

Lessons from Romans Book 4

Truth in Sequence

Our Sanctification



Romans 6:11

*Thus also consider
yourselves also to be
dead to sin, but alive to
God in Christ Jesus our
Lord.*

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

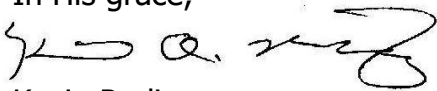
Foreword

This booklet, the fourth in our series from the Book of Romans, introduces a new topic. We are going to move from justification to the believer's sanctification. It is going to be clear from the beginning of our discussion on sanctification that God's ways of doing things are not man's ways! Further, His ways are much better than ours.

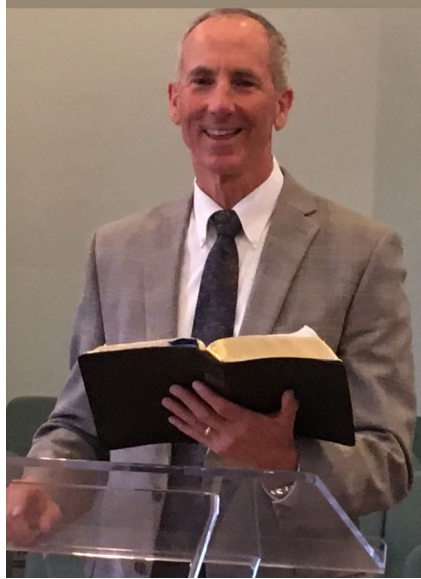
As always, our challenge is to know the truth as spelled out in God's Word, and then to believe it! In this case we are seeking the truth about what God wants us to do with our lives now that we have believed in Jesus Christ.

May God bless you as you seek to do so.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
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Introduction

We are ready for our next destination in our voyage of discovery through the Book of Romans. Let me remind you that we have already *visited* the Gospel of Christ, which contains these truths:

- God has the power to save anyone who will respond in faith (Romans 1:16-17)
- God's assessment of the entire human race is summed up by the phrase, *none righteous* (Romans 3:10)
- God met our desperate need by providing the very righteousness of Christ to those who believe, that they might stand justified before Him. (Romans 3:22)

Our next *port of call* in our voyage through Romans is the following:

**Likewise you also,
reckon yourselves
to be dead indeed
to sin but alive
to God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.**

Romans 6:11



First, we need to recognize that this sixth chapter of the Book of Romans marks a very significant transition from the first five chapters. We are going to see the *Gospel of Christ* expanded from how to be saved out from under the wrath of God to how to live the supernatural quality of life to which we are called.

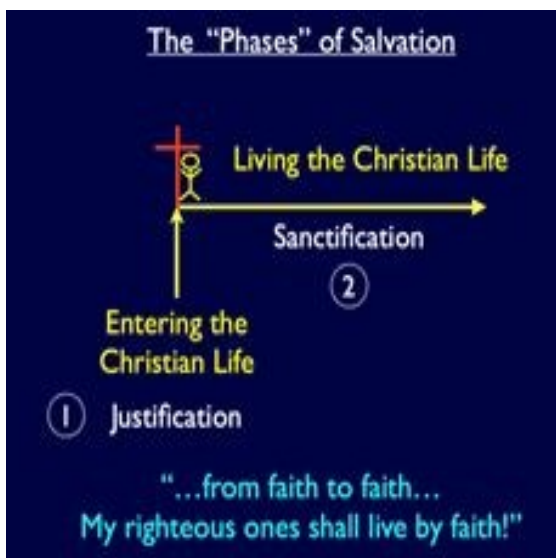
However, we have quite a bit to develop before we are ready to consider the content of the above verse. So let's begin.

From Justification to Sanctification

At the moment we place our faith in the person and work of Christ, we are saved from an eternity in the Lake of Fire to one in God's heaven. Not only do we have the gift of eternal life which we can never lose, but we also are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ which is the basis of our justification before a holy God. This is the justification by faith alone in Christ alone which we have been studying since Romans 3:20. I trust reaching this point of faith is a reality in your life and you realize that, at the moment you believed, you were born again in Christ and entered the Christian Life.

What comes next for the newly-saved individual is the call to live a quality of life far above what came before. As we can see on the diagram, this life—the Christian Life—is the number of days we spend on this earth as a child of God—from the day we trusted in Christ until the day we come into His presence.

As we move into Romans Chapter 6, our subject matter is now exclusively going to be this Christian Life—and that brings us from justification to sanctification.



What is Sanctification?

Before we begin, let's be sure that we understand just what is meant by sanctification. The various words associated with sanctification include the English words: holy, sanctify, saint, and, sometimes, consecrate. We need to know this so that when we see any of these words in our English Bibles, we know that we are talking about the subject of sanctification. An example may help.

For this is the will of God, your sanctification ... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

I Thessalonians 4:3-7

It is God's Will for us. We must note that God has very clearly declared His will for the child of God, our sanctification. We need to understand this from the moment we enter the Christian Life! No excuses. No wiggle room. This is what God wants for us.

Second, in keeping with the above discussion, notice how the paragraph contained in Verses 3-7 begins with the idea of sanctification and ends with holiness. In the Greek text, the word translated sanctification at the start of the paragraph and the word translated holiness at the end are the exact same word. So, among the other things communicated in this paragraph, it is declaring as clearly as it is possible to communicate that God's will for the child of God is sanctification—He has called us to it. As I said, there is no wiggle room here. You are not living the Christian Life unless you are engaged in the *process of sanctification*! (We'll develop that process a bit later.)

Naturally, this begs the question, "*What is sanctification?*" The basic meaning of all the related words, both noun and verb forms, is to be *set-apart* for a special

purpose or function. In our household, we have some special dishes that have been handed down in my wife's family. These dishes are always washed by hand, have a special storage location, and are only used for special occasions. By definition, they are *set apart* or *holy* dishes. Now, we simply need to make the spiritual connection.

Defining Sanctification. Some time ago we spent part of a year studying the concept of sanctification, and from the words involved and their usage in Scripture, we came up with the following *working definition*:

The process of sanctification in the life of the believer is the progressive setting apart of the life unto the Lord, in terms of purity, priority, exclusivity, and service, saints by virtue of position and experience. This process is only accomplished by the means God has provided, and our response of faith.

As a point of clarification, the newly-saved children of God are positionally sanctified at the moment of changing their eternal destiny from one in hell to one in heaven.

... you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

I Corinthians 1:30

Notice that not only are we declared righteous, as the result of being *in Christ Jesus*, but we are also holy—set apart unto Him!



However, when the Scripture speaks of God's will being our sanctification, it is not talking about our position in Christ. Instead, it is talking about our experience here on this earth as we *flesh out* the Christian Life. What God wants is for us to bring the quality of the life we live into conformity to what we already are *in Christ* and, for the believer, that's a process!

We sometimes use the word *progressive* to describe this aspect of our sanctification. Either way, the calling on the saved individual is to set apart his or her life unto the Lord. This is something that takes spiritual growth, time, and doing things God's way. There are no short-cuts, no man-made solutions, just a life-long call to be conformed to the image and likeness of our Savior!

