

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Romans 6

Comments on Romans 6

Paul has established that man is saved by grace through faith (Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8) and not by works of law (Rom 3:20ff). To that fundamental proposition Paul has now added the concept that the result of adding the Law of Moses was to cause sin to abound (Rom. 5:20). But Paul adds, where sin abounded, grace abounded “more exceedingly.” Paul is now concerned that his readers may argue that, based upon his argument, since the exercise of God’s grace demonstrates his glory, and since Christians are only to live to glorify God, it follows that the more man sins, the more God’s grace is bestowed, the more God’s grace is bestowed the more God is glorified, so let us sin that grace may abound. Paul now addresses that corruption of the doctrine that he has espoused.

Before addressing chapter 6 we must address a modern misunderstanding of what Paul is teaching. Some commentators assert that Paul is here addressing the Christian’s empowerment (a popular modern word) to live a life of holiness. They describe Paul’s message as now telling the Romans about their deliverance from the power of sin. Paul is not here addressing deliverance from the **power** of sin, but is addressing their **obligation** to live a life of holiness. In other words, Paul is not addressing the **dynamic** behind the Christian life, but the **type** of life the Christian is obligated to live.

The issue isn’t just one of exegesis, it is one of harmonization with other passages of

scripture. Christians do not find it “mechanically impossible” to respond to sinful urgings. Even those who so teach wind up in self-contradiction, because they ultimately have to admit that the “machine” is broken based on the fact that Christian’s sin.

In summation, Paul is not teaching here that if we are united to Christ we will be empowered within to resist sin. He is asserting that if we are united to Christ (*i.e.*, we have been reckoned righteous), we assume the obligation to live a righteous life. Put another way, holiness is the logical outcome in the life of a Christian. Paul discusses this truth in 6:1-23.

6:1-14 -- The reign of grace affords no encouragement to sin.

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

v. 1 - If in the obedience of Christ all believers are justified, human sin must be a matter of indifference; it cannot nullify the free gift; nay, grace will be even more enhanced in that it abounds the more.

2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?

v. 2 - In physical death, a person no longer lives the life that he formerly lived. And so the sinner dies to the life of sin in that he no longer lives in the kingdom where sin reigns. This does not mean that the Christian finds no attraction in sin.

Gal. 5:17; 1 John 7-9. In those verses Paul establishes not only that Christians find sin attractive, but that they succumb to its allure. Paul simply argues that those who have died to sin cannot continue to live in it.

3 Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

v. 3 – Paul assumes that the Romans have been baptized even though he has never visited there.

Eph. 4:4-6. It seems very clear that Paul believed and was inspired to teach that a person

enters into Christ at the point that he is baptized into Christ. Many commentators, even those whose religious background denies the necessity of baptism, agree with that proposition. Even Martin Luther wrote that “when the washing away of sin is attributed to baptism, it is rightly so attributed.” Paul describes entering by baptism into close union with a person, coming to belong to him so as to be in a sense identified with Him. We are baptized into the benefits of his death.

Recall, however, that Paul is not stressing here the necessity of baptism to union with Christ (though that is certainly true and the basis of the point that he does make), he is establishing that those who have entered into that union can no longer continue in sin. If we entered into such a death (his death), how is it possible that we continue to give ourselves to sin as our master?

4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have become united with *him* in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection;

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin;

vv. 4-6 – In fact, Paul says, our death, burial, and resurrection is parallel to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. (See Eph. 1:18 – 2:6.) Recall that the Christian had been under a death penalty (Rom. 3:23; 5:21 – dead in sin). He is now raised to walk in newness of life. The work of Adam has been undone and the work of Christ has provided the free gift of God – eternal life. It is that life into which we are raised to walk.

Those who have been united in the likeness of his death shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. The “if” is one of condition. Only those who have met the condition are qualified to receive the blessing. Paul argues that those who have been united in Christ’s

death don't make arguments to justify increased sinning because they have been raised to a new life serving a new master to whom they present the members of their body to do His will – not to the former master to do sin. This is not a reference to our future resurrection except only by extension. It is a reference to our present life as those who have been raised with Christ.

In the process our old man is crucified with Christ. The old man is “me” in all of my relationships to law before I was crucified with Christ. The old man is not something that needs to be crucified again and again. When we enter into union with Christ the old man is killed and a new man (newness of life) is resurrected in place of the old man. Eph. 4:21-24. There is something to be continually put to death (Rom. 8:13), but it isn't the old man. The old man (the body of sin) is done away. To serve sin as ruler in our bodies contradicts the very purpose of our dying with Christ. As Paul describes it, we should no longer be in bondage to sin. It is no longer our master. The old man isn't just sick, wounded or weakened. He is not even MIA. He is a certified accounted for fatality – crucified, dead, and buried! Gal. 2:20.

