

## 6:1-23, The Benefit of Newness of Life

**Chapter heading:** Justification by Faith Brings Newness of Life

**Memory verse (Romans 6:4):** “Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Paul anticipates a rebuttal to what he just said concerning the increase of *grace* because of the increase of *sin* (6:1): “If more sin brings more grace, then this actually promotes the increase of sin—and this contradicts the laws of God!” This reasoning, of course, is illogical: God never promotes evil to bring about good; He never condones sin in order to enhance grace. For a Christian to live in sin is not just impermissible, it is impossible; the practice of sin is incompatible with the practice of righteousness (1 John 3:4-10).

One who has *died* to his allegiance to sin cannot still be under sin’s control (6:2). Death severs one’s allegiance to whomever or whatever had ruled over that person—whether it is the death of the one who *rules* (as in Romans 7:1-3) or the one *being* ruled (as in the sinner’s case). The action that *symbolizes* our death to sin’s reign (cf. 5:21) *and* our new allegiance to Christ is immersion in water: baptism (6:3). In other words, sin does not die—we die to sin; sin continues to reign over other men, but (upon being baptized) Christ reigns over us.<sup>1</sup> Being “baptized into Christ” indicates an entrance into fellowship with God through having become a member of Christ’s spiritual body. As Paul has stated in Ephesians 2:18, “Through Him [Christ] we both [Jews and Gentiles] have our access in one Spirit to the Father” (bracketed words are mine).

Baptism symbolizes one’s death, burial, and resurrection to “newness of life” (6:3-4). Christ willingly died on the cross; He was buried in the earth; and He rose from the dead. His “old” life (on earth) was finished (cf. John 19:30); “behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Likewise, the believer<sup>2</sup> must willingly submit to his death to sin; he must be buried in water<sup>3</sup>; and he must rise from that water in allegiance to his new Lord. Our death and His death are both real (even though one is physical and the other spiritual), but they are not equal: ours follows in form, not significance. Nonetheless, through this act of faith:

---

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Wuest has some excellent comments on this (“Romans,” *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1955; reprinted, 1992], 92-98).

<sup>2</sup> We must say “believer” here and not “Christian” because the one undergoing baptism is not *yet* a Christian. It is baptism that makes one a Christian. Christians are not baptized; one cannot “walk in newness of life” without being baptized. (One can choose to *believe* he has this “newness of life” apart from baptism, but that will not change his spiritual relationship with God.) In order to be “born again” of God, one must obey God’s instructions (Matthew 28:19); being born again is not something one says, but is something one *does* in faith.

<sup>3</sup> Water is a most appropriate element for the “born again” process: the earth was “born” out of water and was re-born through water (2 Peter 3:5-6), and every human is born of the “water” of the womb. Water, then, serves as a consistent symbol of *birth* and *re-birth*. While God performs His work upon the human soul during conversion, the believer performs *his* work (of faith) in water; thus, one is “born again” both in an earthly and spiritual context—that is, “of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). In a very real sense, we are saved *through* water—not *by* water, but not *without* water, either. Water is merely a physical element; baptism *in* water is an act of faith. The emphasis ultimately is on the action *in* water, and not water alone (thus, 1 Peter 3:21).

- ❑ We have been baptized into Christ (i.e., His body, the church; Colossians 1:18).
- ❑ We have been baptized into His death (i.e., we have chosen what *He* chose).
  - If we did *not* die with Christ (2 Timothy 2:11), we were not buried with Him.
  - If we were *not* buried with Him, we have not raised from our “death.”<sup>4</sup>
  - If we have *not* raised from our “death,” we cannot “walk in newness of life.”
- ❑ We have obeyed the commands to *be* baptized (Acts 2:38, et al).
- ❑ We have done what Paul himself did in order to call upon the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16; notice also the “us” of Romans 6:3).
- ❑ We have been “born again” (cf. John 3:5, 1 Peter 1:3).
- ❑ Our “body of sin” has been “done away with,” since we have submitted to the God-given process by which this is accomplished (6:6).
- ❑ Since our body of sin has been “done away with,” our allegiance is no longer to sin, but to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❑ Having died to sin, it no longer reigns over us (6:6-7).
- ❑ We are now “alive to God” through Christ (6:11; see also Ephesians 2:1-5).

