

## Romans Study Part 5: Dead to Sin, Alive to Christ (6)

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Winter 2019-20

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*"[H]is doctrine is this - that the death of Christ is efficacious to destroy and demolish the depravity of our flesh, and his resurrection, to effect the renovation of a better nature, and that by baptism we are admitted into a participation of this grace. This foundation being laid, Christians may very suitably be exhorted to strive to respond to their calling." - John Calvin*

### I. Indicatives and Imperatives in Salvation

- A. Indicatives = statements or declarations of fact. We respond by either believing or not believing, agreeing or disagreeing.
- B. Imperatives = commands. We respond by either obeying or disobeying.
- C. **Justification** is entirely in the indicative - it is what God does to us and for us. We respond with faith, trust, belief.
- D. **Sanctification**, however, contains both indicatives and imperatives. When Paul speaks of our sanctification he gives us glorious declarations of what God is doing in us, but he also commands us to behave in accordance with these truths.
  1. The indicatives **must** precede the imperatives.
    - a) It is only because of the indicatives - what God has accomplished on our behalf in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ - that we have the power and ability to obey the imperatives.
  2. Apart from the indicatives of the Gospel the imperatives of God's word are a condemnation to us - they show us what is needed for righteousness, but we are incapable of obeying them in our own strength.
    - a) With the indicatives of the Gospel - with the news that Christ has defeated sin and death and that we share in his victory - the imperatives are full and vibrant life.
- E. Up to this point in Romans Paul has been mostly (if not exclusively) dealing in indicatives. In Romans 6 Paul introduces imperatives.
  1. This signals that he is moving from speaking about justification, to talking about sanctification increasingly in the letter.
- F. "They, who are once effectually called, and **regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified**, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, **by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened** in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." WCF 13.1
- G. "This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a

continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.” WCF 13.2

- H. “In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, **through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome**; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” WCF 13.3
- I. “Q. 77. Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?  
A. Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in **justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof**; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued: the one doth equally free all believers from the revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life, that they never fall into condemnation; the other is neither equal in all, nor in this life perfect in any, but growing up to perfection.” WLC
- II. Baptized into death (6:1-14)
  - A. A challenge: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1)
    - 1. Based on a misunderstanding of the abounding grace referred to in 5:17, 20-21
  - B. The response: By no means! We have died to sin & therefore no longer live in it
    - 1. In his death and resurrection Christ has conquered sin and death. By virtue of being united with Christ in his death and resurrection (6:3-4) we are released from the tyrannical reign of sin and death. The power of sin has been conquered in us.
      - a) We no longer live to sin; rather we live to obey God in Christ (6:11). We are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
    - 2. “A reigning monarch is a triumphant monarch. If grace is reigning in us, grace is advancing its conquest over sin. Christians sin. But they are not defeated by sin, and they do not continue in it.”<sup>1</sup>
  - C. Given that sin no longer has dominion over us, Paul commands us to stop handing ourselves over to sin for its purposes, and commands us to hand ourselves over to God for his purposes instead.
    - 1. “Mortal bodies” (v.12) = all that belongs to our corrupted nature, the old man from v.7
      - a) “The old man...what he means is the whole nature which we bring from the womb, and which is so incapable of the kingdom of God, that it must so far die as we are renewed to real life...*The body of sin*, which he afterwards mentions, does not mean flesh and bones but the corrupted mass; for man, left to his own nature, is a mass made up of sin.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *To the glory of God: A 40 day devotional on the book of Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 74.

<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 224-25.

2. The word translated “instruments” (v.13) means “weapons” or “instruments for war.” The point being that when we hand ourselves over to sin we are waging war against God. When we hand ourselves over to God then we are waging war against sin and death.
  - a) “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” - John Owen
  - b) This puts our sins, as Christians, into sharp focus: before we were justified we were enemies of God (5:10), but now we are his beloved children (8:15). How terrible is it then when we neglect/reject our reconciliation with God and go back to acting as his enemies by handing ourselves over to sin and its dominion again.

D. “Not under law, but under grace” (v.14)

1. Law here refers to the “letter of the law” (see 2 Cor. 3:4-18, esp. v.6), or a works based approach to the law/righteousness, which only serves to condemn.
  - a) “[B]y *law* we are to understand the letter of the law, which cannot renovate the soul, and by *grace*, the grace of the Spirit, by which we are freed from depraved lusts.”<sup>3</sup>
  - b) c.f. Rom. 3:19-20; 8:3-4
2. “Now that Christ has come, the law is not jettisoned but is put at the disposal of a new Master. In the hands of Sin the law is deadly; wielded by Christ the Lord through the empowering Spirit, it becomes a means of grace (Rom. 7:7-13; 8:4-8).”<sup>4</sup>
  - a) This is why Paul can refer to the “law of Christ” in 1 Cor. 9:21 and Gal. 6:2. It is not a new or separate law from the law of God. Rather, it is the law of God as it is used and interpreted by Christ.

III. Slaves to righteousness (6:15-23)

- A. A second challenge: “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?” (6:15)
  1. Based on a misunderstanding of what it means to be under grace (6:14)
- B. The response: By no means! We have a new master (Christ) now and we can no longer serve the old master (sin)
  1. Paul uses an analogy of slavery to show what is wrong with this challenge. A slave cannot have two masters (Matthew 6:24). The one you obey is your true master. In our fallen state, sin was our master and we obeyed its demands readily. Having been redeemed our master is now Christ, the one who redeemed us out of our bondage to sin. It is him we now serve, and we do so with the strength that he provides by his Holy Spirit (6:22).

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin, 233.

<sup>4</sup> J. Knox Chamblin, *Paul and the self: Apostolic teaching for personal wholeness*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 133.

- a) Indeed, the word that we translate redemption/redeem is a term that comes from the slave market; it refers to paying one's debt/price and freeing them (also: ransom as in Matthew 20:28)
  - b) Christ bought us out of slavery to sin with his blood and so has liberated us.
  - c) This liberation, though, does not make us our own masters, for that would be slavery to sin again - that's the very thing that Christ freed us from! No, it makes Christ our master, which is true freedom.
- C. A liberation has occurred through a "change of lords" and with that we are given the power to resist our old lord and to serve the new lord.<sup>5</sup>
- 1. "The purchased possession of Christ the Lord cannot logically remain the slave of Sin or of any of those powers by which Sin maintained its mastery...It is a tyranny of love that moves [Christ] to action - supremely the action required for delivering them from Sin...By the same power he moves his redeemed people to act on his behalf...Nowhere else is such despotism to be found. Jesus Christ is 'the only one in the universe who can control us without destroying us.' Only under the mastery of Christ's love does the slave attain true liberty."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Seifrid, *Christ, Our righteousness: Paul's theology of justification*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 73.

<sup>6</sup> Chamblin, 135.