7 for he that hath died is justified from sin.

v. 7 – The purpose of our being baptized into Christ is to be justified from sin. (Freed - Released, justified, acquitted; immune to the power of sin {Phillips}); no longer answerable for his sin. {NEB}.) The former slave has been freed from all legal claim by his former master.

While sin is personified in this passage, it does not teach that sin has an existence apart from the sinner. There is no sin without sinners. Sin has no objective existence apart from the

8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;

9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him.

10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof:

conduct of people.

v. 8 - live with him when? Logical future tense. On the surface this might seem to refer to a future resurrection. It might certainly be included, but in the context we are dealing with an ethical resurrection, the same one mentioned in vv. 4-5.

v. 9-10 – Did death have dominion over Christ? All that is implied is that he had made himself subject to it by taking on him our nature, and voluntarily submitted to it, once for all, as representing us. John 10:17; Acts 2:24. Death had its chance with Christ and it lost. Death had Christ in its grasp and it couldn't hold on. This truth is for our assurance for v. 8.

Christ's death unto sin does not mean that he sinned. Rather, Paul says that Christ died in relation to sin. He died to settle the debt that was owed because of the problem of sin (Adam). This was a once-for-all death that forever severed Christ's connection with sin (see Heb. 9:28). The life that he now lives he lives in relation to God.

v. 11 – The question under discussion is how should the saint relate to sin? What is the consequence of the new relationship with Christ? Saints don't sin exceedingly so that God may be glorified. "Even so," Paul says, pointing back to the example of Christ's death, your life is a new life in which you live unto God in Christ Jesus.

vv. 12-14 – Here is the call to resist sin. Sin had reigned over them once but it must not be

13 neither present your members unto sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace.

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves *as* servants unto obedience, his

permitted to do so. The mortal body is the body that is subject to physical death and decay. They could live after the flesh (8:13). They could yield their bodies to sin (6:16). But they were not to do so. The body of sin was done away that they might be servants of righteousness.

The reason that they should not do so is because they are not under law but under grace (v. 14). If they were under law they would be under the reign of sin. Since they are under grace, “sin shall not have dominion over [them].” Sin would have dominion over us if there were no way of escape, but through grace there is a way of escape. Where law condemns, grace makes pardon possible. If not under law in any sense, then grace is not needed. Sin is transgression of law. This is a figure of speech in which the less is denied so as to emphasize the greater.

6:15-23 - Believers, though not under a legal dispensation, are nevertheless under the obligation of obedience to the Divine law.

v. 15 – If they have been moved out from under sin, then does it not follow that sin becomes irrelevant? If one has been freed from law he is surely free to do as he wishes? Paul has already made the point that they have been freed from sin to live lives of holiness. But if a life of sin is not acceptable, what about occasional sinning? Since the demand for flawlessness is gone, occasional sinning must be acceptable. Paul denounces this error as strongly as the first.

v. 16 – Paul writes to Christians and his language is a warning not to indulge in sin on the ground that they are not under law. To do so is to

servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

17 But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered;

18 and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye presented your members *as* servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members *as* servants to righteousness unto sanctification.

20 For when ye were servants of sin, ye were free in regard of righteousness.

21 What fruit then had ye at

become servants of sin. The life we live determines whose servants we are. To choose to serve sin when its aims and goals are the direct opposite of Christ's aims and goals is a repudiation of our new Master. We belong to whom we obey. Note that obedience (following God's law) is unto righteousness. Once again we learn that obedience and "works of law" are not the same thing.

v. 17-18 – How beautiful is the word "were" in this text. How did it come about? They obeyed from the heart the form of teaching delivered to them, and they **were** then made free (lit, "having been made free) from sin and **became** servants of righteousness. In their obedience they followed the form of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Their old man was crucified, buried (in baptism), and resurrected to walk in newness of life. In faith, they acted out the victory in Jesus as they were plunged beneath the cleansing flood. Note the likeness of this passage to v. 6.

v. 19 – Paul continues to use human illustrations. The truth is often easier to grasp in this manner, especially abstract truth. Paul calls for loyalty to their new Master as great as the loyalty they had had to their old master.

v. 20-23 – When they were owned by sin they had no desire to serve righteousness and did not practice it, a fact of which they are now ashamed. What was their reward for their

that time in the things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life.

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

service to sin? The end of those things is death.

In contrast to that, you now have fruit unto sanctification. The end of those things is eternal life. How different the harvest! Harvest time is coming.

When the verdict of condemnation is pronounced, we receive what we have had coming all along. When eternal life is given to us, it is a free gift through Christ Jesus our Lord.