Identifying the Source

As we continue our introduction to the Christian Life and the process of sanctification, there is something essential we must settle in our thinking, and that is the answer to this basic question: *Who is the architect and builder of the life to which we are called—the Christian Life?* I am asking, "Whose plan are we going to follow and Who is going to provide the resources to accomplish the plan? What exactly are we, as Christians, expected to do?" Organized religion has many different answers to these questions. The Bible has its own answers. Let me warn you up front, the answers are not the same. In fact, let me suggest what is likely to be a real eye-opener for you:

In the same way it is true that both justification and glorification are a work of God and completely beyond us, so, too, is the process of sanctification! We cannot sanctify ourselves by force of will, self-effort, surrender or any other means that originates from within

ourselves. Sanctification is a work of God with which we are called to cooperate by faith. Further, let me suggest that this is going to take time for us to grasp because, for most of our lives, we have been taught otherwise, either explicitly or implicitly!

What I am saying is that most Christians have a huge *understanding gap* when it comes to sanctification. They have been taught that saving us from the penalty of sin, and all that goes along with our justification, is a work of God by grace, while sanctification is our responsibility—that it is left up to us to accomplish. Nothing could be further from the truth! We need to get over this error in our understanding as soon as possible. Let me help right now by providing one of many Scriptures that supports the point I am making:

May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.

I Thessalonians 5:23-24



Who is going to sanctify us? Who is going to bring us to the point that we are blameless in daily behavior? Does it appear to be our responsibility or a work of God? Who is more likely to be faithful—our heavenly Father or us? We have more to develop, but I trust you can see that we need to give God His due as the author of our sanctification. Let me develop this a bit more methodically.

Understanding the Breadth and Depth of Sanctification!

I have given you a definition of sanctification. Here are a few samples of what it looks like in daily operation, according to the Scriptures:

Be holy as I am holy.

I Peter 1:16

Be imitators of God ... live a life of love just as Christ loved us ...

Ephesians 5:1-2

... clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience ... over all these virtues put on love.

Colossians 3:12-14

When you get up tomorrow, I want you to spend the day being holy as God is holy, imitating our great God, and manifesting love as Christ did. Then, in your spare time, clothe yourself with an amazing array of virtues! Let me know when you have mastered just these three commands!

Understand the Outcome. As we are conformed to the requirements of these verses on a daily basis, here is the outcome we are meant to achieve:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 8:29

We are to be conformed to the likeness of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, there should be a family resemblance for anyone who cares to observe.

Not only do I believe God wants exactly the above to occur, but also I believe the Scriptures teach us He has also provided the means to do it. What must occur, before we are ready to receive what He has provided in Romans 6-8, is that we must be thoroughly convinced that this cannot be done any other way than God's way!

So, ponder the words of one of the most motivated and capable people of all time:

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ... for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me ... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Romans 7:15-24

Please take note of the following:

- What pronoun dominates the narrative? I, I, I!
- Do you see Jesus or the Holy Spirit anywhere in the text? Nowhere to be seen!
- How well did things work out? Does this sound like a description of the abundant Christian Life? I certainly hope not!

We Need God's Help. Every born-again believer is a new creation walking around in a *dead man's body*!

That simply means that despite being born again, we still have a nature to sin. Unfortunately, far too much Christian teaching is focused on rehabilitating the sin nature and trying to turn it into something it will never be! The Christian Life is not a spiritual version of *This Old House*, where we spend our time and energy trying to spruce up or rehabilitate the flesh! It is incorrigible and beyond rehabilitation, and we must be convinced of that.

The Christian Life is a supernatural quality of life that requires a supernatural means! Do you think that God would address our hopeless, helpless, and unrighteous condition by providing His righteousness so that we might be justified when we believe, and then leave us to struggle on with the sin nature as best we can? Of

course not! That would be just a partial salvation, and our God doesn't work in half measures.

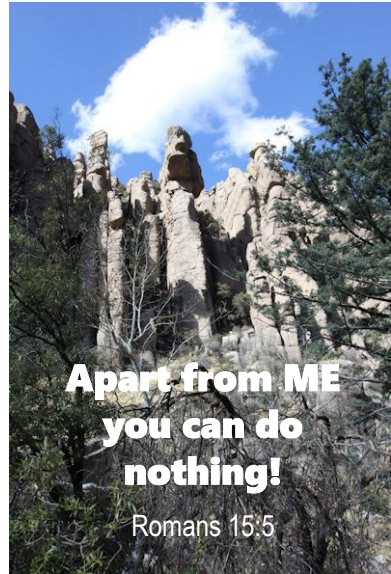
That leads me to a number of Scriptures to once again reinforce the idea that the work of sanctification is a work of God, simply because we are not up to the task:

"Abide in Me and I in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me ... apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15:4-5

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life.

Romans 5:10



We produce no fruit—nothing—apart from the life of the True Vine, Jesus Christ, abiding in us. Further, notice what is going to save us (redeem our lives as Christians) once we are reconciled. It is nothing short of ***His life***, which would be the very life of Christ in us.

One More Observation. It would seem that, when it comes to our justification in the past, our sanctification in the present, and our glorification in the future, which in reality is the fullness of the so-great salvation provided by our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ, God has entrusted none of the work of salvation to us. Instead, He has accomplished it all Himself! I don't know about you, but I find His grace much preferable to any other alternative!

Our Greatest Need

Let me continue on in our introduction to sanctification by introducing you to another key element. As a lost person, our greatest need was for the forgiveness of sin. Naturally, in the plan of God, He met our need!

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

Thus, as we enter the Christian Life, our greatest need is no longer forgiveness for our sins, but deliverance from what we are. To be sure, we are new creations in Christ, but we retain a sin nature! Again, note the struggle of Paul as a saved individual seeking to live a God-honoring life:

For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ...

Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Romans 7:19,24

Paul is saved, born again with an eternal destination in heaven, but struggling to be holy as God is holy, to imitate God, and to clothe himself with the character of God. He wants to live the Christian Life, but is unable to because *the body of death* remains. He needs deliverance from what He is!

God's Provision. Let me introduce God's provision for living the Christian Life after our sins are forgiven. We will go through it in detail later, but here are some things to ponder. Our sin is dealt with by the *Blood of Christ*:

Since we have now been justified by His blood ...

Romans 5:9

We ourselves are dealt with by the *Cross of Christ*:

... our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 6:6

This brings us to the point of something we must learn:

*The **Blood** procures our pardon, the **Cross** procures our deliverance from what we are in Adam.*

Watchman Nee

The blood and the cross are not the same thing! The former brings us into the Christian Life, and the latter is the means of living it as unto the Lord. The former deals with the penalty of sin, the latter deals with the ongoing presence of sin and its power. Both the blood and the cross are solely works of God and are meant to be appropriated by faith! This will become clear as we work through the text, but for now, I am simply trying to introduce you to the *big picture*.

Christ Is Our Substitute. As we have learned, our justification is: The plan and the work of God; it was accomplished solely by Christ as our substitute; it addresses the issue of sins; and is received by an act of faith. Mark it down, the work of Calvary covers our justification!



Born of His
SPIRIT
Washed in His
BLOOD!

What we are going to learn is that our sanctification is: The plan and work of God accomplished by our participation in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Its purpose is to address our ongoing nature to sin and it is received by a moment-by-moment walk of faith!

Compare carefully the attributes of sanctification and justification in the above two paragraphs and make sure you notice the distinctions. You will see that Calvary covers it all and is every bit as much a part of our justification as it is our sanctification.

