

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

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

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

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

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.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his resurrection*:

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.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ,

we believe that we shall also live with him:

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

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

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

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

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.

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

NOTES

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

Lesson Text: Romans 6:1-14

Related Scriptures: I Corinthians 15:12-23; Colossians 3:1-11

TIME: A.D. 56

PLACE: from Corinth

GOLDEN TEXT—"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

Lesson Exposition

In last week's lesson text, we examined Paul's emphasis on the spiritual principles of death and life. We discovered the good news that Jesus' death resulted in our justification by faith and our reconciliation with God. We also discovered the comparably greater news that Jesus' resurrected life delivered us from enemy status to friend status, characterized by joy and praise.

In this week's lesson text, we continue to emphasize the dynamics of spiritual death and life. The apostle Paul's teaching inspires us to live out the day-to-day reality that death no longer has dominion over us. As a result, we now present ourselves to God as resurrected, life-filled saints and display our righteous lives, dominated by His grace.

A TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE—Rom. 6:1-7

Paul's searching question (Rom. 6:1-2). The apostle Paul's teaching that increased sin resulted in increased grace (5:20-21) prompted his searching question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (6:1). Paul seemed to sense an objection to his teaching, so Paul did not hesitate to state his

answer. Using the strongest language possible, Paul vehemently objected to any relationship between the doctrine of justification by faith and sinful living.

The apostle Paul then expressed a foundational question to advance his teaching on the relationship between justification and holiness. Paul's implied answer to his question taught that an increase in sinful living to achieve abundant grace was utterly incompatible with the doctrine of justification by faith. Paul declared sin no longer had a dominant influence over the Roman believers. In fact, Paul implied it would be ridiculous to teach otherwise.

Paul's symbolic illustration (Rom. 6:3-4). Paul used the symbol of baptism to promote the relationship between justification by faith and holiness. Paul believed baptism was a spiritual act of intimate identification. Paul's language implied his readers were not ignorant of how baptism convincingly illustrated the truth that justification by faith results in holiness.

Through baptism, followers of Jesus Christ by faith alone identified with Jesus' death. Paul's implied conclusion, therefore, was that the Roman

believers were dead to sin. The fact that Jesus did not remain in the grave furthered Paul's argument for the relationship between justification by faith and holiness. Jesus' powerful and glorious resurrection to life demanded a reciprocal identification from the Roman believers—they too were to rise to a life dominated by holiness.

There remains an endless debate over whether Paul's symbol of baptism referred to baptism of the Holy Spirit or to water baptism. My humble belief is the context of Paul's teaching placed a priority on Spirit baptism, which is the identification of the believer with Christ and other believers in the body of Christ at the moment of salvation (cf. Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

Paul's significant knowledge (Rom. 6:5-7). Paul moved toward the conclusion of his argument that justification results in holiness through an allusion to knowledge. Paul restated the undeniable truth that the Roman believers had been intimately united with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. Since the believers shared in the benefits of both spiritual realities, they gained significant knowledge.

Paul declared the Roman believers knew the corrupt, dominating, sinful nature of man (cf. Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) had completely identified with Jesus' death; that is, the sinful nature was powerless and defective. As a result, the Roman believers knew they no longer were under the control of a master/slave relationship with sin. Death had freed them from sin's deadly control.

Spiritual knowledge for the sake of knowledge only is one-dimensional. Yes, it is beneficial to possess factual knowledge (cf. Ps. 46:10; 1 Cor. 3:16). Transforming spiritual knowledge, though, is developed as the believer lives out the factual knowledge he possesses (cf. Phil. 3:10).

The development of transforming

knowledge often takes place in relationships. I want to encourage you, therefore, to seek out other Christians to whom you can be spiritually accountable (cf. Prov. 27:17). Even if your life schedule prevents you from experiencing regular Christian fellowship, take every opportunity presented you to engage with believers. God desires to mature you into the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:29).

