

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 6:1-4 (A)

Student Notes

Recap from Romans 6:1: Paul's critics were charging that he had made grace too easy. They argued that he had made sin the object of the Christian life -- because more sin meant a greater experience of God's grace in one's life.

Paul's reaction to these charges: "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

Paul employs eight arguments in this passage. A quick outline of his response:

- We died to sin.
- Our baptism united us with Christ in his death.
- We share in Christ's death, we share in his resurrection life.
- Crucified with Christ, we are free from sin's slavery
- Christ died to sin once for all, but he lives continuously unto God.
- In Christ, we share his status as, "dead to sin, but alive to God."
- As "new people", we are to offer our bodies to God's service.
- No longer under the Mosaic Law ... we are under Grace.

That's the basic outline of Paul's Romans 6 argument that the grace he preached was not, "easy grace". It did not encourage sin, if it was properly understood.

Paul's First argument:

• **We Died To Sin: v. 2**

The Antinomians: "With grace, there were no moral laws in effect. Grace allowed believers to practice any form of sin without consequence.

Paul's first answer to the Antinomians: "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" -- **The Greek sentence:** "We died to sin the past, how then shall we live in it in the future?"

It is not that, after our rebirth, we are incapable of sinning ... it makes sinning out of sync with our new life.

• **A Theological And Practical Misunderstanding.**

Some teach Paul is making a strict analogy to physical death: "When humans die, they become insensitive to all outward stimulus. Accordingly, if we have died to sin we are as unresponsive to temptation as a corpse to a physical stimulus."

John Stott's Commentary: "Three fatal objections" to this popular view of "We have died to sin".

1. It Contradicts The Meaning of Christ's Death:

The expressions “we died to sin” or “we are dead to sin”: Applied to both Christ and Believers: See v. 2, 10, &11

The goal: Finding an explanation for “we died” that matches “Christ died to sin once for all”.

Does Paul mean that before his death, Jesus was responsive to sin? No. While his temptations were real, he did not need the cross to die to it decisively, once for all.

Jesus did not die on the cross to decisively defeat sin in his own life.

2. It Contradicts Paul's Encouragements Against Sinning:

Beginning at verse 11, Paul gives us a number of statements which encourage us not to sin. If, at rebirth, our fallen nature had completely died -- making us unresponsive to temptation -- then why does Paul still encourage us not to sin?

Romans 13: Paul warns us to “put aside the deeds of darkness”, and stop thinking about how we might “gratify the desires of the sinful nature”. (See: Romans 13:12,14).

3. It Contradicts All Of Christian Experience.

Paul is writing to the rank and file of Christians who believed and have been baptized into Christ (See: verse 2-3).

The real question: “From your experience, are all of God's children so “dead to sin” as to be unalterably unresponsive to it?

Even Paul was not insensitive to sin and temptation. 2 Corinthians 11:29: “Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?”

Far from being dead, our fallen nature is so alive that we must guard against fulfilling its desires. In fact, we need to submit to the Holy Spirit in order to control them.

• The Real Meaning of “Dead to Sin”:

A different meaning for “dead to sin” as applied to Christ and believers: Looking to the Scriptures rather than from popular interpretations.

In the Bible, and, especially in Romans, death is represented in legal terms: Whenever sin and death are coupled in the Bible, death is the penalty of sin.

Romans 1:23: “Those who sin, “deserve death”. Romans 5:12: “Death entered the world through sin”. Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death”.

The natural meaning of “Christ died to sin, once for all”: Christ took in himself the penalty of all sin. Because of his sacrifice, sin no longer has a claim on him.

What about us? We have been joined to Christ by his death and resurrection. In that sense, we too, have “died to sin”. Legally, sin and death have no further claim on us -- because Christ has paid the penalty for us. In him, death and sin have no authority or rule

over us.

We only become slaves to those we have surrendered to. That being the case, we do not have to submit to temptation; we have a clear way out of it.