

The Epistle of Paul to the *Romans*

Having demonstrated the doctrine of justification ^{3:20-5:21}, Paul began a discussion of the doctrine of sanctification, which is the process of God producing righteous behavior ^{6:1-8:39}.

Sanctification: The Demonstration of God's Righteousness (6:1 - 8:39)

To begin his teaching on sanctification, Paul explained that everyone God has justified will experience personal holiness ^{1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:9-11}, no matter what they were like in their past.

6:1-2 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? As a former Pharisee, Paul anticipated the objections to his teachings. In these verses, he emphasized the criticism that once God granted justification through his free gift of grace, what would keep the believer from being free to increase sinning ^{Romans 3:5-8}. Paul responded to his question with a sense of outrage that anyone might think in that way. His statement "we died to sin" ^{Colossians 3:3} was referring to the one-time past decision to be "in Christ" ^{Romans 6:11, 8:1}, which associates a saint with the substitutionary death of Jesus ^{Romans 5:6-8}, and not to their daily struggle with sin.

The concept that a Christian is counted "dead" with Christ is the central theme of Romans 6.

The phrase "by no means" is translated from two Greek words (*ginomai, mē*) that Paul wrote in his epistles fourteen times, and his use in every case was to convey an emphatic "No!": also translated as "not at all", "absolutely not", "certainly not", "may it never", and "never".

6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

In speaking about "all of us", Paul was addressing all genuine believers. The "[baptism] into Christ Jesus" ^{Matthew 28:19, Galatians 3:27} was not a reference to being immersed in water, but to a spiritual immersion into the person and principles of Jesus ^{1 Corinthians 6:17, Galatians 3:26-27}.

Paul continued by explaining that in being "baptized into [Christ's] death", the Christian is associated with the death, burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ ^{Colossians 2:9-12}. Unlike fringe 'Christian' churches that teach once a person has accepted Jesus as their personal Savior, they are free to go about their lives as they please, Paul echoed a principle taught throughout

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both the OT and NT: the genuine believers will live a “new life” ^{2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15}.

This changed life will have a new quality and character setting saints apart from the ways of the world ^{Ezekiel 36:25-27, Ephesians 4:22-24, Colossians 3:10}, and a transition from sin to righteousness.

Water baptism is a symbolic act representing the vital, salvation-producing spiritual baptism. Baptism is a NT analog to the OT symbolic act of physical representing spiritual circumcision.

6:5-7 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Paul continued to embellish the believer’s connection with Jesus and the events He experienced ^{Romans 8:11, Ephesians 2:6, Philippians 3:10-11}. Here the emphasis is on “death” eliminating the old (the worn out and useless) and “Resurrection” bringing in the new ^{Galatians 2:20}. Accordingly, saints should not be living in any of the old sinful ways ^{Galatians 5:24, Ephesians 4:20-24}. While someone who is saved has a new nature (a “new life” ^{v.4}), they are still burdened with their unredeemed flesh, which continues to try to change behavior ^{Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:3, 5:13}. However, Paul told the saints that Christ has “done away with” and “freed [them] from sin” ^{v.20-22, Romans 8:2}, which meant that as long as they remain close to Jesus, they are no longer under the control/power of sin ^{Galatians 3:22}, because Christ’s efforts have rendered sin ineffective in their lives.

Paul used the terms “old self” and “body of sin” as synonymous: *unregenerate flesh* ^{Romans 8:6-8}.

6:8-10 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

The connection between the believer and Jesus provides the believer with the opportunity to live a holy ^{1 Thessalonians 4:7, 2 Peter 3:11} and righteous ^{1 Peter 2:24} life not possible prior to salvation.

There are two aspects of Christ’s death to sin: (1) He paid the penalty of sin (meeting the legal demand on the sinner) and (2) He destroyed the power of sin over His followers forever. The sacrifice of Jesus was unlike the inadequate sacrifices of the priests, because His sacrifice was complete, never needing to be repeated ^{Hebrews 7:26-27, 9:27-28}. “He lives to [God’s glory]”.

Paul wanted all believers to fully understand and appreciate that their association with Christ meant they could live free ^{Galatians 5:1} and joyful ^{1 Thessalonians 5:16} lives, because of His sacrifice.

