

11. ROMANS SERIES: Alive to God

Romans 6:1-5

In Romans 6, Paul moves on to show yet another fruit of justification by faith, that of holiness of life, or what we call sanctification. This passage is still closely related to Romans 5:1-21 however.

Previously (1:1-5:21) Paul has shown that Christians are not saved by Law keeping or any other fleshly method, but by the grace of God in justification by faith, and what Paul teaches here in no way disregards that truth.

Please Read Romans 6:1-5

An *'implication'* of this teaching as taught and practised by some was, 'if I'm not saved by righteous living, then why bother with that at all. In fact, let's continue in sin that God's grace may be made more manifest.'

But Paul shows this to be a contradiction of true Christianity and he now gives the true nature of the Christian life. This then is the connecting thought between Romans 5 and Romans 6. Indeed there is a vital connection between sanctification and justification, for the one justified will always be sanctified. Therefore a life of sin is not possible for the Biblical Christian.

NOTE INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY QUESTION HERE: What should be a Christian's attitude to sin?

Verse 1: What is the implication of the grace of justification by faith alone? Is it that we should continue in sin so that God's grace may abound?

This *'implication'* is one formed from the argument of Romans 5:20,21. In these verses Paul has shown how grace *'super-abounds'* over sin. Can we therefore continue in sin in order that God's grace is made even more manifest (3:7,8; Jude 4), thereby bringing more glory to God? This is the premise of antinomianism.

Verse 2: Paul's answer is that it is not to be so. By receiving Christ by faith we died to sin. By believing in Christ, not only were our sins forgiven, but our slavery to sin also ended. This is so for every Christian. We are now separated from sin unto God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Col 3:3). It is therefore a contradiction to live in sin as a Christian, for how can death be living? We are no longer in that realm; it is no longer what we are. The Christian simply cannot continue in sin anymore, for he now lives in Christ. We will still sin, but not as we once did, for we no longer belong to that kingdom, being freed from its dominion (2 Cor 5:17).

What all this means, and how it came about, is what Paul now goes on to explain in Romans 6. That is, how we in fact die to sin and what that means for our daily living.

Verse 3: If any Christian does not understand that he has died to sin, then he can not understand the rite of baptism either, for this is what Christian baptism is all about. The Christian can no longer continue in sin because of his '*baptism into Christ Jesus.*' What this is speaking of is our union with Christ. The picture of baptism actually illustrates this truth. The sign of baptism is a picture and outward profession of the reality of our position in Christ. Baptism has no meaning at all if it is removed from that which it illustrates. We share by union with Christ, that which was true of Him, His crucifixion and burial, His resurrection and exaltation. The rite of baptism illustrates what we reckon ourselves to be as by faith (1 Cor 10:2; 12:13; Gal 3:27).

The going down into the water is symbolic of our having died with Christ, as our having died when He died. In Christ's death we paid the penalty of our sin, for He bore it as our Representative and Substitute. In other words, His death became ours, not only as the payment of our sin debt, but also as the end of sin for our lives.

When Christ died on the cross, the imputed relationship He had with sin ended. So too for us, the reign of sin in our lives ended with the death of Christ, it having no more power over us. As far as sin is concerned, we are dead to it.

Verse 4: Because of our union with Christ by faith, as illustrated in baptism, we are also buried with Christ. Burial sets the seal on death, and baptism illustrates this, showing the end of the old way of sin (Gal 3:27; Col 2:12). We died in Christ and were buried in Christ, meaning that we now have no part with the realm of sin. By being in Christ in His resurrection, sin has now been replaced with new life in Christ. As Christ died to sin and rose to new life, so we have died to sin and risen to new life. We are seen to be in Christ not only His death, but also in His burial and in His resurrection. We share in His death that we might also share in His life. Justification by faith is in order for sanctification of life.

As Christ's resurrection was the certain consequence of His death, so a sanctified life is the certain consequence of our having died with Christ. Because He died to sin, so did we, for He was our representative. Because He rose to new life, so have we in Christ, for He was our representative in that also.

Christ was raised by the Father's power (1 Cor 6:14; 2 Cor 13:3; Eph 1:9ff) and believers

are also raised to new spiritual life by the Father's power (Col 1:11; 2:12-23; 2 Tim 2:11; 1 Pet 2:24), as opposed to the old way of life, from which we are forever separated in Christ.

QUESTION: Why should a Christian undergo baptism? What does it say about him/her?

Verse 5: There is a close connection between verses 3, 4 and verse 5. This verse is not therefore speaking so much of the future bodily resurrection, but repeats the thought of verses 3 and 4. If we have been united with Christ in death, we shall also be in life. If one has happened then the other will consequentially follow.

Having been united with Christ in His death by faith, most surely also will we be united with Him in a resurrection like His. His bodily resurrection will bring about our spiritual resurrection in newness of life and therefore also, our bodily resurrection. For in this historical event, Christ was our Representative and Substitute.

INDIVIDUAL DISCOVERY

How are we to reckon ourselves alive to God? What will this involve?

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