

Free to Sin?

Romans 6:1—7

There are those who would take what Paul said in the last chapter about God's grace being sufficient to cover any sin and try to make sinning a positive thing. They would claim that if I sin then God's grace would be even more abundant and would give Him even more glory. This is they type of twisted thinking typical of the unregenerate mind. Paul continues in this chapter to show us who we are in Christ and the responsibility we have to give ourselves over to God as instruments of righteousness.

Verse 1

The basis for this verse begins in the previous two verses that state that the Law was added so that sin might increase but where sin increased, God's grace increased even more. Paul knew that sinful man would take what he said and twist it to make it a positive thing to sin. Mankind is always looking for ways to please himself instead of God.

The wording suggests it is not just sinning but a lifestyle of continual sin. By leading a life immersed in sin the sinner would then experience much more of God's grace than by not sinning. God's grace does not increase and decrease because someone sins or does not sin. There is plenty of His grace to take care of our sins but the total amount of grace He has is static. All Paul was saying is that God's grace is absolutely more than enough to handle any and all sin.

Verse 2

Of course the answer to the question in verse 1 is "Absolutely not"! How can you continue to live in sin when you are now dead to sin? All who are believers are found in Christ and therefore are alive in Him and dead to sin.

This raises a practical question because we all sin. If I am dead to sin why do I keep sinning? As Paul explains in the following verses, we are spiritually dead to sin; it does not have a hold on us because we are identified with Christ. Positionally we are sinless and are seen as being seated in heaven with Christ. Practically (or experientially) we have yet to break free from our sinful nature and will struggle with it until we are called home to be with the Lord.

Ephesians 2:1—7 ¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Verses 3—5

Paul continues to explain how it's possible for us to be dead to sin. It is obvious that when we die physically that we will then be free of any sin because it is no longer possible for us to sin. Paul also explains that we who are in Christ have already experienced death and because of that we are dead to sin.

According to these verses those in Christ have obtained that position by being baptized into Christ. The word *baptized* has the idea of identification. If you are baptized into Christ you are fully identified with

Him. This is consistent with the rest of these verses for as Christ has died, been buried and has risen, we too are considered to have died, been buried and will rise as He did.

Many find water in verse 3 and assert that we are found in Christ because of being baptized in water to receive Him. However, this verse clearly states that we were baptized into Christ and not into water. Christ is the medium into which we were immersed and it was by the work of the Holy Spirit that it was possible. Other verses make this clear:

Galatians 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Although most churches practice water baptism, I do not believe it is necessary in this Age of Grace. God seems to have left room for only one baptism and the only baptism we need is the baptism into Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Water baptism (the baptism of John) was given to Israel so that she would recognize their Messiah. It is not for the Church, the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

John 1:31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

Our baptism into Christ is in contrast to what happened at Pentecost where Jesus Christ poured out the Holy Spirit on Israel. They were "immersed" in the Holy Spirit and thus fully identified with the Holy Spirit. Their identification with the Holy Spirit was manifested through the gift of tongues and other signs and wonders. We don't experience that today because we are not baptized in the Holy Spirit, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Acts 2:16—17 ¹⁶but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says,

'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;

Mark 1:8 "I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Many think that baptism is a New Testament innovation but in actuality was an act given to Israel with the Law. We see a reference to baptisms in Hebrews. Notice that the Greek word for washings (βαπτισμων) is the word *baptism*.

Hebrews 6:2 of instruction about washings (baptisms) and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Hebrews 9:10 since they relate only to food and drink and various washings (baptisms), regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.

These baptisms were spelled out in the Law. One of these baptisms was used to consecrate priests to God for service in the tabernacle. We see this in Exodus 29:4; 40:12 and Leviticus 8:6 when Aaron was washed (baptized) and anointed.

Most people think of water when you mention baptism however, there are many baptisms that exclude water:

As used in the Classical and New Testament Greek the allied words βαπτω and βαπτίζω definitely convey the *idea of to dip*, but not necessarily always the thought of immersion or submersion (Luke 16:24; Mark 1:4; 7:4). In the New Testament it depicts *washing*, apparently the hands (Luke 11:38), and of various utensils (Mark 7:4). The Greek verb βαπτίζω is commonly used in the New Testament in contexts in which there is *no water*. Jesus will baptize *in the Holy Spirit and in fire*, i.e., in judgment (Luke 3:16-17). Jesus asks the question, Are you willing to be baptized *into my impending death* (Mark 10:39; cf. Luke 12:50; Romans 6:3). Paul speaks of true believers as those who have been baptized *into Christ* (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). He refers to the Israelites who came out of Egypt as having been baptized *into Moses* (1 Corinthians 10:2). When the context obviously refers to baptism in water, it is never referred to as *into Christ* (εις Χριστον), but always as *in or into the name* (εις το ονομα) of either Jesus Christ or the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5).

Ernest R. Campbell "A Commentary on Romans Chapters 1—8"

Verses 6—7

These verses further explain how through death we are free from sin. The old self, or old man, is the sinful nature we inherited from Adam. At the moment we believed, we became dead to sin because we have now been completely identified with Jesus Christ. Since Jesus had died my old nature has died, doing away with the ability to sin.

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.

Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Obviously this last statement would be problematic for many people because we know that even those in Christ will sin. How then can Paul say we are free from sin and that the old nature has been crucified? Some would say we could live a completely holy life free from any sin (holiness movement). They would believe that one is able to live a holy life by being entirely sanctified (holy) as a second definite work of grace, received by faith, and accomplished by the baptism and power of the Holy Spirit, giving one the ability to live a holy life. Paul did not have this in mind at all for he knows how we would struggle with sin through our lifetime (Romans 7:21—23).

I believe Paul was speaking from God's point of view. He sees us the old nature as being dead, unable to sin and we as living in perfection. Positionally we are already considered as perfect. We know that we do not and will not live in this state of perfection until we are with Christ. We will finally be found to be in the state of perfection that we are currently trying to obtain in becoming Christ-like. We can see this in Ephesians where we are told to take off the old man and put on the new. This is a conscious and deliberate action we are to take after we are saved.

Ephesians 4:22—24 ²²that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Colossians 3:8—10 ⁸But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, ¹⁰and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--

Before we were saved we could not do anything good in God's eyes, we were incapable of pleasing Him. Now we are able to do so because we have a new nature, one that is born of the Spirit.

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