

Dead to Sin (6:1-10a)

Paul demonstrated in the previous chapter how following the example of Adam’s sin left man in need of a Redeemer. Near the end of chapter five Paul declared: “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (5:20). This very statement, sets the stage for what Paul moves to address in chapter six. If grace abounds, when sin abounds, some might ask: **shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?** (6:1b). To which Paul answers forcefully: **Certainly not!** (6:2a). The reason being, because Christians in their very conversion die to sin. Paul asks, **How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?** (6:2b). Christians have “died to sin.” That is not to say that they are incapable of sin, but rather that they should consider themselves as dead to sin and its condemning power. To continue to live in that to which one has died is senseless.

How does this death to sin come about? Paul explains: **do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that**

just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (6:3-4). The

statements in this chapter about baptism are some of the most powerful texts in the New Testament that explain the significance, method, and importance of baptism in its relationship to conversion. Consider what is taught:

The Significance of Baptism.

Paul tells us through the Holy Spirit that in conversion one is “baptized into Christ.”

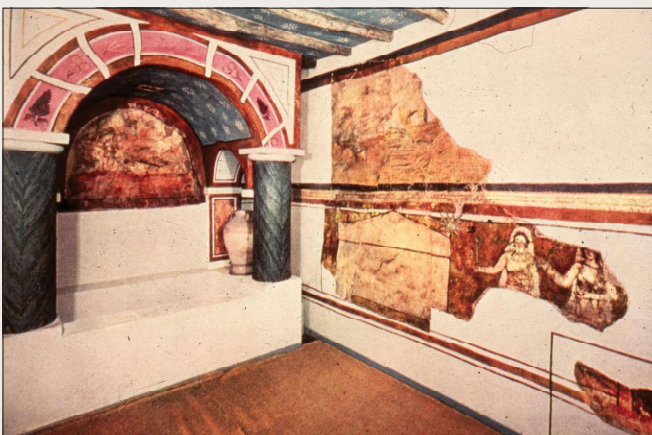
There are great blessings that are found “in Christ.” In this very epistle Paul says when one is “in Christ” he is “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:24). He will later declare,

As Paul refutes the idea that the gospel grants license to sin, he demonstrates three things about baptism: its *significance*, its *method*, and its *importance*.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (8:1a), and that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (8:39b). Yet, how does one who is “out of Christ” move to be “in Christ”? Paul teaches us that this happens through baptism. He tells Christians in Galatia, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

The Method of Baptism

The text continues, **For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection** (6:5). The phrase “united together” in the Greek is *sumphutos* meaning—“born together with, of joint origin...implanted by birth or nature” (Thayer), “planted together” (KJV). This planting together in baptism is in death’s “likeness” (Gr. *homoiōma* meaning—“that which has been made after the likeness of some-



Reconstruction of a house where Christians worshiped in Dura Europus, Syria. In use through ca. A.D. 200, it had a baptistry and a place for worship. Photo: Public Domain.

Chapter Six

thing... representation... resemblance” Thayer).

In declaring that the convert is “united” or “planted” together with Christ in the “likeness of His death” Paul tells us that there is something about baptism itself that resembles Christ’s death. Only if baptism is an immersion, could it be said that it is in the “likeness” of Jesus’ death. The verb translated “baptize” in Scripture, is the Greek word *baptizō* meaning—“to dip in or under water” (Liddell & Scott). Thus, when the Lord, as in Mark 16:16 commands, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned,” He is commanding those who would become His disciples to believe and “be immersed.” When one is immersed in water he submits his body to the handling of another person, as if he was a dead body being placed in the grave. Sprinkling or pouring does not mirror this “likeness.”

The Importance of Baptism

Paul continues, **knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin** (6:6, 7). We observed above that there is no other way for one to move from being “out of Christ” to being “in Christ” other than through baptism. In the same way there is no other way for a person to be “crucified with Him,” and then be “buried with Him,” experiencing a spiritual death to sin in order to become “freed from sin,” except through baptism. The importance of baptism is seen in the fact that unless one has been baptized he is not “freed from sin.” In Paul’s own conversion this was made quite clear. Although Jesus spoke to him on the road to Damascus, Paul wait-

ed, blind for three days (Acts 9:9), until Ananias came and told him, “Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Paul was not “freed from sin” until he was baptized.