God didn't provide our justification while leaving a life of holiness up to us. He has met all of our needs! Do you see what I am wanting us to realize? God has not said, "Good luck with living the Christian Life on your own." Instead, God has continued with His pattern of providing, in grace, what we need. We can see that truth in the Scriptures. Consider this one from II Peter:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

II Peter 1:3-4

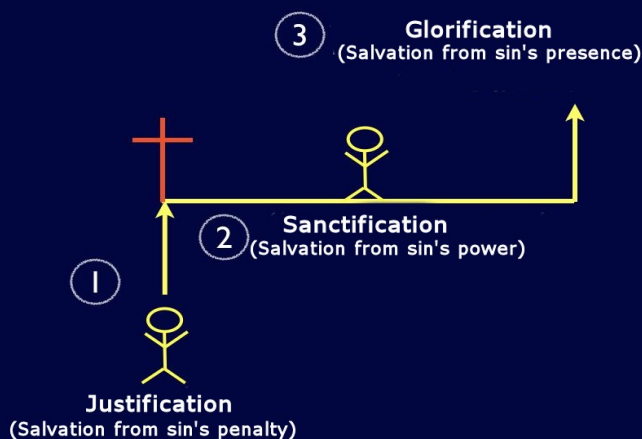
He has given us everything, with the result we can participate in the Divine nature and escape the corruption of the flesh. That's the Christian Life and deliverance from sin's power, as opposed to the deliverance from sin's penalty at the point we become a child of God. While we are at it, we should note what is coming:

... the Lord Jesus Christ ... will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Philippians 3:21

There you have it, all three components of the so-great salvation that God has provided: justification, sanctification, and glorification, as illustrated on the diagram.

THE COMPLETE GOSPEL--IN PHASES



Now, at this point, it is very likely this is all new to you, and you are wondering where I am getting it from—as you should! There is only one acceptable answer to that question, and that is that all this information comes from rightly understanding the Scriptures. I am going to unfold it for you in great detail, but my approach has been to introduce you first to the *big picture*.

Now, it is time to go to work on the details. So let me remind you of our reference verse in Romans, along with a passage from Galatians. (Galatians was written before Romans, and it often contains the *short version* of truths that are later expanded upon in Romans.)

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:11

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

Galatians 2:20 makes a startling claim: Paul was crucified with Christ and now Christ lives in him. When did this happen? Does it apply to us? Apparently it does, for the passage in Romans says that we are to reckon ourselves first dead and then alive!

What does that mean? The answer to these very important questions takes us back to the transition between Chapters 5 and 6, and then into a verse-by-verse study of Romans 6.



GALATIANS 2:20 WEB

*I have been crucified with
Christ, and it is no longer I that
live, but Christ living in me. That
life which I now live in the flesh,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me, and gave
himself up for me.*



Deliverance from the Power of Sin

After his thorough development of justification by faith, Paul ends the fifth chapter of Romans as follows:

... so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:21

What a snapshot of the situation. As far the human race goes, sin reigns in death! But the grace of God has provided a way—faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ! This faith allows us to obtain a perfect righteousness which allows for God to bestow the gift of eternal life in His heaven.

There is only one way to obtain this eternal blessing—through faith in Jesus Christ. It is most certainly by grace, because God has done all of the work of salvation. Our part is simply to receive His gift by faith!

This brings us to the new content of Romans Chapter 6.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Romans 6:1

We must acknowledge there is a certain logic to the question. The Book of Romans clearly expands our understanding of how all—the immoral man, moral man, and religious man—are under sin. Yet this *increase* of sin leads to an even greater revelation of the grace of God that completely addresses the need of mankind. So, Paul poses the question, “*Should we continue in sin knowing grace will cover it?*” He asks this question for two reasons:

1. He really wants to answer it.
2. He wants to make a singular statement about the Christian Life!

We are going to see both of these in Verse 2. The first thing I want to do is to show you how various translators have handled that first phrase. Romans 6:2 is Paul's answer to the question *Shall we go on sinning?* It gives us a singular principle for the believer's relationship to sin.

By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Romans 6:2

To emphasize Paul's answer, I have put in blue text eight different ways translators have handled that first little phrase—*by no means*.

Shall we go on sinning ... By no means! Certainly not! God forbid! No way! May it never be! Far from it! Absolutely not! That's unthinkable! We died to sin ... Romans 6:1-2

Read through them slowly. They should give us a really clear answer regarding God's expectation with respect to the continuation and acceptance of sin in the life of the child of God. My favorite is: *That's unthinkable!* Put them all together and we have an unequivocal answer to the question raised in Verse 1. Even at this early stage, let's make some application.

Point of Application

As much as we are going to continue to talk about grace as the means that God has provided to live the Christian Life, make no mistake about it, the grace of God is never, never, never a license to sin—*that would be unthinkable!* Now that we've settled that, did you notice Romans 6:2 said we have *died to sin* as the reason we should no longer continue in sin? When did that happen? What are the specifics? Before answering these essential questions, let me settle another issue.

Point of Interpretation

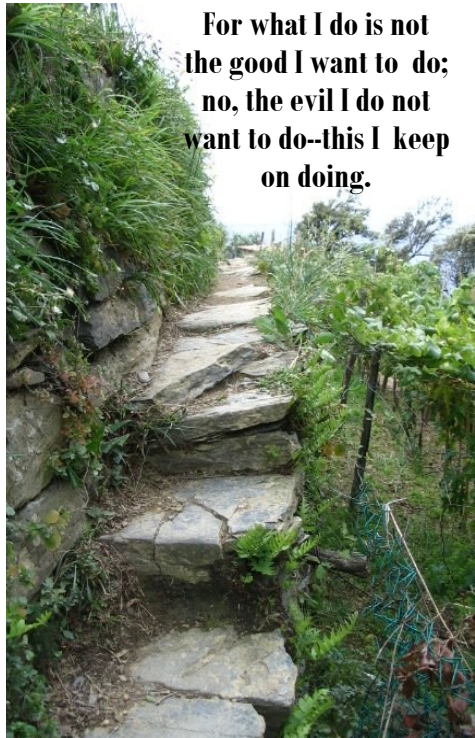
Implicit in the entirety of Romans Chapters 6-8 is the assumption that it is possible for the saved child of God to continue in sin. Why else ask the question *shall we go on sinning*, if it were not possible? If it is not possible, why does Paul say this?

**... the evil I
do not want to do—
this I keep on doing.**

Romans 7:19

And, why does he exhort us to avoid living "*according to the sinful nature*" unless it is a very real possibility? This is the crux of the Christian Life: Are we going to live according to the Spirit or the flesh? This is not a question of the justification that leads to eternal life, but rather of the sanctification which leads to a life lived to God's glory in preparation for eternity!

Are we condoning, excusing, or accepting the manifestation of the flesh? God forbid—that's unthinkable! This is why all of the New Testament epistles are so cautionary in tone. We must be on guard against sin and taught



**For what I do is not
the good I want to do;
no, the evil I do not
want to do--this I keep
on doing.**

God's ways to overcome the power of sin in our lives. Then, we must continue to be firmly admonished to stay the course, if we are going to avoid the many pitfalls that await the Christian in the devil's world.

Against the breadth of Scripture we are in the midst of studying, any theology that teaches that the *true* believer cannot become tangled in sin, or would not have difficulty in overcoming its power, is simply bad theology. This bad theology has as its source the mind of man and not the Word of God!

Understanding Baptism in the Context of Romans 6

As we continue in the text of Romans 6, we find the following verse:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Romans 6:3

Paul asked the question, *Don't you know ...?* Sad to say, many Christians are ignorant of what comes next, specifically, that if you have been baptized into Jesus Christ, then you have been baptized into His death!

