths in these three verses are profound.

1). **Let Not Sin Reign - Romans 6:12**

The first great truth is that we are not to let sin reign in our bodies. The word translated "reign" is the Greek word *basileuo* which is related to the word *basileo* or kingdom. The idea Paul is trying to get across is that we no longer belong to the kingdom of sin, but to the kingdom of righteousness. Paul states this same idea in Colossians 1:13 where he writes, "**Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.**" The point is simple, we belong to a new kingdom.

Our basic problem in dealing with sin in our lives is that we continue to listen to the commands of the wrong king. Our new king is Christ. He has broken the power of the old king, sin, and has made us a citizen of His kingdom. Paul goes on to say that our submission to the wrong king results in us obeying the lusts of our body. It is at this point that we need to come to terms with the fundamental truth of our new life, that of obedience to our Lord. This is the starting point of spiritual maturity. When we start obeying what God tells us without question, we have embarked on the only real path to maturity available. On the other hand, when we disobey, we stifle the power of God in our lives and quench the Holy Spirit.

2. **Neither Yield Your Members As Instruments of Unrighteousness - Romans 6:13a**

The second way we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin is not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness. The word translated "instrument" is the Greek word *hopla* which means "weapon." One of the main reasons many Christians are victimized by sin is that they do not heed this command. When Christians constantly place themselves in areas of temptation it is not a question of "will they sin", it is a question of "when will they sin." When a Christian pumps the garbage of this world into their mind, garbage will come out. Any Christian who is serious about overcoming sin needs to make the vital step of guarding their minds from the areas of temptation they have trouble with. If a man has a problem with drinking, stay away from the bars. If a man has trouble with lust, stay away from pornographic materials. Never place yourself in a spot where you will be subjected to temptation. To do so is foolish and is presuming on God.

3. **Yield Your Members to God - Romans 6:13b**

This is the flip side of the previous truth. It is not enough to stop yielding ourselves to sin if we do not yield ourselves to God. We need to saturate our minds with the truth of the Scriptures and

the things of God. We need to get busy in the kingdom of God so that we will not have time to dwell in the kingdom of Satan.

Note that these two commands take a conscious effort on our part. We cannot sit around and expect God to miraculously protect us from Satan if we have not taken the first step by changing the input to our minds. It is fools who expect God to protect them when they expose themselves to needless temptation. Remember the story of Peter in Matthew 26? He told Jesus that he would never deny him although all of the other disciples would. Unfortunately, he exposed himself to temptation apart from the protection of God and fell. We can overcome temptation, but only in the power of God. By exposing ourselves to temptation we remove ourselves from the sphere of divine protection and set ourselves up for sin.

4. Sin Shall Not Have Dominion Over You - Romans 6:14

Lastly, we reckon ourselves dead to sin by understanding that sin has no more dominion over us. The word "dominion" comes from the Greek word *kurio* which means "to rule." Our new lord is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, not sin.

Why does sin have no more dominion over us? It is because we are under grace and not law. Remember that in verse 20 of chapter 5, law entered to proliferate sin. This truth cannot be underemphasized! All the law does is to bring out the sin in man. Under the Old Testament economy, the law had dominion over a man by showing that man just how far short he fell of God's standards. In other words, there was no way a man, on his own, could ever keep the law of God. However, because of the salvation God grants man based in the death of Christ, the power of the law is broken thus releasing man from the dominion of the law. This same idea can be understood by realizing that the law was a constant reminder that man was under the rule of sin because all man could do was sin. With the power of sin broken, the law has accomplished its purpose and no longer serves as a condemning factor in the life of a believer.

B. Sanctification Implies We Are Free From Sin to Serve God - Romans 6:15-23

In this section of Romans Paul further develops the doctrine of sanctification by showing that since we are free from the sin principle, we are free to serve God. Paul proves his argument by following the same pattern as he did in verses 1 to 14: 1) asking a question, 2) proposing the answer, 3) giving an axiom, and 4) proving the answer.

1. The Question - Romans 6:15a

6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?

This question is a natural response to the fact of our freedom from the law. If we have been made free from the law, as verse 14 shows, then we are free to

do whatever we want. This is the argument of the antinomians who taught that it did not matter how you lived once you were saved. It is also the doctrine of the libertines who taught that since the body was totally evil it did not matter what it did. God redeemed the spirit and soul but not the body.

We need to understand that Paul's teaching of grace ran counter to every theological concept the Jews had. To them the thought of abolishing the law was unthinkable since they taught it was the law that provided salvation and constraint in society. To remove the law would be to remove the restraining force that kept man from gross levels of evil. If the doctrine of justification by faith is to have any chance of acceptance, Paul must show that the removal of the requirements of the law in the believer's life does not lead to more sin. He needs to show that there is a more powerful restraining force to sin in a believer's life than the external requirements of the law.