Paul will speak of this as crucifying the “old man.” In his epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians he uses the figure of the “old man” in reference to our old sinful character. In baptism, Paul says, this old character is “crucified.” For the Christian this is both a past deed that is accomplished in conversion and an ongoing activity. Paul told the Colossians that they should “not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). Yet, to the Ephesians he urges them to “put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Eph. 4:22-23). We see in these two texts that the crucifixion of the “old man” involves both the initial “putting off of the old man” in conversion and the ongoing choice to “put off the old man” through faithful obedience to God.

Paul argues, **if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him** (6:8). Christ’s death and resurrection illustrate the potential of man’s own resurrection. In that Christ conquered death, **Death no longer has dominion over Him** (6:9b). When a person is united with Christ in His resurrection through baptism, he like Christ, is delivered from the dominion of death. Those who reject the offer of salvation in Christ remain under death’s dominion. Although they will be resurrected on the last day it

will be a “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:25-28). As Daniel declares, they will awake to “shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). In Christ’s death, **He died to sin once for all** (5:10a). His sacrifice was offered for “all” but only those who accept this offering will reap its benefits.

The one who has been buried with Christ views himself as alive by the mercy of God and yields to God’s rule in all things.

Life in Christ (6:10b-15)

Christ’s obedience did not stop at the cross. Even after the resurrection, **the life that He lives He lives to God** (5:10b). This should be the attitude of those who have been buried with Christ. You must **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord** (6:11). “Reckon” in the Gr. is *logizomai*—“count, compute, calculate” (Thayer). Christians must count themselves as dead to sin. The one who has been buried with Christ submits his life to the rule and authority of Christ. Rather than allowing sin to have dominion in our lives we think of ourselves as alive only by the mercy of God and willing to allow Him full and complete control of our lives.

This demands limits on our own behavior. Paul tells the Christian, **do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts** (6:12). James teaches us that all sin begins from the lusts (or desires) that are within man. He writes: “...each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to

sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:14, 15). Jesus taught that: “...out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19), and that these are the things which defile a person. The person who allows sin to rule him, gives himself in obedience to these desires. Personifying sin, Paul teaches us that we must not obey its desires.

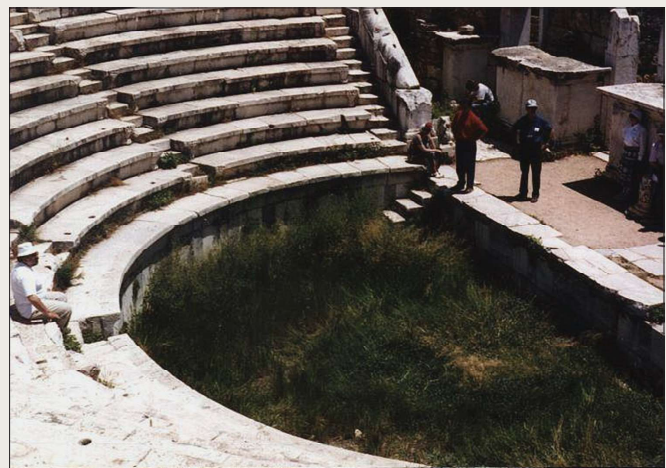
Death to sin does not take away the potential or temptation to commit sin. Rather, Paul commands, **do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin** (6:13a). “Present” comes from the Gr. word *paristēmi*—“to place beside or near.” Although one dies to sin in conversion to Christ, that does not eliminate all possibility of sin. The Christian must choose not to place their “members” beside or near sin. When Christians allow themselves to be near temptation; when they then choose to use their eyes to covet, their tongue to speak evil, their hands to take what is not their own, their feet to take them where they should not go, they present their members as instruments of unrighteousness.

Instead, as a Christian you must choose to **present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God** (6:13b). Christians recognize that their life in sin was a life of spiritual death and fruitless behavior. In coming to Christ they have been brought back to life from the death which sin produced in them. Just as the one who is rescued owes his life to his rescuer, in gratitude for redemption we must “present” ourselves to God in gratitude for our spiritual resuscitation. Our bodies must no longer be used in service to sin but in service to what is right.