If you are thinking, "*Oh yes, I was baptized in the lake when I was in third grade;*" then you do not yet understand what this verse is talking about, for there is not a drop of water anywhere in Chapter 6! The underlying meaning



ROMANS 6:3 WEB

*Or don't you know that
all we who were
baptized into Christ
Jesus were baptized
into his death?*

of the Greek word translated *baptism* is to identify with and often involves the ritual immersion of an object. For example, Roman soldiers immersed their swords in blood on the eve of battle (baptized them), in order to identify their personal weapon with its intended purpose of killing the enemy.

Spiritual Baptism

The baptism spoken of in Romans 6 is most certainly an identification, but it is a spiritual one. For example, there is no water in I Corinthians either—just a spiritual identification:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one Body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

I Corinthians 12:13

Romans 6:3-4 speaks of another spiritual identification, specifically, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is clearly something only God can do. Our church ordinance of baptism does not accomplish these things. On the contrary, it is a visual and outward picture of an inward reality that has already happened!

Back to Romans 6:3. We have just learned that every single believer in Jesus Christ has been identified with the death of Christ! The death of Christ has become our death, because we, in some spiritual way, participated in it. Did we experience this? No! But upon the authority of God's Word, it is ours to appropriate by faith.

Onward to Verse 4:

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. Romans

6:4

What an amazing verse! Further—this is something we

would have absolutely no way of knowing, apart from God's revealing it to us in His Word. Specifically, so intimately has God identified us with the death of His Son (that's our baptism into His death) that we were buried with Him. Not only that, we were equally identified with His resurrection to life. With what outcome in mind did God do all of this? Just what I have been writing about all along—newness of life—that we would have a life set apart unto the Lord in terms of purity, priority, exclusivity, and service—a sanctified life!

Verse 5 reinforces and clarifies the concept we have been discussing:

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection ...

Romans 6:5

Paul repeats this amazing truth of our identification with Christ—united with Him in His death, and then united with Him in His resurrection. God does not do things half-way! As we shall see, our death with Christ breaks the sin nature's power over us, and our resurrection replaces the crucified Adamic life with the very life of Christ! This is the spiritual foundation of the Christian Life. It is the only foundation that can lead to a sanctified life because it is His way, and let me suggest He is not interested in any alternatives from the mind of man!

Personal Testimony

Allow me to give just a short bit of my own testimony. As a twenty year-old, the Lord brought into my life some college classmates who were really good evangelists. After a struggle of some months, I responded to the Gospel of Christ in faith, and became a new creation in Christ. Following the example of those who evangelized me, I studied my Bible with great zeal and attended every Bible study I could. I learned much about God's

calling on the life of the Christian, but I never once heard anything about my identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's way of delivering me from the power of the flesh. I was taught that after all God had done for me in saving me, sanctification was my responsibility. So, I sought to control the flesh in my own strength. I tried hard and failed. Then I tried really hard—and failed.

Then I took every ounce of the will power that had made me a successful college athlete and student, expecting to achieve victory, while instead knowing only defeat. You would probably laugh at my defeats. It wasn't the outward sins you might expect of a college student; no, it was a failure to overcome sin within. What a wretched, saved Christian I became. That's what happens when you don't do things God's way. Discouragement or cover-up. Those seemed to be my only two options, until the Lord brought the light of Romans 6-8 to the edification of my soul! There is no salvation like that provided in Jesus Christ!

The Power of the Sin Nature Is Broken

Perhaps you are seeing how this is different, but not quite seeing how the power of the sin nature has been broken. Verses 6-7 are very instructive, and are going to really challenge us when it comes to walking by faith in God's revelation to us:

For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Romans 6:6-7

We are to "know" something! There will be no progress in our sanctification until we know, and believe, the content which follows.

Our Old Man Was Crucified with Him

This truth in Romans 6:6 refers to who we were in Adam before we were saved. It is a description of each one of us as a lost person. When we trusted in Christ unto eternal life, as we have already learned from Romans 6, Verses 2-5, we were identified with Christ's death and who we were in Adam was crucified!

Why is this such an important truth? Because our co-crucifixion with Christ accomplished a great work we could never accomplish on our own! God's intent was:

... that the body of sin might be done away with.

Romans 6:6

The first part is easy—the body of sin is a reference to our sinful nature—that which remains with us following our salvation until the day we trade in this *body of corruption* for a new incorruptible body like that of our Savior! Here is the best of news: Our resurrection body will not have a sin nature.

We do have one misleading item to correct. The Greek word translated *done away with*, can indeed mean to destroy, but it is also very commonly used to mean the following: to render inoperative, ineffectual, or to deprive of power. Consider the following passage with me:

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil ...

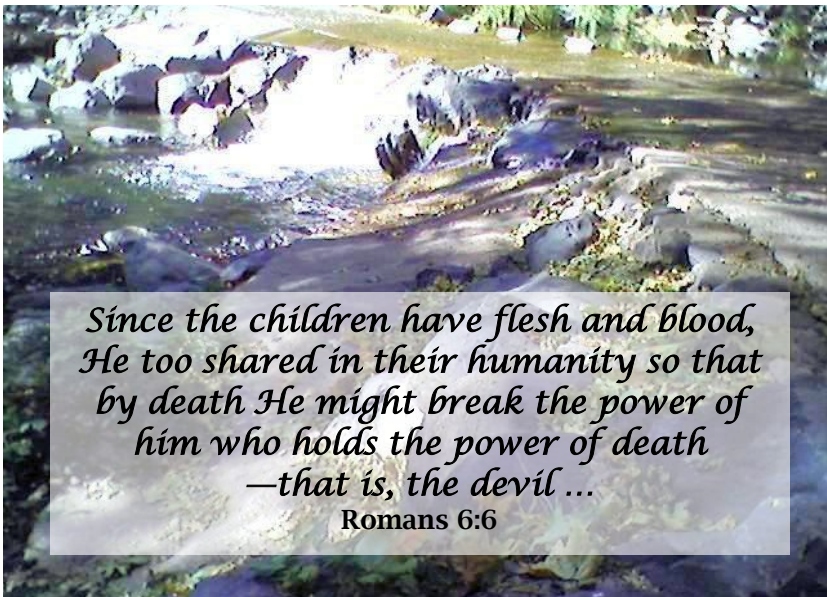
Hebrews 2:14

The underlined word is the exact same word as translated *done away with* in our passage. Now let me ask a question. Did Christ's death at the cross *destroy* Satan? Was he *done away with*? Hardly! According to I John 5, Satan is the current ruler of this earth.

So then, not surprisingly, Ephesians 6 names Satan and his demon organization as our real spiritual adversary. But, when it comes to Satan's hold on the human race, is it fair to say that Christ's death and resurrection rendered Satan's power to hold onto his subjects null and void, ineffectual, without power? It most certainly did, because those of us who have placed our faith in Christ have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son. (Colossians 1:13)

To summarize, the sin nature has not been destroyed, but rather its power has been broken by our co-crucifixion with Christ. Our participation in the death of Christ has *neutralized* the sin nature's exclusive power over the life of the one who has trusted in Christ, who knows and believes this great truth!

There is just a bit more to develop. Why did God identify us with the death of Christ? As we have seen, the sin nature's power in the life of the believer would be broken. Why is that important?



Our passage tells us, *so that we would no longer be slaves to sin*. Prior to faith in Christ, we were only and always slaves to sin! That is the lot of the lost. It doesn't have to be the gross sins of the immoral, it can be the refined sins of the materialistic and self-centered. Either way, the lost are enslaved to their flesh. No surprise, in God's plan of salvation, this is not to characterize the saved child of God. We are not to be slaves to sin, but under orders to our heavenly Father!