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:27): baptism is the historical and visible event that marks our spiritual transition from the world to the church (cf. Colossians 1:13-14). It is the point of reference upon which our walk with God begins. Just because baptism is a “symbol” does not make it any less important or required.<sup>5</sup> There is only “one baptism” that God requires of us (Ephesians 4:5): that which is done in faithful obedience to God’s commands.

“He who has died is freed from sin” (6:7)—he who has severed his allegiance to sin by undergoing the symbolic ritual of water baptism cannot be ruled by sin any longer. Sin no longer reigns over him, but Christ does; he no longer walks according to the way of the world (or “flesh”), but by the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:16-17). He is not “partially” buried in water, but fully immersed; likewise, he is not “partially” dead to sin, but is fully dead to it. This does not mean (and it *cannot* mean) that this person will never sin again; it means that once he was a servant of sin, but now he is a genuine servant of the Lord. Having been “united with [Christ] in the likeness of His death” (6:5),<sup>6</sup> “we shall also live with Him” in the likeness of His glory (6:8; see also Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2). Just as Christ will never have to physically die again,

---

<sup>4</sup> “It is altogether probable that the apostle in this place [6:4] had allusion to the custom of baptizing by immersion” (Albert Barnes, “Romans,” *Barnes’ Notes*, vol. 10 [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, no date], 142). One has to wonder: what else *could* Paul have meant? And what *is* baptism but “immersion”—for this is exactly the meaning of the word? “It is a tragedy that Paul’s majestic picture here has been so blurred by controversy [or sheer disbelief—MY WORDS] that some refuse to see it. It should be said also that a symbol [i.e., baptism] is not the reality, but the picture of the reality” (Robertson, 362).

<sup>5</sup> In the same way, both circumcision and the Sabbath were considered signs of the covenant between God and Israel. Yet even though these were mere “signs,” God required them to be observed. Failure to keep the “sign of the covenant” indicated a disregard for the laws that commanded such observances, and the God who gave such laws (Genesis 17:14, Ezekiel 20:19-21). This principle also applies to baptism: even though it serves as a sign of our covenant with God (cf. Colossians 2:9-12), it is also a command of God to those who wish to call upon His name (Acts 2:38, 10:48, 22:16).

<sup>6</sup> “Our death depends so entirely on Christ’s sacrificial death by crucifixion that, when he is stressing this connection, Paul is able to say that baptism nails our old man of sin on Christ’s cross in order to perish in and with the sins for which Christ died on his cross” (Lenski, 401). This forces one to consider the magnitude of our having died *with* Christ—as *if* on the same cross (cf. Galatians 2:20).

so our souls will never have to die; death is no longer “master” over us—it has no “victory” or “sting” as before (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57). But note that this is a conditional premise (“If we have died with Christ...”; 6:8): if the conditions are not met, then the premise remains unsupported. Thus, if one thinks he is “raised with Christ” without having first died with Him—in *baptism*—then he contradicts the doctrine Paul explains here.

The “once for all” phrase (6:10) should not be regarded lightly: it indicates a permanent, immutable, and all-encompassing action with (in this case) eternal implications. Sacrifices under the Levitical system (of the Law of Moses) could not remove a single sin, though those sacrifices were many and offered frequently (Hebrews 10:1-4). In other words, the blood of animals cannot atone for the sins of men. But “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10); thus, “by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). “Through His own blood, He entered the holy place [i.e., into God’s presence] once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” for our souls (Hebrews 9:12). That which is done “once for all” does not have to be done again; it is forever finished. Thus there is no unfinished business that needs yet to be completed with regard to the salvation of men’s souls.<sup>7</sup>

Having defined the process by which one is justified to God, Paul now makes practical use of what has occurred (6:12-23). Since the Christian is no longer a servant of sin, the “members of your body”—i.e., one’s physical body—can no longer be used for sinful action.<sup>8</sup> Just as one’s heart is given over to Christ, so his body also belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:19-20): his body must be brought into subjection to the same God who has given life to his spirit. Therefore, one’s body is now to be used for the purpose of righteousness, in conformity with the One who imparts righteousness. “Sin shall not be master over you”—because the Christian has “died” to sin; it must not reign over him any longer. “For you are not under law but under grace”—that is, we are no longer condemned by law (as law-breakers), but are justified by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8, Titus 3:7).