Not Under Law

Paul declares, **sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace** (6:14). Many have falsely concluded from this statement

that the child of God is no longer accountable to any law. That is not what Paul is teaching. In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul acknowledges that no one is “without law toward God, but under law toward Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). Paul speaks of law here in reference to Mosaic Law or divine law in general without the benefit of the sacrifice of Christ. The grace of God demonstrated in Christ’s sacrifice and the system of faith that it brings is what Paul calls being “under grace.” This system of grace has requirements and commands to which the Christian is held accountable. Paul tells Titus, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). Recognizing the liberty from sin that is granted in Christ must move children of God to refuse to allow sin to have any dominion over them.



The Curia was a Roman political body that met in halls such as this one in Aphrodisias. Photo: Kyle Pope.

Under Grace

After discussing the change that should govern the life of a Christian, Paul returns to the issue introduced at the beginning of the chapter. He asks, **What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!** (6:15). This is a restatement of the question Paul asked earlier, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (6:1b). The fact that the Law of Christ is a system of grace in no way condones the practice of sin. Sin does not magnify the righteousness of God. Sin does not cause grace to abound. The grace of God, when properly understood, should motivate an abhorrence and

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repulsion toward sin. Any religious philosophy that ignores, minimizes or sanctions sin reveals the error of its own system.

Slaves of Sin or Slaves of Righteousness (6:16-23)

To further illustrate the nature of life in Christ, Paul moves again

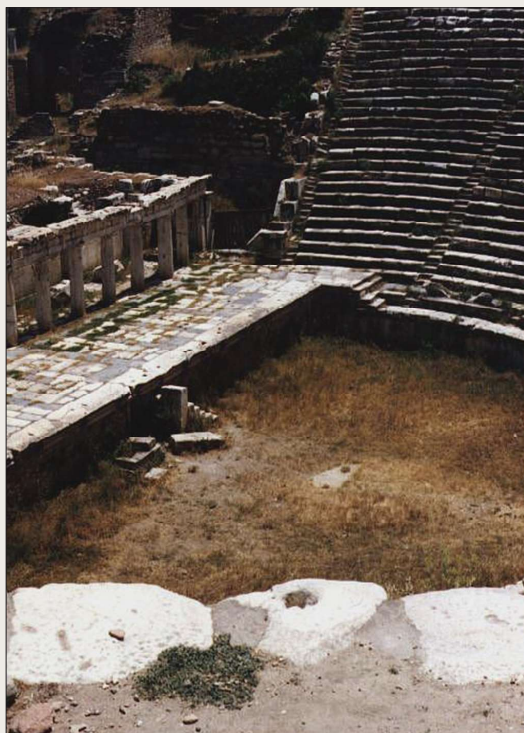
to the figure of slavery. He asks, **do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?** (6:16). There is no neutral position that man can hold. We either obey sin (which will lead us to death) or we obey the righteousness taught by the gospel of grace. A person must choose to whom he will present himself to obey.

Unlike slavery brought on by conquest, the Christian has **obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.**

(6:17b). Being under grace does not mean that there is nothing that the one who looks to Christ must follow and obey. Paul teaches us that we are “delivered” in our wholehearted obedience to the “form of doctrine” that is the system of grace under Christ Jesus. This obedience to the “doctrine of Christ” (cf. 2 John 9) sets us free from sin’s bondage and enslaves us to Christ. Paul tells us, **having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness** (6:18). The soul who turns to Christ becomes freed from bondage to sin and willingly submits to slavery to God to work righteousness. Under the Law of Moses, if an Israelite became poor and sold himself to a stranger, a fellow Israelite could redeem him (Lev. 25:47-48). Paul says in the next chapter that the sinner is “sold under sin” (7:14). Christ offered Himself in payment of the debt that was necessary to redeem us from sin. It is now our obligation to live as “slaves of righteousness.”

Slaves of Sin

The soul outside of Christ, is in bondage to sin. Paul tells us that outside of Christ **you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness** (6:19a). Paul is not using hyperbole or exaggeration in describing former bondage to sin. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” (John 8:34). The alien sinner “presents” his or her members in service to sin. This stands in contrast to the false idea that man inherits sin and a sinful nature. On the contrary, one “presents” himself in service to sin.



Roman theater in Aphrodisias. Holes are still visible where bars were set up when Christians were thrown to wild animals. Photo: Kyle Pope.

