

We have died with Him

Romans 6:1-13

Some people do not like Christianity because they believe it encourages hypocrisy.

Poet, W. H. Auden articulated this hypocritical attitude: "I like committing crimes. God likes forgiving them. Really the world is admirably arranged."

Paul begins Romans 6 by asking a question.

What shall we say then?

Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

Does the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in Christ alone encourage hypocrisy? If we are saved by grace, and our sins only magnify God's grace, should we not continue sinning so that God's grace might increase all the more? Somehow, we all know the answer to his question, even before Paul gives it.

² By no means!

But while we know that we should not go on sinning, we may not know why we cannot go on sinning. There is a big difference between the two. The Bible gives many reasons why you should not go on sinning. But here in Romans 6, Paul explains why the Christian cannot go on sinning.

Read Romans 6:1-13.

"By no means!"

Are we to continue in sin?

By no means! Absolutely not!

Not happening!

Not possible!

No way!

It is absolutely true that your good works do not save you.
But it is not a correct to conclude from this that you can go on sinning.

If the doctrine of Justification were all there was to the Gospel, then changing your behavior might be irrelevant. But justification is not everything to the Gospel. There is more. And this more makes continuing in sin a logical impossibility. It is important for you to see that when Paul says, "By no means!", he is not giving a moral command. There is nothing wrong with moral commands. The Bible is full of them. But if moral commands is all that you have, you turn the gospel into a form of moralism.

Paul explains for us here the logical impossibility of continuing in sin. And in so doing, he makes sure that the moral commands are encompassed and established in grace. Paul is not saying, "You better not continue in sin! Or else!" Paul is saying, "To trust in Jesus Christ and to go on continuing in sin is not even possible!"

It is a logical impossibility, because it is a spiritual impossibility. There is something that spiritually happens when a person trusts in Jesus Christ that makes continuing in sin an impossibility. What is it that happens? The person who previously had Adam as their covenant head, now has Jesus Christ as their covenant head. This was Paul's main point in Romans 5:12-21.

All men were initially tethered to Adam. All who trusts in Jesus Christ are now tethered to Jesus Christ. Being tethered to Adam is like being tethered to a canon ball while trying to swim. You are not going to win this battle. You are going to drown. Being tethered to Jesus Christ is like being tethered to a rocket. You are not only going to swim, you are going to fly heavenward.

Theologians have historically used the language of "union with Jesus Christ." Being united with Jesus Christ is more than a doctrine. It is a spiritual reality that you cannot see or many times even feel. But for those who believe in Jesus Christ, it is the most real truth about them.

When the Christian asks, "Who am I really?" There is only one ultimate answer that matters: I am someone who is united to Jesus Christ. Who am I? I am one who has been tethered to Jesus Christ! Because I have been tethered to Jesus Christ, it is impossible for me to continue in sin.

Paul writes, “How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

If all you had was this question in isolation, you might think that Paul is talking about what we call “conversion.” When a person trusts in Jesus Christ, there is a conversion of the heart. Experientially, deep within, the person is new, different.

But if you consider the context of Romans 6, I do not think Paul is referring to what has occurred inside of him. At least not primarily, or initially. Of course, through the Holy Spirit, God does make changes inside of us. The Christian is born of the Spirit.

But when we ask: “What does Paul mean by, ‘we who have died to sin’?”, I do not think he wants you to search inwardly to discover if you have been experientially transformed.

In fact, I would argue that in Romans 6 Paul is laying the foundation of true hope for experiential transformation. If they had already strong assurance that the transformation had already occurred, there would not be any need to have the discussion.

If the Romans were already “experientially” dead to sin, then they would not be struggling with sin, and they would hardly need Paul to take three chapters to help them be free from sin. Instead, I believe Paul is making a logical statement of what it means to have Jesus as our representative and covenant head.

I said last week: When Adam sinned, we sinned. The same is true of Jesus: When Jesus died to sin, we died to sin. What is true of Jesus, is true of us. Even though not one of us has yet to fully died to sin.

Faith in Christ unites you to Christ. Everything that Christ has done as your Covenant Head, you too have done. This union with Jesus Christ is symbolized and sealed to you in your baptism. And that is exactly where Paul takes us.

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

When you were baptized, you were baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. What that means is that the entirety of the redemption that has been accomplished by Jesus Christ is now yours, through your union with him.

