

Bible Study of Romans (17)
Romans 6:12-23

Introduction:

In the previous verses, we came upon the truth that God's children are 'dead to sin.' How to understand this phrase is critical to understanding the comfort of God's Gospel!

Some explain the 'dead to sin' as sanctification. If we see it merely in that connection, then the words feel very contrary to the experiential struggle each born again believer experiences. It is their wish to be as 'dead to sin as a dead body is to food and drink.' But such is not the case. A genuinely repentant soul still experiences the power of the old man. Sin continues to have an attraction. Paul will later describe this intense spiritual battle in Romans 7.

Others explain Paul's words 'dead to sin' in connection with justification. In that light, 'dead to sin' means to be dead to the **curse** of sin. That explanation also fits the teaching of vs. 10, where reference is made to the Lord Jesus 'who died unto sin once.' The Lord Jesus didn't experience the attraction to sin in that He was sinless. To Him there were no pleasures in any sin as we fallen sinners experience. To write therefore that 'He died to sin' in the same way that believers have died to sin, cannot mean that He died to the attraction to sin for He never had any.

To 'die unto sin' is therefore in this context of justification to die unto the curse sin caused in breaking God's law. Robert Haldane's words are worth an extra re-read,
The phrase 'dead to sin' is often extended to include death to the power of sin to which is has not the smallest reference. It exclusively indicates the justification of believers and their freedom from the guilt of sin, having no allusion to their sanctification.

What did free the Lord's people from this curse of sin? In other words, how did they become 'dead to sin?' This is solely due to their *union* with Christ. By God's grace believers are united through faith with Christ. In consequence of this union, believers participate in Christ's death as well as His resurrection. As Jesus died on the cross, ending the curse of the Law, so His people have died to the law's curse. As Jesus rose from death into life, so His people have been raised from their old life to a new life.

Being united with Christ makes it therefore impossible to continue in sin. The reality of Christ's life will become the reality in all who are Christ's people. Paul appealed to the symbolism of the baptism ceremony to illustrate this. In chapter seven, he used the illustration of marriage to picture the relationship between Christ and His people. That relationship cannot remain fruitless.

1. In vs. 11 we are exhorted to 'likewise reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'
 - a. What was the condition of all *before* they are saved? Illustrate or support this from some other Scriptures.
 - b. Upon being united to Christ through faith, we change 'ownership.' No longer are we under the dominion of Satan but now under the headship of Jesus. How is that reality to influence us according to this verse?
 - c. Notice how often Paul used the word 'reckon'. That word refers not to our feeling but

our thinking. What experiential reality do you find hinders you to reckon yourself Christ's? What not thinking about this do to our spiritual life?

2. The exhortation in vs. 12 sounds so easy, "Let sin no more reign within you ... to obey it."
 - a. Notice that Paul personifies sin as a master we are no longer obliged to obey. Is that how you consider sin and Satan? Would it be helpful to think and speak to him in the spirit of, "Who are you thinking to command me? I am no more your slave. I now belong to Christ, my Redeemer and Master."
 - b. Does this mean that when faced with the temptations of sin from within and without, that a believer needs to 'reason or argue' on the basis of his/her union with the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Let's say I have all day done my duty, like work on the field, milk the cows, build a house, work at the office, teach a classroom of kids, clean the house, prepare a meal etc. Does that mean I have then yielded my members as instruments of righteousness unto God according to vs. 13?
4. Is vs. 14 an exhortation or a promise? Define what it now exactly means to 'no more to be under the law but under grace.'
5. There are many who use this verse to indulge themselves into a careless walk of obedience, claiming that we are 'not under the law but under grace.' For example, the observation of the Sabbath command is no longer needed because 'we are now under grace' by which they mean that we are no more under the strict Mosaic laws but under Jesus' yoke that is easy and light. How is that view to be combated?
6. Vs. 15 restates the suggested thought of vs. 1.
 - a. What is meant with 'not being under the law?'
 - b. In what way(s) is the true believer never freed from the law?
7. vs. 16 states a common truth for God's children: obedience leads to life and disobedience leads to death. Can you illustrate this from other Scriptures and example in the Bible?
8. How does this verse describe the nature of a true conversion?
9. Why did the Spirit inspire Paul to describe the spiritual response as 'obeyed from the heart' rather than 'believed with the heart?'
10. Note: In vs. 19, the Greek word 'free' in this verse (and 20 and 22) is different from that in vs. 7.

Here it does not refer to a person's 'freedom from the curse of the law through justification by faith' but to a believer's freedom from the *dominion of sin in sanctification*. The word 'free' refers to the freeing of the slave from master Evil to Master Good.

- a. Does 'made free from sin' mean believers will be entirely freed from sin?

11. What is Paul referring to when he wrote 'I speak after the manner of men...'?

12. Let's make this command practical: how do you follow this Divine direction as you face a temptation, a challenging situation, a situation that tends to make you want to obey the old master?

13. What is the purpose of bringing up the past in vs. 21?

14. Ironically, many who have chosen to 'throw off all shackles of the law' feel they are finally free to be what they always wanted to be. Why is this never true?

15. Define 'being made free from sin?'

16. How does verse 22 answer the charge of vs. 1?

17. Contrast 'death vs. eternal life. Make a list of similarities and differences between them both.