But how is it that we are no longer slaves? We're dead to the flesh—in Christ! And, *anyone who has died is freed from sin*. This is a powerful statement we must understand. Consider those things which trigger an individual's sin: bottles of alcohol for the alcoholic, a juicy bit of information for the gossip, pornographic images for the adulterer, and the list goes on.

What happens when these things are put before a dead person? Absolutely nothing. The things to which they would have responded when alive, now provoke no response at all! Why not? Because they're dead!



God identified us with the death and burial of His Son so that, by faith, we would reckon ourselves dead to every demand of the flesh!

- Why? Because it is now without effect!
- Why? Because we are dead to it—separated from its power—because these things no longer have any impact on someone who is dead, and that’s what we are in Christ!

This may be completely new to you, but give it time to sink in. Upon the authority of God’s Word, it is God’s way, it is brought into our daily circumstances by faith, and it is what undergirds our call to respond to the will of God—even our sanctification. (I Thessalonians 4:3)

In Summary

We should have known before beginning this study that the cross was the place where our sins were paid for *in full*. This is a work of Christ apart from our involvement in any way. Now we have added to that understanding by learning that the cross of Christ is our cross as well. His death is our death, that we might *walk in newness of life!* What does it take for that to happen? Not only must we have forgiveness for the penalty of sin, but the power of sin in our lives must be neutralized as well! That is exactly what God has provided by means of our identification with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Misunderstanding Scripture. Now some very influential teachers claim that if you are a *true* believer, then you no longer have a sin nature—you just have to clean up its residual effects. That’s absolute rubbish when held to the light of both the doctrine contained in God’s Word and our experience. Why else does Paul teach the believers in Galatia that they are in the midst of a

conflict in which they have already experienced failure?

So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Galatians 5:16-17

The above conflict is going to rage in the life of every born-again believer until they are in God's presence with a redeemed body! What is the God's way for not giving in to the desires of the flesh? It starts with our identification with Christ's death in Romans 6 and ends with our walk by the Spirit as developed in Romans 8. It's the only way, because it is God's way!

Living the Abundant Life. For far too many Christians, the Christian Life has been reduced to something like the following:

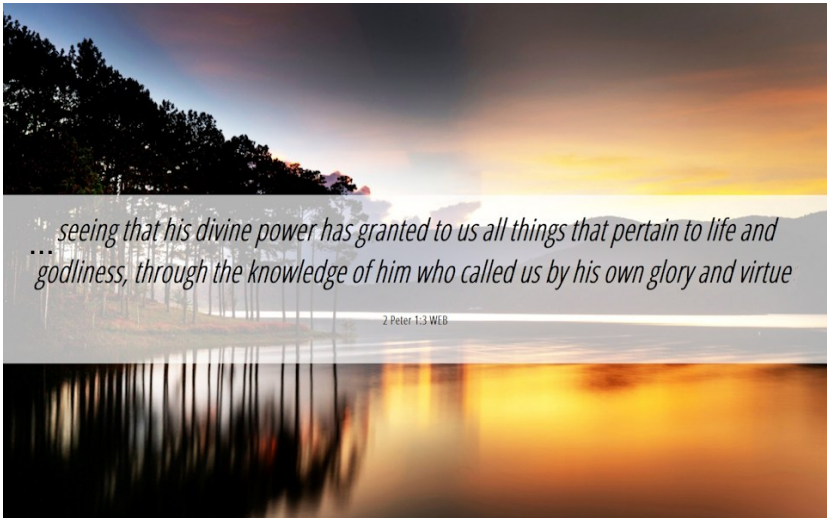
I used to be so excited about the many wonderful promises in the Bible. But they haven't been fulfilled in my life and I have gotten used to living at a level far below what I once hoped to achieve! I guess the abundant life is just something in store for the future. So I'll muddle along as best I can in the present and hold on to my hope that heaven will be better. I hope I am not disappointed there as well!

Does this sound like *peace with God and standing in His grace?* (Romans 5:1-2) Does this sound like the blessing of sharing in the life of Christ after being reconciled to the Father? (Romans 5:9) It is most certainly not the *Abundant Life* that Jesus promised! (John 10:10) And, one more very important question: Does this sound like the kind of testimony that would draw anyone to faith in Christ? I don't think so either!

I'll tell you what the problem is: This person is saved, but has not grown into the identification truths of Romans 6-8. It is not God's plan for us to wait until we get to heaven to be sanctified and bear fruit for Him. He has left us here to bring glory to Himself by manifesting the life of Christ to a lost world, and He has provided what we need to do so. He has not provided some things, but He has provided everything we need, upon the authority of His Word:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness ... Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that ... that you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world ... II Peter 1:3-4

If we have not escaped the corruption of the world and partaken of the divine nature, it is because we have not yet had deliverance from the power of sin and taken up the life of Christ. It means that we have not yet brought into our lives, by faith, what we have just seen declared in Romans Chapter 6!



Reckon Yourselfes ...

The summary of what we have been learning is in our anchor verse for Romans 6:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:11

Understanding the Verse

To be sure that we fully understand this anchor verse, let's look at the various parts:

Likewise you also ...: What is Paul telling us to do? The answer is in Verses 8-10, the verses that come before and explain the truth:

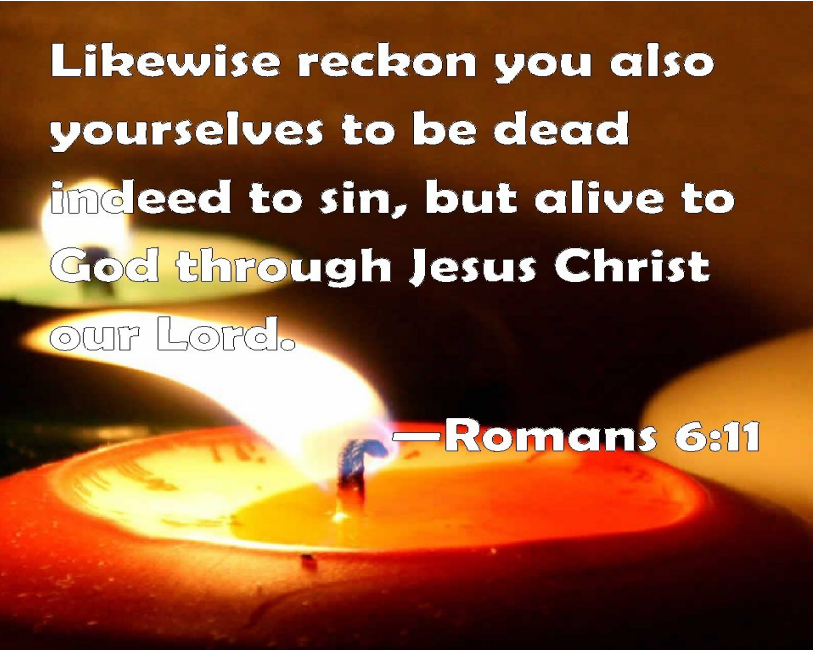
- We died with Christ and so, too, we have life in Him. (Verse 8)
- Never again will Jesus come under death as the penalty for sin, and neither will we! (Verse 9)
- Jesus died to the principle of sin once and for all, and now lives unto the Father. We, too, are to be done with the power of sin and put our new life at the Father's disposal. (Verses 10 and 13)

... reckon yourselves ...: The word translated *reckon* is an accounting term, and the grammar matters. It is in:

- The present tense—we are to do it right now, over and over again
- The middle voice—we are to do it ourselves, in our own souls
- The imperative mood—it is a command from God to us.