2. The Answer - Romans 6:15b

6:15 ...God forbid.

As in Romans 6:2, Paul expresses his answer in no uncertain terms by using the strongest negative in the Greek language, *me genoito*. This answer alone should quell the many ignorant ideas regarding the Christian's unrestrained freedom to commit sin.

3. An Axiom - Romans 6:16

6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

To provide a basis for the argument to follow, Paul puts forth an axiom, a self-evident statement that needs no proof. The axiom he puts forth is this "you are a slave to whomever you yield yourself." When we agree to work for an employer for a specified wage, we are bound to do whatever the boss tells us. In the Roman world, you were bound to do whatever your master told you. Disobedience was not an option.

To further clarify the axiom, Paul gives the identity of the two masters one can obey, sin or obedience. This is probably one of the best definitions of sin found in the New Testament, that is, sin is the opposite of obedience. Not only do we have the two masters, but we have the two destinies, death and righteousness. Those who yield themselves to sin ultimately earn death, those who yield themselves to obedience will ultimately receive righteousness. The word "unto" can be understood better by the phrase, "which leads to." Sin leads to death, obedience leads to righteousness.

4. Proving the Argument - Romans 6:17-23

Having presented the axiom that whoever we yield ourselves to is our master, Paul now shows exactly what consequence this has in the life of a believer. He does this by 1) showing we have a new master, 2) describing our new walk, and 3) revealing our new wages.

a. **Our New Master - Romans 6:17-18**

6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 6:18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Paul begins to describe our freedom from sin by showing that we have a new master. Our old master, sin, no longer has dominion over us. The power of the old master has been broken because of our obedience to the message of the gospel. It is the acceptance of the gospel into the life of the sinner that breaks the power of the old master of sin and gives us the new master of righteousness.

The word translated "servants" is the Greek word *doulos* which means "slave" or "bondservant." Paul is saying that the unregenerate man is a slave to sin. In other words, the unregenerate man cannot keep himself from committing sin since sin is his master. However, when we obey the gospel, we are released from the bondage of sin in order to serve a new master.

b. **Our New Walk - Romans 6:19-20**

6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

Paul not only says that we have a new master, but he says that because of that new master we have a new walk. It is at this point we see a paradox. Paul spends a lot of time showing our new position in Christ, which has been attained solely by the grace of God, but he also spends just as much time telling us of our new duties. Many Christians do not understand the answer to the question "who does the sanctification in my life, me or God?"

The answer to this question is both! We need to understand that it is by God's divine power that the sin principle has been broken in our life. We must also understand that we have been called to a life of obedience. Whenever we stress God's side of our sanctification, we become lazy and disobedient. We think that we need to "let go and let God." On the other hand, when we stress man's side of sanctification, we become proud and legalistic. We begin to think that we are something special to God because of our perceived holiness.

Sanctification is accomplished in the life of the believer by submitting ourselves to God. We must understand that it is God's power that gives us the victory but we must decide to submit. For every verse in the New Testament that tells us of God's divine power, there is a verse that gives us a command for obedience. Unfortunately, many Christians consider obedience to God an option. We must realize that we have been made free from the bondage of sin for the express purpose of serving a new master. We are commanded to yield our members, that is our

bodily parts, to God. If we fail to submit, we have no one to blame for our sin but ourselves.

This tension between God's power and our obedience is brought out in many New Testament passages. For example:

James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Philippians 2:12-13

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2 Peter 1:3-11

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

c. Our New Wages - Romans 6:21-22

6:21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not only do we have a new master and a new walk, but we have a new wage. A slave received wages for his work even if it was only food and shelter. The wages of sin is ultimately death. God is not unjust in condemning man since man receives exactly what he worked for, death. However we, as believers, have a new master whose new wages are everlasting life.

In closing out this great chapter, we need to understand that God brings about practically what he brought about positionally. That is, all true believers are marked by a life of obedience. That does not mean that they will live lives of perfect obedience, but there will be within them a desire to live holy before the Lord. Although failures will come, they will loath the sin that is in them. Paul is not teaching that God brings about positional righteousness and we bring about practical righteousness. On the contrary! Paul teaches that God brings about both positional and practical holiness since it is by His power we are granted the ability to do righteousness. Our obedience releases the power of God in our lives resulting in true holiness. On the other hand, disobedience quenches the power of God in our lives making us victims of the sin principle which lives in our bodies.