

Studies in Romans 1 - 8 (6)

Study 6: Reading – Romans 6 v 1 – 5, 12 – 18, 7 v 1 - 6

In this third section of the doctrinal part of Romans (6 v 1 – 8 v 39) Paul describes the effect of God's provision, sanctification. He shows that 'justification by faith' and 'the righteousness of God' is not just a theoretical concept, but should have an effect on, and bring about a change in, our daily living. If in chapter 3 v 21 – 5 v 21 we learn 'how to be saved', in this section we learn 'how to live a godly life'. The power that brings about this change is the indwelling Spirit and this is noted in chapter 8 in particular e.g. v 2. However, before we come to chapter 8 Paul considers the problem of the flesh, 'the old man'.

In chapter 6 it is '**positional**' truth i.e. how God sees those whom he has justified e.g. v6. In chapter 7 it is the '**practical**' experience of the believer e.g. v18. Finally in chapter 8 we have the '**power**' for holy living, the Spirit of God e.g. v9.

6 v 1 – 11 Dead to Sin – Alive unto God: v11 *"reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"*

6 v 12 - 23 Free from Sin – Servants to God: v22 *"But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God"*

7 v 1 – 6 Delivered from Law – Serve in Newness of Spirit: v6 *"But now we are delivered from the law that we should serve in newness of life"*

6 v 1 – 11 Dead to Sin – Alive unto God:

At the close of chapter 5 Paul says v20 *"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* Based on this Paul raises a question that might be asked in v1 *"Shall we continue in sin, that that grace may abound?"* "God forbid", let it not be is Paul's answer, *"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"*

"Dead to sin", in the remaining verses of this section Paul gives **v3 – 5 'The illustration from baptism'** and **v6 – 11 'The picture of crucifixion'**. Notice how each section begins, *"Know ye not"* and *"Knowing this"* (see also 6 v 16 and 7 v 1). This is something the Roman Christians, and we, ought to know.

v3 – 5 Illustration from Baptism: Paul teaches that baptism is a picture of death, burial and resurrection. In baptism we are identified with the Lord Jesus. On salvation's day we were joined to the Lord Jesus, separated from the old life and associated with the Lord in that new life. Water baptism is a picture, an external demonstration of what has taken place internally (see v4). One of the results of the death of the Lord Jesus is that he died to set us free from the power of sin. Believers are identified with him, reckoned as having died to sin and been resurrected *"to walk in newness of life"*.

v6 – 11 Picture of crucifixion: v6 *"our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed"*. The 'old man' is our old self; all that we were before salvation. Paul explains that as the Lord Jesus was crucified for sin i.e. bore the judicial penalty for sin, so our old man has also been judged and put to death. The result of the old man being crucified is that the body of sin, the body controlled by sin is destroyed, or rather rendered inactive. As a result we no longer serve sin.

In v8 Paul introduces new life, *"if we be dead with Christ ... we shall also live with him"*. Not only in the future, but we share this new life in the present. In v9, 10 the apostle states that the truth concerning the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus demands a response from the believer

v11 *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be 1) dead unto sin and 2) alive unto God.”* These two facts show the nonsense of the idea in v1 *“Shall we continue in sin?”*

6 v 12 - 23 Free from Sin – Servants to God:

In these verses there is a change from ‘dead and alive’ to ‘free and servants’. Based on the fact that we are dead to sin the readers are encouraged to dethrone sin, not to follow its evil desires, and *“yield yourselves unto God”*. In v13 the word ‘yield’ appears twice, but they are in different tenses. In the first mention, *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness”*, it is in the present tense indicating continuance of action i.e. ‘stop doing this’. On the second occasion, *“but yield yourselves unto God”*, it is the aorist tense indicating an action done once for all, never requiring repeating i.e. do this now, and do it once for all.

The promise of v14 *“sin shall not have dominion over you”*; with the explanation that we are now governed by the principle of grace leads to the question in v15 *“shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?”* The suggestion in the question is that we can sin with impunity because we are under grace. As in v2, Paul’s answer is *“God forbid.”*

At v16 two masters are introduced ‘sin’ and ‘righteousness or obedience’. If sin is master, his demands must be met and the consequences faced i.e. death. However, there is an alternative and Paul says *“God be thanked”* and v18 *“made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”* If we are bondservants of righteousness, we must meet this masters demands and the outcome of this is eternal life. At v19 Paul states that he uses this picture of masters and servants because of their limited spiritual understanding (compare 1 Cor 3 v 2). The exhortation that follows is to sanctification, *“yield (present) your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”* As servants to sin no fruit was produced, nothing valuable or useful and the end is death. But now as *“servants to God”* there is *“fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”* That is as servants of righteousness we are separated from the world, separated unto God.

7 v 1 – 6 Delivered from Law – Serve in Newness of Spirit:

Paul now draws lessons from the marriage bond. The expression *“Know ye not”* appears for the third time and links with 6 v 14 where we read, *“sin shall not have dominion over you”*. In 7 v 1 Paul notes *“the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.”* In v2, 3 the example of the marriage bond is used to further illustrate the truth that the Christian has died with Christ and now lives a new life. Concerning a married woman v3 says that *“if her husband be dead, she is free from that law”* i.e. the law concerning her husband and the marriage bond. In v4 we have the lesson as the apostle compares the death of a husband with the experience of a believer: 1) As the wife was united with her first husband, so we, before we were saved were united to the law 2) In contrast to the first husband dying and freeing the wife from the law of her husband, our old man died, and although the law remained, death has freed us from its dominion 3) The wife is free to be united to a second husband, so the believer is now united to the Lord Jesus.

Finally, in v5 we learn that when we were united to the law, the law by its commandments kindled desires and passions, which lead to death. In v6 we have the contrast *“But now we are delivered from the law”*. We are delivered, having died, and now we serve a new master *“in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter”*. What a difference this new master makes. The well known quote, attributed to John Bunyan, describes it well:

‘Run John, run! The law commands but gives me neither feet nor hands
Far grander news the gospel brings it bids me fly and gives me wings’