As an accounting term, it means to mark down accurate figures in the ledger. God is telling us He wants us to mark down a very specific truth in the *ledger* of our souls! Specifically, He wants us to know that *in Christ Jesus we are dead to sin* and *in Christ Jesus we are alive unto God!*

There is no way that we can experience the *Abundant Life* which God has provided, and every other aspect of the supernaturally high calling that is the Christian Life, unless we are done with the power of sin and manifest the very life of Christ. How does this become a reality in our lives? By faith! We achieve it by taking God at His Word and, though we did not experience neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection, we by faith reckon that we died with Christ in order to be dead to the flesh and, by that same faith, have been raised with Christ in order to put on display His life to a watching world.



**Likewise reckon you also
yourselves to be dead
indeed to sin, but alive to
God through Jesus Christ
our Lord.**

—Romans 6:11

To reckon is to adjust the thinking within our soul to the reality of what God has revealed to us in His Word. Reckon all the day long!

Illustrating Our Need to Reckon

Let me illustrate our great need to *reckon* upon the truths of God's Word.

When you and I were lost, was it a fact:

- That Jesus died for each of us? Yes!
- That He bore our sins while He was on the cross? Yes!
- That He received upon Himself the wrath of God that we deserved? Yes!

How did we reach the point we understood and answered yes to all of the above? By faith! Did our faith in these *facts* make these things true, or were they true all along and just became efficacious in our lives when we believed them to be true?



When put that way, I trust you can see that these truths were always true. Then, when you put your faith in them, that led to a change in your eternal destiny!

How about as a Christian, is it Biblical truth?

- That we died with Christ? Yes!
- That we were raised with Him? Yes!
- That our death with Christ broke sin's power over us? Yes!

How do we bring these great truths into our lives? We bring them into our lives by reckoning them to be true—by faith! Does our reckoning make them true, or have they always been true but only become efficacious with respect to our daily walk when we begin to reckon them to be true? Once again, it is the latter!

So when the flesh seeks to regain its control of the soul, what are we to do? Do we need to gear up to win a great victory? No, we need to identify ourselves with a victory already won, knowing that who we were in Adam was crucified with Christ, so that the sinful nature might be neutralized and we would no longer be slaves to sin. Because we died with Christ, the things of the flesh no longer have any power. In Christ, we are free of them. Thus, although circumstances and temptations change, we can go back to the truth of our death with Christ to neutralize sin's power and our resurrection with Christ to find the way forward in His life and not our own. Romans 6:6,7 and 11 paraphrased

As our Substitute, He went to the cross alone, without us, to pay the penalty of our sins; as our Representative, He took us with Him to the cross, and there, in the sight of God, we all died together with Christ. We may be forgiven because He died in our stead; we may be delivered because we died with Him. God's way of deliverance for us, a race of hopeless incurables, is to put us away in the cross of His Son, and to make a new beginning by recreating us in union with Him, the risen, living One.

Stanford

In Light of What We Have Learned

Romans 6:12 begins with the word *therefore*. What comes next is meant to be an application of what we have just learned in the first 11 verses of Romans Chapter 6!

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Romans 6:12

Do not let sin reign ... After what we have just learned, our response to this opening should be:

Of course not! We died to that nature! How can we live in it any longer? To do so would be to ignore the work of the cross! It would be a spiritual adultery of sorts—going back to what we were in Adam rather than moving forward in light of what we are in Christ!

As noted earlier, Paul is warning us away from that which is entirely possible, but completely inappropriate, for the child of God. Our text continues:

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. Romans 6:13

The first half of this verse continues the thought begun in Verse 12: Sin is not to reign in our lives, and we are not to have the outworking of sin visible in the various members of our body: hands, feet, mouth, and mind!

Note the underlined word *offer*. In our various English translations you will also find the words: yield and present. The best understanding of this word in context is to *put something at one's disposal!* So, in the first half of the verse, we are being commanded not to put the

members of our body at the disposal of our sin nature! It is possible to do so, but completely out of the will of God for one who has died with Christ.

Then, in the second half of the verse, the same word is used to give us a description of what the Christian Life should look like in practice. We are to put the new life that we have in Christ at God's disposal—and naturally the parts of the body to Him as well—as instruments of righteousness! Notice, the key to this is not to try with all our might. It is no act of great willpower but a grace gift to those who have been brought from death to life! God caused us to participate in the death of Christ that the power of the sin nature would be broken. God caused us to participate in the resurrection of Christ that we, too, would walk in newness of life. All of this we are to receive by faith—but of course we already knew this because we are told to:

... reckon yourselves to be dead to sin, and alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:11

There we have it, a beautiful and simple picture of the Christian Life: the desires of the sin nature no longer working themselves out through the members of our



body—no wicked actions, slanderous words, or evil thoughts. Instead, we put the new life we have in Christ at the Father's disposal for Him to work out our deeds, words, and thoughts in keeping with His will, plans, and purposes.

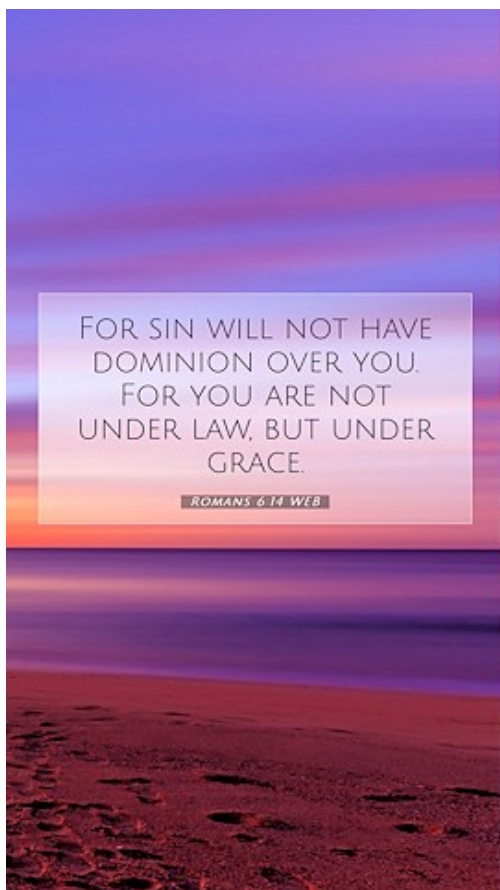
There is still one more provision from God to complete the picture. Note that there will be many a challenge along the way in order to make this transition from *sanctification by self* to *sanctification by reckoning upon what God has provided*, but for now, glory in the possibilities and beauty of what God has provided.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Is this really possible, or is it just a *glamour photo*? Is it just a beautiful picture that doesn't really work out the way it is supposed to in reality?" God answers these questions in the very next verse!

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Romans 6:14

You see, it really is true. In the salvation provided through Jesus Christ, sin ***shall not be*** our master! The reason



is that we are not under law. It is not about our keeping a set of rules, following any man-made set of do's and don'ts, or maintaining rigid self-control. On the contrary, because we are under grace, it is all about what God has provided and we receive by faith. We should have every confidence that it is possible, in this life, to live out from under the power of the flesh.

Living Under Grace

Let's see if we can draw this all together and address a few practical points as well.

First, sin, as a principle, shall continue to have dominion in the life of the child of God as long as he or she seeks to live the Christian Life by law, religious practice, commitment, surrender, will-power, and so on. In fact, sin will have dominion in every case, except in the life lived under grace.