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In the upcoming verses ^{Romans 6:11-14, 7:1-25}, Paul addressed the question: If the old self is dead, why do Christians continually struggle with sin and how can the new self become dominant? The keys to his answer lie in two words: "count" ^{v.11} (*logizomai*) and "offer" ^{v.13} (*paristemi*).

6:11-14 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. The phrase "in the same way" is Paul's way of saying the previous 10 verses are the foundation of what is ahead. The Greek word translated "count" indicates the kind of heartfelt confidence that will make a difference in a person's decisions/actions. Where the saved person is still vulnerable is in their mortal body, where temptations come through sinful thoughts in their mind ^{Romans 7:14-25, James 4:1, 1 Peter 2:11}. The Greek word translated "offer" reflects a decision made in the will ^{Philippians 2:12-13}, which can result in either an acceptance or a rejection of sin. When a person's will chooses sin, they allow their bodies to be used as "instruments of wickedness" to produce violations of God's holy will/law. But Christians are called to "offer" their bodies as "instruments of righteousness" ("living sacrifices" ^{Romans 12:1}).

The phrase "in Christ" is Paul's favored way to indicate the union: believer/Jesus ^{Ephesians 1:3-14}.

The phrase "not under the law, but under grace" ^{Ephesians 1:3-14} does not mean God abolished the law ^{Matthew 5:17-19}. The law ("commandment") is "holy, righteous and good" ^{Romans 7:12} "if one uses it properly" ^{1 Timothy 1:8}, which has two meanings: (1) the law will always remind man of his sin ^{Romans 3:20} and great need for grace ^{Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 4:16} and (2) the law should not be used with rigid legalism, but as a guide for life out of vast love for the Lord ^{Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:30}. Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross ^{John 19:30} made salvation possible ^{1 Peter 2:24}, as well as enabling the believer to begin to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law ^{Romans 7:6, 8:3-4}.

In the remaining verses in this chapter ^{v.15-23}, Paul continues explaining sanctification, by reminding believers of their past slavery to sin and their present slavery to righteousness.

6:15-18 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be

slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. Paul essentially asked the same question he posed earlier ^{v.1}, with the same response "By no means!" ^{v.2}. He continued by proclaiming people are slaves to whomever they "obey", and implying there are only two types of self-imposed slaves: (1) "slaves to sin" or (2) "slaves to righteousness". The Scripture declares that if man is not in the process of being a "slave to righteousness", then "sin [would be] crouching at [their] door" ^{Genesis 4:7}; however, Paul indicated the way to stay on the right path is to "wholeheartedly" obey "sound teaching" ^{2 Timothy 1:13}.

Paul made a connection between slavery and obedience. However, Peter expanded on this concept by pronouncing that: "...a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him." ^{2 Peter 2:19b}.

The word "form" (*typos*) in the phrase "form of teaching" indicates a 'type' or 'pattern' of belief and behavior worthy of emulating. Paul's emphasis is on teaching sound doctrine ^{Titus 2:1}, especially to new believers who have a natural hunger for "pure spiritual milk" ^{1 Peter 2:2}.

6:19-23 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. It seems the "human terms" ^{Galatians 3:15} Paul wrote about referred to the use of the analogy of slave/master when discussing obedience to sinfulness or righteousness in order to help his readers understand divine truth. The imagery of an "ever-increasing wickedness" relates an evil man's hunger for sin with the appetite of a wild animal ^{Genesis 4:7}.

Paul alluded to the shame following the very temporary satisfaction sin provides ^{Hebrews 11:25}, and even worse, the second "death" results from the giving in to a life of sin ^{v.23, Proverbs 10:16}. Paul concludes this discussion with two points that are absolute: (1) a person who chooses a life of wickedness will receive a payment ("the wages") of spiritual death ^{Romans 6:23}; however, (2) he who elects to accept and embrace God's gift of grace will receive eternal life ^{John 3:15-16}.

A true believer has been "set free from sin" ^{v.6,18,22}, is in the process of sanctification that "leads to holiness" ^{Isaiah 35:5-8, 2 Corinthians 7:1} and is granted "eternal life" ^{Romans 2:7, 1 Timothy 6:12}.