A TRANSFORMING CONSIDERATION—Rom. 6:8-11

Death's vanishing influence (Rom. 6:8-9). The apostle Paul confirmed once again his emphasis on the believers' identification with Jesus Christ in His death (vss. 5-7). Paul's language did not imply any doubt. Rather, Paul confidently stated the Roman believers' intimate fellowship with Jesus in His death also included intimate fellowship with Jesus in His risen life.

This intimate fellowship produced an assured knowledge concerning death. Jesus' resurrection from the dead assured that He will never again experience physical death. The reality and influence of death had completely vanished.

Life's vibrant influence (Rom. 6:10-11). Jesus' perfect, sacrificial death on the cross for sin was a singular event (cf. Heb. 10:9-14). Jesus' resurrected life, though, has an eternal character. Seated at God's right hand in His majestic presence, Jesus now lives to intercede for His saints and bring glory to His Father (cf. 7:25).

Jesus' vibrant, resurrected life should have a spiritual impact on the lives of His followers. In like manner to their living Lord, the Roman believers were to consider themselves to be separated from sin's masterful dominion. Instead, the Roman believers were to look at themselves as alive in Him. Their lives were to mimic Jesus' risen life.

A TRANSFORMING PRESENTATION—Rom. 6:12-14

The believers' responsible actions (Rom. 6:12-13). In light of everything the apostle Paul had previously written, he commanded the Roman believers to renounce every relationship to sin. Based on their intimate identification with Jesus' death, the Roman believers were to not yield obedience to sin's lustful control in their lives. In addition, they were to stop surrendering their physical bodies to corrupt desires and actions. As animated, intimate companions with Jesus and His risen life, the Roman believers were to surrender themselves completely to God and His righteousness.

The believers' novel position (Rom. 6:14). This week's lesson text concludes with Paul's striking summary statement. Paul strongly stated the Roman believers' intimate identification with Jesus in His death and risen life provided them with a novel position. The overarching spiritual position of sin no longer dominated the Roman believers. The reasons for that novel position were twofold.

First, the Roman believers did not depend on the law for God's favor and approval. Trying to be declared righteous by keeping the law was foolish because the law had no confining effect on sin and its lusts. In fact, the law left people at the mercy of sin.

Paul's terse statement did not invalidate the law. The Roman believers were to obey its moral precepts. Their obedience, though, did not result in their being declared righteous in God's sight.

Second, the Roman believers were positioned under the control of God's grace. Under the power of God's grace, the Roman believers would experience spiritual assistance to overcome the damaging effects of sin. What the law could not do, as it was weak and ineffective (8:3-4), grace would success-

fully accomplish because of Jesus' powerful, risen life.

The term "legalism" does not appear in God's Word. It is, nevertheless, a spiritual reality. Legalism is a man-centered dependence on rules and regulations to achieve both salvation and spiritual growth (cf. Gal. 3:1-5).

I want to strongly encourage you to memorize Galatians 5:1: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Next, I want to challenge you to experience the freedom of your novel position by taking God at His Word, trusting His personal involvement in your unique life circumstances that are difficult or impossible for you to manage.

—Thomas R. Chmura.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We must never believe the lie that an increase in sinful living is beneficial because it results in an abundance of God's grace (Rom. 6:1-2).
2. Intimate identification with Jesus in His death and resurrected life is a powerful impediment to sin's dominion (vss. 3-4).
3. The spiritual key to a life of holiness is the believer's freedom from sin's slavery (vss. 5-7).
4. Jesus' perfect, singular sacrificial death sets the stage for our perfect, continual vibrant lives glorifying God (vss. 8-11).
5. Believers in Jesus Christ by faith alone are accountable for their day-to-day spiritual decisions (vss. 12-13).
6. The spiritual failure of the law has been replaced by the spiritual success of God's grace (vs. 14).

—Thomas R. Chmura.