Second, let's understand why our focus is to be turned to the grace of God. Look at the pattern. Who died to pay the penalty for our sins? Who identified us with the death of Christ in order to break the power of sin? Who identified us with the resurrection of Christ that we might walk in newness of life? The answer to each and every one of these questions is: God did!

What is more, He did each and every one of these things apart from our deserving them or working for them. That's what makes it grace! So, what do you suppose is the way forward with respect to living the Christian Life? How about day-by-day, moment-by-moment, receiving by faith what God in grace provides?

We have to get our focus off of what we think we should be doing and on to what He has provided and where He is leading. Perhaps you are wondering why God didn't just eradicate the sin nature altogether. To answer, we

must understand from the beginning that in God's plan we can be dead to the sin nature, but it is not going to be functionally dead to us. When the world calls, the flesh is still going to want to answer whether we are a Christian or not! We cannot be surprised by this. God's promise is not that the flesh is gone, His promise is that it will not be our master! (And please note, I am speaking of our life here on earth. Part of our hope of future glorification is the confidence that in our resurrection bodies the sin nature will indeed be gone—and we will never need to deal with it again.)

So, why not deliver us from any potential of sin compromising our Christian Life? That is a very good question. Let me try to answer it in light of other revealed Truth:

- Make no mistake about it, God has provided a definitive deliverance from the power of the sin nature in the life of the believer. It is not a half-measure, or a partial deliverance. It is everything we need for life and godliness! What makes it a challenge is that moment-by-moment it must be appropriated by faith, which, of course, is where failure can occur. Failure, then, is not in the provision of God, but in the unbelief of man.
- Now to the question at hand: Why didn't God remove the sin nature altogether? It certainly would have made it easier to live the Christian Life. My best answer to this question is because of competing priorities in the purposes of God. Ponder these Scriptures:

... anyone who has died is free from sin ... sin shall not be your master ... Romans 6:7,14

My righteous ones will live by faith. Romans 1:17

You see, God has provided a means for victory over the flesh, but at the same time He wants a people

who live in dependent faith upon Him. How could He promote this dependence? By leaving the sin nature in the body of the Christian, in order to require us to turn to His grace for deliverance every day.

When the reason we still have a sin nature is stated that way, I get it! While we are on this earth, God wants to keep me very close to Him. (You might even say *abiding in Him* and trusting Him to do, through me, what I cannot do myself.) That's a walk of dependent faith in the promises and provision of God! Does that sound like being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ? It does to me!

The Outcome of Sinning

What happens if we do sin, if we give into the desires of the flesh? Unfortunately, it is entirely foreseeable that we will sin. God has provided everything we need so that we will not, but, on the other hand, Satan is a tireless schemer and uses the world from without to ensnare the sin nature within. If we choose the flesh, we sin. Then what?

**My dear children,
I write this to you
so that you will
not sin. But if
anybody does sin,
we have One who
speaks to the
Father in our
defense—Jesus
Christ, the
Righteous One.**

I John 2:1



We have failed, but take note: The perfect Son of God, who died for the very sin we just committed, steps forward to speak in our defense. He reminds the Father, *It is finished!* and that our sin debt is *paid in full!* Now, am I condoning sin, making light of it? Certainly not! God forbid! That's unthinkable! We died to sin and the life we live we are to live to God (Romans 6:10-11). That's our standard! But, if we think as *new creations* that we are going to get this right after hearing it once or twice while living in a dead man's body in a fallen world, our actual experiences will correct that error in short order.

So, what do we do? We don't wonder about our salvation. We don't mope around in the pity parlor. We confess our sins and simply take God at His word that we are completely saved from His wrath and cleansed from all unrighteousness! (I John 1:19)

Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him.

Romans 5:9

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

I John 1:7

Are you starting to see how God has provided everything, how He has covered all the bases? We just need to know what He has provided, and then respond in faith until we can rest in the fullness of what He has provided!

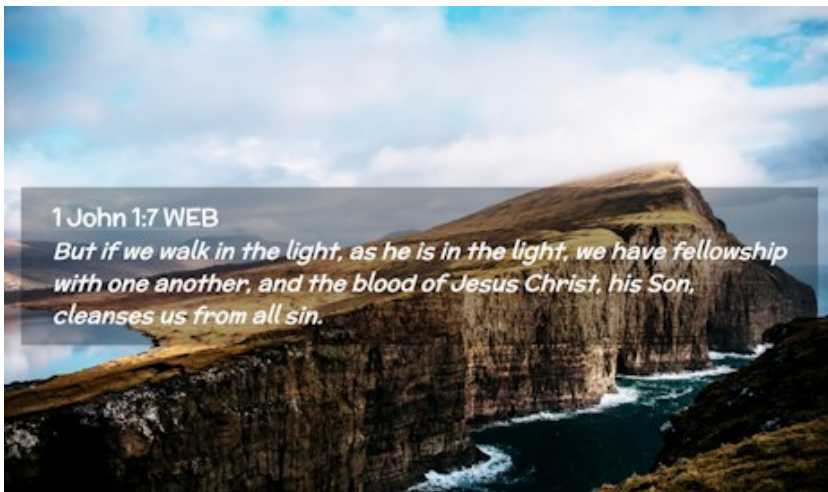


A Brief Interlude

There is one more thing we need in order to complete the picture of God's provision for us to live the Christian Life. Thus far, we have the *Blood of Christ* and the work of Christ on the cross to deal with the penalty of sin. Those who place their faith in the person and work of Christ are clothed with the very righteousness of Christ and stand justified before the Holy One! (Romans 3:22) Thus, our first need is justification.

Once justified, our need becomes one of dealing with the power of the sin nature that remains after our salvation. This is where the *Cross of Christ* comes in. I don't mean the cross on which Jesus died, alone in darkness, to pay for our sins. I mean the cross of Christ which is ours as the result of God identifying us with the death of Christ so that the power of the flesh might be neutralized! (Romans 6:6)

As Watchman Nee helpfully points out, the *Blood of Christ* deals with the sins committed, while the *Cross of Christ* deals with the factory that produces sin.

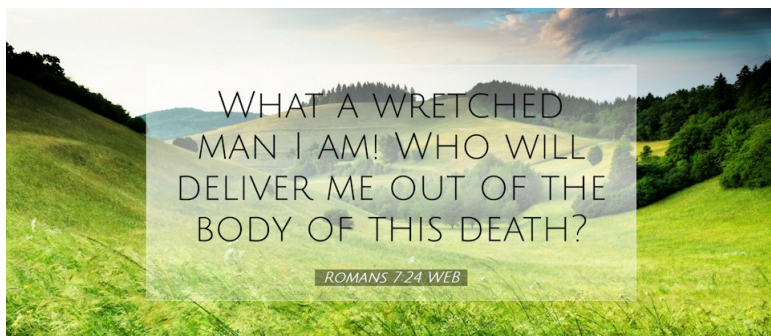


So far so good, but that leaves us dead in Christ and our subject is the Christian Life. We need life! God provides that too by raising us up with Christ and giving us the very *Life of Christ!* At this point you would think we are all set, having all that we need, but God has provided still more. There is one more thing we need and that is the power to enable the new life that is ours. We are going to find that to be the *Spirit of Christ*, the subject of Romans Chapter 8.