Slaves of Righteousness

In contrast to this presentation of our members to sin, the Christian must **now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness** (6:19b). The word translated “holiness” comes from the Greek

verb *hagiazō* meaning—“to separate from profane things and dedicate to God” (Thayer). Being a slave of righteousness means that the Christian considers himself separated from the world and all of its corruption. Although we must not isolate ourselves from others, nonetheless we are to see our lives as removed from the world and dedicated (or set apart) to God. When we present our bodies as “slaves of righteousness for holiness” we are practicing a type of behavior that distinguishes us from the world.

What did the condition of slavery to sin mean for our relationship with God? Paul says, through the Holy Spirit, **when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness** (6:20). Is Paul teaching that the soul outside of Christ can do nothing that is right? No, but simply that when one is in sin no quantity of good deeds can establish a person as innocent and right before God. In fact, in such a condition even good deeds become abhorrent to God. This is what Isaiah addresses when he declares: “...we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). The Christian looks back on his or her past life and asks, **what fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?** (6:21a). One who has come to Christ looks back on sins of the past with shame and regret. They should never feel proud of how many “wild oats” they have sown, because they recognize **the end of those things is death** (6:21b).

Freedom Through Slavery to God

Ironically, the path to freedom from sin is found only in bondage to God. Paul teaches, **having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit**

to holiness, and the end, everlasting life (6:22). While there was no lasting fruit from our slavery to sin, the fruit that is borne by the one who offers himself in slavery to God in righteousness will bear fruit “to holiness.” As we noted above, holiness means living a life that is set apart from the world and dedicated to God. The result of this condition is “everlasting life.”

The godly imagine that sin offers them greater benefits than righteousness. In truth, **the wages of sin is death** (6:23a). “Wages” comes from the Gr. word *opsōnion*—“a soldier’s pay, allowance” (Thayer). The service given to sin can expect only death for its compensation. This is not physical death. A person does not die the moment he first sins. Adam did not die physically the moment he sinned. Rather, spiritual death occurs when sin comes into our life and spiritually separates us from God. This is what

Isaiah explained to the Israelites, “your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59: 2). Paul describes this condition to the Ephesians, saying, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 2:1-2).

In this chapter Paul has shown that when one is baptized, the soul spiritually dead and separated from God, allows Christ to make the payment necessary for his or her sins. Rather than facing the punishment for sin we deserve, by being “united together” with Christ, “crucified with Him” and “buried with

Him” in baptism, we die to sin and become alive again. In doing this we accept **the gift of God which is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** (6:23b). No longer must a person be separated from God be-

The path to freedom from sin is found only in bondage to God.

cause of past sins. The horror of sin, in the face of the horror of Christ’s death gives way to the marvelous beauty of God’s forgiveness. As a result, the soul once dead in sin can become born anew unto a fresh and clean relationship with God.

Questions

1. What does Paul say that the Christian has done, with regard to sin (6:2b)? _____

2. How does Paul teach that the Romans were “buried with Him” (6:3)? _____

3. How did Paul tell the Galatians that one may “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27)? _____

4. What three things about baptism does Romans 6:1-7 teach?
 - a. The _____ of baptism.
 - b. The _____ of baptism.
 - c. The _____ of baptism.
5. What does the phrase “we have been united together in the likeness of His death” indicate about the method of baptism (6:5)? _____

6. What is the literal meaning of the Greek word *baptizō*? _____

7. Explain the meaning of Paul's declaration that "our old man was crucified with Him" (6:6): _____

8. Fill in the blanks from Acts 22:16: "And now why are you _____? _____ and be _____, and _____ away your _____, calling on the _____ of the _____" (NKJV).
9. How should the Christian "present" his or her members (6:13b)? _____

10. Does Paul's claim that Christians are not "under law" (6:14) mean there is no law in force under Christ? _____
 Why or why not? _____

11. What does one become to whom he presents himself to obey? (6:16)? _____

12. What must one "obey from the heart" if he would come to Christ (6:17b)? _____

13. What did Jesus teach was necessary for one to be considered a "slave to sin" (John 8:34)? _____

14. While a slave to sin in regard to what is one "free" (6:20)? _____

15. What is the "fruit" and "end" for one who becomes a slave to God (6:22)?
 Fruit: _____
 End: _____
16. What does Paul teach is the "wages of sin" (6:23)? _____