Your Covenant Baptism preaches to you this truth: You are tethered to the rocket of Jesus Christ. But instead of the rocket initially taking you up, the rocket plunges you down, down to death. Why? Because Jesus went down before he went up.

You were not baptized into your death. You were baptized into “his” death. It is not so much that you have experientially died. But rather that you are included in his experiential death.

⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death,

“We were buried” is another way of saying, “we have died.”

But how were we buried? Answer: with him

The Christian is tethered to the death of Jesus Christ. This is not to say that the Christian has experientially died in every way, just as Christ has died. Think about the fullness and completeness of Jesus’ death to sin that occurred as he breathed his last breath in this world.

Before that last breath, Jesus wrestled in the Garden with God, pleading that God might take the cup from him. He surrenders his will to the Father, but not without great struggle. What happens to that struggle after he breathes his last breath? It is gone. No more struggle. No more spiritual attack from the devil. No more temptations to disobey. In his death, Jesus is fully and completely “dead to sin.”

What is more, Jesus’ death was itself an act of dying to this world. Satan had offered him all the kingdoms of this world, if he would only bow to him. Jesus refused at the beginning of his ministry. But he also refuses again in the Garden of Gethsemane. And when commits his life into the hands of his Father. Jesus doesn’t have his life taken from him. He lays it down. In his death, every temptation to live for this world is over. At the cross, Jesus dies to sin. And through faith in Jesus Christ, you have died with him.

You have not breathed your last breath. You still struggle to die to sin. And you still struggle to die to this world. But your death to sin and your death to this world are not in question. You have been baptized into the death of Christ, which is already fully accomplished.

As a Christian you live in two worlds. You still live in this world that is full of evil. But you also live in the world that comes after death. You are tethered to that world through your union with Jesus Christ. This tether is not simply a doctrine. It is a spiritual reality that is stronger and more real than anything that ties you to this world. And Jesus did not remain in the tomb. He also gloriously raised up from the grave. And just as you have been united to him in his death, so you are united to him in his resurrection.

We were buried with him in his 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.

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.

The purpose of being tethered to Jesus Christ is to enable our walking in newness of life.

aaEvery week we pray that Lord's prayer. One line that you pray is "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven."

Everyone who is tethered to Jesus, and is now in heaven, does the will of God perfectly and completely. Why do they do God's will now?

Because the effect of being tethered to Jesus is complete in their souls.

The effect of your being tethered to Jesus is not yet complete in your soul, but you are just as much tethered to Christ's death and resurrection as the saints who are now in heaven are so tethered. And on the day of the great resurrection from the dead, everyone who is in Christ will fully and completely do the will of God on earth, as it is done now in heaven.

This is why Paul wants the Romans to focus in Jesus' death and resurrection. It is complete. The completeness of your own death is not found by looking inward to see if that death is complete. Of course it is not fully complete. You have not yet died to sin as Christ has died to sin, or as all of the saints in glory are

experiencing death to sin. But through your union with Jesus Christ, your death is no less certain than theirs.

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him
in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing,
so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

In verse 6 Paul introduces a new concept: our old self. And then he refers to this “old self” as “the body of sin”. This “old self” refers to the person that was tethered to Adam. You see, the connection that you have with Adam cannot be broken any other way than through death. As long as you are still alive, you are in some sense still joined to Adam.

God does not free us from sin by severing us from the ball and chain. This concept of our sin does not go deep enough. Sin is bound to who we are in the very core of our being. God does not free us from sin by severing the chain. He frees us from sin by crucifying us.

Romans 6:6 our old self was crucified with him

In redemption, Jesus carries you with him to the cross, where you are crucified with Him. Everything about you that is corrupted by sin and death was crucified on the cross with Jesus.

It is so important to understand that Paul is speaking in representative language.

The Christian still feels within his body and soul a yearning for sin.

But because he is united to Christ, all of these passions to sin, are now seen as part of the “old self”.

And this old nature has been spiritually severed from the New Person that Christ is now forming. This is why Paul can speak in such strange language in Galatians 2.

ESV **Galatians 2:20** It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

Neither in Galatians, nor here in Romans, is Paul denying that physically and spiritually there are forces within him that still desire to sin. But he is choosing to

believe that everything within him that still desires evil is no longer who he is in Christ. It is the old self because it no longer belongs to who he is “in Christ.”