But Paul has done a very interesting thing between Chapters 6 and 8, and we must take note. He has inserted Chapter 7 as an interlude of sorts. He has interrupted the unfolding of God's provision of the means of living the Christian Life—a life of true spirituality—in order to make sure we understand something. He has thus far explained our cleansing from sin by the *Blood of Christ*, the way in which the Cross of Christ breaks the power of sin, and the provision of the *Life of Christ* to replace that which was crucified. Now, before his treatise on the *Spirit of Christ*, Paul is going to do everything he can to help us avoid what I am going to call the *Wretched Man Syndrome*, something we find right at the end of Roman's Chapter 7.

**What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me
from this body of death?**

Romans 7:24



Understanding *Wretched Man Syndrome*

Now you should be asking, “How could this possibly be? We seem to have everything—sins forgiven, sin’s power broken, and new life in Christ! What more could we need?” Those are good questions. Paul had those same things, and yet his own testimony is one of being a *wretched man*! He tells us what made him so:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do ... nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing ... it is sin living in me that does it. Romans 7:15-20

Paul fell into a trap he wants us to avoid. That is why, following the great news of Romans Chapter 6, he is going to do everything he can to warn us against making a terrible mistake before we head into Chapter 8 where he unfolds the final piece of God’s provision for the Christian Life. Let’s consider Chapter 7 as a way to avoid wasting time as a *wretched man* as we continue to learn what God has provided as the means to live the Christian Life.

It is very easy to be tripped up by the mistake described in Chapter 7—after all, Paul was! Our goal should be to immediately recognize when we have gone wrong, confess the error of our ways, and get back to doing things God’s way. Then we can move right on into the eighth chapter of Romans.

Avoiding *Wretched Man Syndrome*!

So let me walk you through it. Before I do, let me note that there is much in Romans 7 that I am going to ignore or gloss over. It deserves closer scrutiny but, for

our purposes, I want to complete the picture of spirituality started in Chapter 6, so I am simply going to extract what we need to continue to the culmination of God's gracious provision in Romans 8.

To begin, recall that at the close of Chapter 6, we seem to have everything we need: sins forgiven, the power of the sin-nature broken, and the very life of Christ. What could go wrong? Apparently, something very serious for Paul had all of these things, and yet he found himself to be a *wretched man* looking for deliverance! Do not underestimate in your own mind the serious nature of this problem. It is a potential disaster for two reasons:

1. A lesser man than Paul would very likely become greatly discouraged! When you grasp the wonderful truths of what God has provided, and yet end up a wretched man (or woman), it is very easy to become disenfranchised and walk away! Or, almost worse yet, reconcile yourself to a *wretched life* being as good as it gets and, from that point forward, maintaining a veneer of Christianity while simply going through the motions.
2. A second disastrous outcome is what being a wretched man does to our testimony! How effective do you suppose it is to reach out to others the Lord brings our way, and then hold out to them this testimony: "*You need to be saved by putting your faith in Jesus Christ so that you can be a wretched man like I am?*" Of course, we don't phrase it that way, but when it is our current reality, we tend to lose our zeal for sharing Christ.

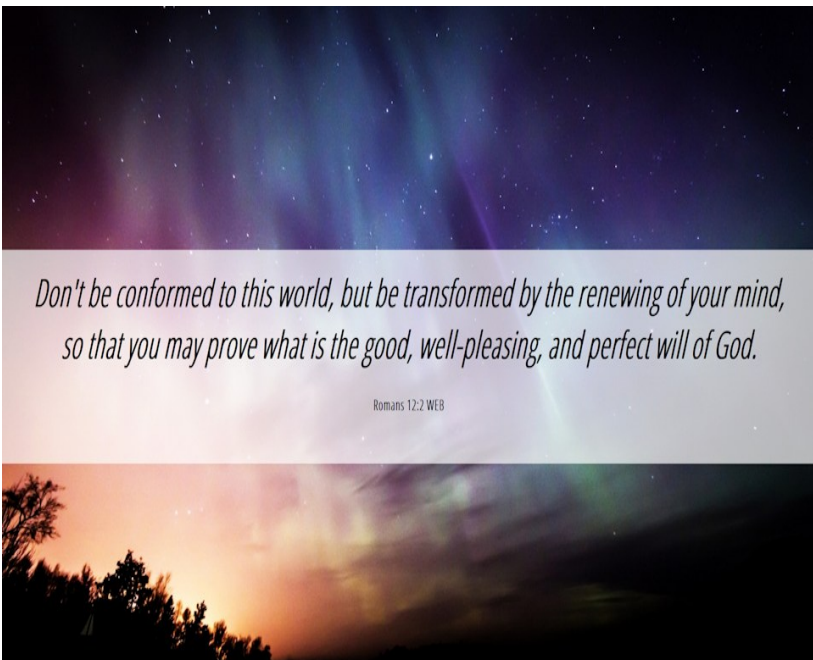
At this point you should be dying to know the cause! What is the reason for Paul being a wretched man despite apparently having everything? Romans 7 tells us the answer: Paul has taken what God has provided and is trying to live out the Christian Life from the source of

himself. In his case, that was primarily by means of the Mosaic Law and, further, from the source of himself. He was trying to do all of the things he thought he should be doing as a good Christian, while at the same time not doing those things he thought he shouldn't.

Let me take the above two issues, and show you, from the subject matter of Chapter 7, exactly what caused Paul to declare his condition wretched? First, let me show you that trying to live by the Law, even something as holy as the Mosaic Law, is not God's way:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ... by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

Romans 7:4,6



First, it is very clear, is it not? As part of our identification with the death of Christ, we have died. That means we have been separated, once and for all, from the principle of law-keeping as the means to spirituality. Instead, we serve in the new way of the Spirit not the written code—that's the subject of Chapter 8. Trying to live the Christian Life by any system of do's and don'ts is a sure-fire way to become a wretched man!

Second, consider the disaster that results from seeking to live the Christian Life from the source of self. Take a second look at Paul's lament recorded for us in this seventh chapter of Romans:

For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out ...

Romans 7:15-18

What is the dominant pronoun in the above? It is obviously the little word "I"! If you expand the text on either side of this text, you will find: I, I, I! By the time we are done with Romans 8, you are going to be thinking: by the Spirit, by the Spirit, by the Spirit!



Now you have it. The way to discover *wretched-man syndrome* for yourself is to ignore what God has provided and seek to live the Christian Life by means of either law keeping and/or from the source of self. To be clear, by self I mean any combination of will-power, drive, volition, personality. By law, I mean any combination of do's and don'ts, or rules and regulations.

By this point, I hope you are thinking, "*What is the answer to wretched man syndrome? How do I avoid it?*" It is essential that every Christian reach the end of his or her rope with respect to seeking to live the Christian Life in personal strength! Paul did. He is going to give us a bit of encouragement at the close of Chapter 7, and then spend the first half of Chapter 8 on the answer: God's provision to complete the means for living the Christian Life by a quality of spirituality that only He can provide.

So, let me close this booklet with a word of encouragement and urge you to read the next booklet to discover the *law of the Spirit of Life!* Here is the encouragement: Paul, in total frustration, asks, "*Who will rescue me from this body of death?*" We shouldn't be the least bit surprised by the answer to his question:

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 7:25

Of course, God will rescue, and naturally it will be by means of His Son. That's because:

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.

II Corinthians 1:20

Jesus has provided what we need for spiritual victory. And of course you and I want to know what we are to do—what role do we play in the victory yet to be won in our lives?

This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

I John 5:4

It is not about our strength, will-power, or commitment! It is about what God has the desire and ability to do in our lives. We need to put our trust in Him, and walk in dependent faith. And, faith in the provision of the Holy Spirit is the final piece of New Testament spirituality as unfolded in Romans Chapter 8.



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