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In Romans 6, Paul defends the truth of salvation by God's grace and answers questions that the Roman Christians and others might have. After all, people could say, "If God's grace abounds when we sin, should we just go on sinning so that His grace may abound all the more? If we are no longer under the Law, are we just free to live however we please? Does the gospel of grace permit or even encourage sinful living?"

Such objections would indicate that the questioner did not really understand either law or grace. But people often gravitate to the extremes – in this case either legalism, or license to sin.

To summarize Paul's answer to "shall we continue in sin", he says in essence: 1) 'you cannot' because you are united to Christ (v. 1-11), 2) 'you need not' because sin's dominion over you has been broken (v. 12-14), 3) 'you must not' so that sin does not again become your master (v. 15-19), and 4) 'you better not' because it will end in disaster (v. 20-23).

Before examining the details, to understand them we must see the difference between the believer's position and his practice. Our position is our standing in Christ, while our practice is what we are in our everyday life. In Christ, our standing is complete and perfect. Our practice is very imperfect, but as we mature spiritually it should improve significantly. However, our practice will not match our position until we see Christ and then be like Him (*1John 3:2*).

Justification by faith is not simply a legal matter between God and me. It is a living relationship, a relationship that brings life. As believers, we are "in Christ" and He is "in us". So, we have died with Christ, have risen with Christ, and are seated with Him in the heavenly realm (*Eph. 2:1-10*). Through this living union with Christ, the Christian is now dead to sin.

Baptism demonstrates our identification with Christ. The Greek word *baptizo* literally means "to immerse", and it means figuratively "to be identified with". As the believer is baptized, he is demonstrating his identification with Christ. Going down into the water and then rising out of it pictures Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The water baptism also pictures the true baptism of the Holy Spirit that transforms the believer. It is an important outward symbol of an inward experience.

Galatians 2:20 says of the believer, "I am crucified with Christ". Obviously we were not literally on the cross with the Lord 2000 years ago, but in Christ we have died to ourselves and are spiritually "born again", dead to the effects of sin in that Christ has overcome sin. We walk in "newness of life" in Him.

The resurrection of Lazarus (*John 11*) also pictures this spiritual truth. He was dead in the tomb four days, tightly bound in grave clothes. The Lord called him forth and commanded, "loose him and let him go!" He was raised to walk in newness of life. Soon after, Lazarus was seated at the table with Christ in fellowship. All these picture our identification with Christ.

Too often Christians can fail to realize the benefits and power we have been given in Christ. Verse 5 tells us that our union with Christ assures our own resurrection in the future. But verse 4 speaks of His resurrection power that we have now, that we may walk in newness of life.

The believer has died to the old life and has been raised to a new life. He does not want to go back into sin just as Lazarus would not have wanted to go back into the tomb wrapped in his grave clothes.

The "body of sin" (v. 6) is not our physical body, but is the indwelling sin that is personified as ruling the person. Through Christ's victory over sin (a victory He shares with all who are identified with Him), we are no longer slaves to sin. A dead man is freed from sin. The penalty for sin (death) has been paid. When we receive Christ, our account is paid. Those outside of Christ will pay their own account through spiritual death - eternal separation from God.

As we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him (v. 8). The risen Christ will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him, or those in Him (*1Cor. 15:51-57*).

The body itself is not sinful, but it is neutral. It can either be controlled by sin, or by the Spirit of God. Satan and sin want to control us, but cannot if we are yielding to the Spirit. Sin and death have no dominion over Christ. He has already won the victory over them. By paying the penalty of sin, He broke the power of sin.

The Greek word for "reckon" or "impute" is used 19 times in Romans. It is an accounting term meaning "to put to one's account". Reckoning requires faith, like endorsing a check if we really believe the money that the check represents is in the account. Regarding our justification by faith, do we really believe God's Word is true? Reckoning acts on a fact. God is not *commanding* us to be dead to sin, He is telling us that we *are* dead to sin and alive unto God, and then He commands us to act on that fact.

Verse 11 tells us to "reckon" ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. This transitions to a section we'll study more next time. So far, we have seen what is true of Christians positionally. Now Paul considers the practical outworking in our lives. As we "reckon", we believe that what God says is true, and live it out in our lives.

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As we examine ourselves, are we growing spiritually? Can we (and others) see evidence that over time we are becoming more conformed to the image of Christ (more like Him)?

Romans 6

Dead to Sin, Alive to God

⁶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?

² Certainly not! How can we who died to sin continue to live any longer in it?

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

⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will also certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.

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

⁹ For we know that Christ was raised from the dead, and He cannot die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

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

¹¹ Likewise you also must reckon yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body and cause you to obey its lusts.

¹³ And do not go on presenting the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

¹⁴ For sin will not have dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

From Slaves of Sin to Slaves of God

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, that leads to righteousness?

¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.

¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness.

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness which leads to holiness.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

²¹ What benefit did you reap at the time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

²² But now that you have been set free from sin, and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness and its end, everlasting life.

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Memory Verse for the Week

Galatians 2:20(a) – *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*