Your sinful heart, and your fallen body, have been dealt a death blow at the cross. They may appear to your experience to be alive and well.

But they have been crucified “with Christ.” This is why, in the death of Jesus Christ, it is a logical impossibility that you will continue in sin.

in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing,
so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

By tethering you to Jesus Christ, God has guaranteed that the “body of sin” in you would be brought to nothing. The part of you that has been tethered to Adam has been crucified with Christ. The New You is tethered to Jesus Christ – the rocket that takes you to righteousness.

⁷ For one who has died has been set free¹ from sin.

The one who has died is first Jesus Christ. You, too have died, but in your union with him in his death. The focus is on Christ’s death and your union to it, not so much your death.

Look at verse 7. Some translations have a footnote after “set free”. In the Greek, it actually reads: Justified from sin. Translators struggle with this because “justified” is a legal term, and one that Paul has used frequently in Romans. To be justified is to be “declared righteous” by God. But here the context is sanctification. It can certainly be confusing.

But, I believe that just as we are declared righteous in our standing before God before we are actually righteous, so we are also declared free from our sin, even before we are actually free from our sin. We die with Christ, even before we have completely died in our daily life.

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ,
we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹ We know that Christ being raised from the dead
will never die again;

death no longer has dominion over him.

¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin,
once for all,
but the life he lives he lives to God.

Christ's death to sin is complete. Once for all. Jesus is not still in the process of dying. He has died already. It is finished. "once and for all time." This is the point of saying he, "will never die again." Your personal death is not yet complete. But it is absolutely complete through your union with Jesus Christ.

Therefore, since our death is complete in Christ, so our obedience is also guaranteed. How could we be united with Jesus in his death and not be united with him in his life? It is a logical impossibility. Union with Jesus Christ by faith alone makes continuing in sin an impossibility. You are tethered to the Rocket of Righteousness. If you understand this, you will not corrupt the life of obedience to which God calls you heavenward. You will not think: It is God's work to forgive. And it is your response to obey. Understanding union with Christ, joins the believer's pursuit of holiness to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

What does that mean for you practically? Paul gives three practical applications to what he has just taught:

1. It means that faith is just as essential to your sanctification as it is to your justification.
2. It means that your daily battle against sin must be placed in the larger context of Jesus' victory.
3. It means that you must daily choose to present yourself to your Covenant Lord.

1. Faith is essential to sanctification.

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The Greek word for "consider" is the same word for "reckon" or "count".

This very much connects Romans 6:11 with Genesis 15:6.

ESV **Genesis 15:6** And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, God sees you as righteous. He reckons you righteous, even though you are still a sinner. Now, he declares to you that you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Remember what we said about verse 7: You have been justified from sin.

“You have been declared free from sin.”

You must accept what he says of you. You must reckon to be true even though it is not yet fully true in your experience. The foundation of sanctification is faith – accepting what God says is true, even before you can see it as true.

Where there is not this faith, you will inevitably try to make it true in your own strength. And your strength will fail. The Christian life, from beginning to end, is lived by faith in Jesus Christ. Do you believe that you are tethered to Jesus Christ, and that he will carry to completion the work that he has begun in you?

2. It means that your daily battle against sin must be placed in the larger context of Jesus' victory.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.

The Christian must do battle against sin. We are in a life and death struggle to the finish. Either you are conquering sin, or sin is conquering you. We all have passions (inner desires) that are pushing us to obey them. They could be desires for comfort, or independence, or pleasure, or respect, or control. The Christian must daily fight to not let his passions control him. But we must fit our battle into the larger battle that Christ has already won.

Illustration: David and Goliath and the army.

Your passions, apart from Christ, are too powerful for you. But you are not apart from Christ. Don't expect the conquering of sin to be easy. Expect it to take far longer than you think it should. But do not doubt its final outcome.

3. It means that you must daily choose to present yourself to your Covenant Lord.

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.

Every day God gives a roll call to his children. You are not simply meandering through this world. You are an instrument of righteousness in the hand of God. Regularly present yourself to him: Jesus, I am present and ready for you to do something through me today. I may not know what it is that you call me to today. But I am offering myself to you, not as someone who is still tethered to sin, but as one who is tethered to the rocket of righteousness.

Circle back to the initial question: Does Justification result in people caring less about sanctification?

Does being declared holy, work against us actually becoming holy?
Yes, if you are tethered to the Rocket of Righteousness!