Being “under grace” does not absolve us of our responsibility to law, however (6:15); in fact, it should make us even more responsible to it. This refutes antinomianism (*anti* [against] + *nomos* [law]), a man-made doctrine which assumes that since we are saved by grace, we no longer are accountable to law. This implies a “once saved, always saved” scenario: since one is “under grace,” he cannot be condemned by failing to keep God’s laws—thus, he cannot “fall” any longer. Paul strongly counters this doctrine (6:16-18): we are still servants, but now we are obedient to God and not to sin. Obedience is impossible without law; obedience to God is impossible apart from the honoring the laws of God. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep

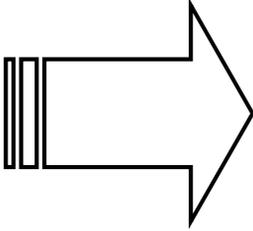
---

<sup>7</sup> This also refutes the popular doctrine of Premillennialism, which necessarily implies that Jesus must come back to earth and reign for 1,000 years in Jerusalem to finish what He left undone. Such doctrines call into question the “once for all” work of Jesus Christ, and insinuate that Christ failed to do all the work He was sent to do (John 17:4). This also begs the awful question: If Jesus failed the first time, what assurance do we have that He will not fail again?

<sup>8</sup> Something to consider: “Although it is the body in focus here, the mind is also an ‘instrument’ no less than members of the body; and all such instruments are used at the direction and according to the will of the true person, which, in the Christian, is the seat of the inner reign of Christ in human hearts” (Coffman, 236). Whiteside adds: “Certainly the body, being merely an instrument, is not responsible for the sin [of a man]; and if the spirit of the regenerate [i.e., convert] is not responsible for the sin, it would seem that a regenerate man is not in any sense responsible for the wrong that he does!” (137, bracketed words are mine).

My commandments” (John 14:15)—i.e., you will obey My laws (see also 1 John 2:4-6, 5:2-3). Likewise, the Roman Christians were obedient to “that form of teaching” [lit., Christian doctrine] which Paul had taught them (6:17). If they had *not* been obedient, then they could *not* have been slaves of righteousness.

Paul admits that his “slaves to righteousness” analogy is a primitive one; “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh” (6:19). Nonetheless, it properly illustrates the change of allegiance—and form of obedience—that occurs upon one’s having been justified *by* God for his faith *in* God. Paul sets the two allegiances in contrast (6:19-23):

<b>Living under law</b>	<b>Justified by God (conversion)</b>	<b>Living under grace</b>
Slaves to sin		Slaves to God
Slaves to impurity		Slaves to righteousness
Resulting in lawlessness [disobedience]		Resulting in sanctification [holiness]
“Free in regard to righteousness”—i.e., unable to be righteous (Romans 8:6-7)		“Freed from sin” (recall 6:7)—i.e., no longer to live as sinners
Derived no benefit from sin		Derive great benefits
“The wages of sin is death”		“The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ” (6:23)

What benefit does one derive from his allegiance to sin? In today’s vernacular, one might ask, “How’s that working for you?” The answer is: there is no benefit; it does not “work” for us. Sin is inherently destructive, corrosive, and debilitating; it ultimately produces nothing but sorrow, shame, and ruin. Allegiance to Christ, however, produces *eternal fellowship with God!* There is no greater pursuit in life than to be a *slave to righteousness*—a paradoxical concept, but one that is fully workable in the realm of Christ.

### Questions:

- 1.) In the context of salvation, what is the relationship between *law* and *grace*—how can these two things work together without contradiction?
  - a. Does grace nullify the need for law?
  - b. Does obedience to law render useless the work of grace?
  
- 2.) In 6:2, Paul stated, “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” What does it mean to “die to sin”? Does this mean that we are no longer tempted to sin? Does it mean that what tempted us prior to our baptism will tempt us no longer? Please explain.

3.) What does it mean to be “crucified with” Christ” (6:5)? (See also Galatians 2:20, 5:24, and 6:14.)

a. Can a person be “united” with Christ without being “crucified” with Him (6:5)? If so, how? If not, why not?

b. Can this be accomplished by “just asking Jesus into your heart to be your personal Savior”—which is taught in many churches today?