

Faith Is Action

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white lace dress, is shown from the waist up. Her hands are bound together by thick, coiled rope, and she is looking upwards with her mouth slightly open. The background is a plain, light gray.

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DEAD TO SIN

In the first five chapters of *Romans*, Paul expounded the Mosaic law, showing that the law was never given to save man. In fact, it *couldn't* save man. The law was *diagnostic*—the only thing the law could do was show man that he is exceedingly sinful. It served to stir up sin and bring mankind into its bondage. With the institution of the law, man was in a worse situation than he was before the law, because without the law, sin was not imputed: *“For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed where there is no law”* (Rom.5:13). In other words, you can't be guilty of something if there is nothing in the law to prohibit it. If there is not a *No Parking* sign posted in an area, you can park there anytime, but the minute someone posts a sign, it's illegal to park there, and if you do, you are guilty.

Paul said in Rom. 4:15, *“Where no law is, there is no transgression”*—no violation and no imputation of sin, although sin was in the world— *“For by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (Rom. 3:20). Paul said, *“I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law said, Thou shalt not covet”* (Rom.7:7). But when the law came,

sin revived and used the law to slay man, because it showed him that it was impossible for him to keep the law and live right (Rom. 7:9). It would take an intervention by God, and God intervened:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16). God's grace intervened and gave Jesus to pay for our past sins and to deliver us from the power of sinning, from the power of the law, and from the power of the devil.

Romans 5 ends with these verses: *“... But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”* (20-21).

Super Abundant Grace

Where sin held us in bondage, Christ super-abundantly set us free. As Paul continued in chapter 6, he appeared to be answering a disputer. This was a style Paul used often in his epistles: He anticipated the questions and objections some



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Teaching from Romans 6 by R.G. Hardy

would have, assumed what they would say, and answered them. Paul had stated that we are no longer under the law, which means no longer under the power of sin and the judgment of God, because we are free from sin. Jesus declared “*Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.... If the Son therefore shall make you free, you are free indeed*” (John 8:34&36).

The supposed **disputer** says, “Since God’s grace is so wonderful and so abounding, let us sin more that grace may abound!” Paul had declared the greatest thing in the world is God’s grace. It’s the only thing that can make us a child of God and give us a right to Heaven. These objectors said to Paul, “Have you just said that God’s grace is great enough to forgive us of every sin?” Paul said, “That’s right.”

Disputer: “You are, in fact, saying that God’s grace is the most wonderful thing in the world?” Paul replied, “That’s so.” The objector counters, “Well, if this is the case, let us go on sinning. The more we sin, the more grace will abound, because sin doesn’t matter anyway, since God will forgive us anyhow. In fact, we can go further and say that sin is an excellent thing, because it gives the grace of God the opportunity to operate in our behalf. The conclusion of our argument is that sin produces grace; therefore sin is found to be a good thing. It is the thing that produces the greatest thing in the world—grace.”

Paul essentially railed back: “Are you suggesting that God demands that we should go on sinning so that grace can have more of an opportunity to operate in us? God forbid, that I should sin so that His grace can have more opportunity to abound and show forth His goodness, and then I can go back and do it again, because of His super-abundant grace!”

Dead To Sin

“*God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (vs.2). The essential point of this entire chapter is: *We are dead to sin*. The Christian should be dead to sin. Death severs all obligations and all power over a person. Sin doesn’t have any power over a dead man. The law doesn’t have any power over a dead man. You can’t go to court and drag a corpse before the law. Death severs all claims to the old life and its bondage. The ties to sin, the world, the flesh, the devil are severed. It’s finished, and you should keep it finished. Just because I can have forgiveness, I’m not going to willfully sin. I will not say, “God’s going to forgive me anyhow, so I might as well do it, and not only that, this will show the world how wonderful His grace is and how merciful He is, so I’m just going to keep on sinning.”

Paul exploded: “*God forbid—May it never come to that!—How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into*

Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (vv.2-3).

Paul was not speaking of water baptism. 1Cor. 12:13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...”* We are baptized into the Body of Christ—not into water by a man. The agent is the Holy Spirit, the element is the Body of Christ, and the candidate is the Christian who has repented. Water baptism is not for sinners. It’s for saints. Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch he could be baptized *“if he believed”* (Acts 8:36-37). Water baptism is for believers.

“Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (vv.3-4).

In Paul’s day the heathen understood what it meant to be “baptized into death.” (The Jews also understood this concept, but modern Christians don’t quite understand.) In order to be a member of those ancient mystical occults, such as the gnostic occults, one had to be *initiated into the mystery*. That’s what Paul referenced in Phil. 4:12: *“I am instructed”—initiated into the mystery of the Lord.”*

Part of the initiation was a ceremonial cleansing symbolizing one had died and become a new person. One Jewish version was for those who desired to become members of

the Jewish nation and come under its covenant. They had to have a **MIKVAH**—a ritual baptism. The candidate cut his fingernails, shaved off all his hair, stripped down, (putting off the old man), and was totally immersed into a pool. All of his skin had to be covered, and when he came out of the water, he was counted as a new-born baby. His former life was forgotten in such a way it was like he never existed before. The Jewish rationale was that if he never existed before, God couldn’t find him guilty of sins he did before he was re-born.

The Holy Ghost refined it in the NT: It’s not just a ritualistic thing: cutting our nails and shaving our hair, and washing the outside of the body. *Saints, we have become new creatures from the inside out!* The new birth starts on the inside and works out. Under the OT, the law tried to do it from the outside working in, but you can’t do it that way. It won’t work. You can’t sanctify the devil. Some Christians go around trying to sanctify the devil. You have to cast the devil out and get the person saved first. When he gets saved and sanctified, it will show in his outward expression. The law said, *“Thou Shalt Not...”* and they tried to do it on the outside. The OT said, *“Don’t do this, and you will be saved.”* The NT says, *“Get saved, and then you can do the right things.”*

First, a person has to become born again. Otherwise, he will go down a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner. Paul declared, *“Don’t you*

know that as many of us as were immersed into Jesus Christ were immersed into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the mighty power of God, even so we should walk in a new life as a new creature in Christ."

I am new all over. I'm not a patched-up old creature that could blow out under pressure. I was baptized into His death. When somebody dies, you remove him and bury him, and you will never see that person again the way he was. Neither should the world see the person that was buried in Jesus anymore. He should rise in the newness of life—not just wearing a new outfit, but a whole new life: *"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new"* (2Cor.5:17). I can hardly remember the old person I was. I was just a natural man who didn't know anything about the Spirit of God. Now, I'm a spiritual man who has been illuminated, and I have the mind of Christ.

The Believer's Metamorphosis

When Jesus was crucified, we were crucified with Him. When He died, we died with Him, and thank God, when He rose, we rose with Him. Salvation is union with Jesus. If you are not in union with Jesus through His death, burial, and resurrection, you are not saved. You have a profession, but not the real thing.

First, we died in Christ, but He didn't leave us there: We were buried with Him, but we are not still in the grave. We have been raised with Christ, and we are not the same persons that went into the grave. The best way to illustrate this change, the *metamorphosis* of a Christian, is the butterfly. The compound Greek words are **META** which means *after* and **MORPHOS** which means *the other form* or *new form*. It does not just refer to the outward appearance, but to a new essence, *a whole new nature*. The beautiful butterfly begins as a caterpillar—an ole wiggly worm. No one likes the wiggly worm when it gets into trees and eats, and eats, and eats. It eats so much of its surrounding world that it's dying. Then it spins a cocoon where it is *"buried,"* but a *metamorphosis* is occurring: It is changing into a new essence and *after form*. It finally starts eating its way out of the cocoon until it squeezes its way out. Suddenly, instead of an ole dirty wiggly worm, a beautiful butterfly emerges. But there could be some people out there with nets trying to capture that butterfly, and the devil, when we come out of our burial cocoon, is trying to capture us and take us back into sin, but we are made to be free.

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, henceforth we should not serve sin"

(vv.5-6).

The *old man* refers to the *old nature*, and is like Paul's usage of "*the flesh*." To understand Paul's teaching in chapters 6-7-8 of Romans, and all of his epistles: *the old man is the flesh*, and *the new man is the spirit*. When you read them with this understanding, it's very simple. In saved people, *the old man* should be crucified: "*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him...*" Also the word *destroyed* does not mean to *annihilate*, but rather to *render inactive*. The point is *we can activate him, because we are not slaves*.

Many Christians at various times activate the old man. For instance, they lose their temper and say evil things, even curse. Believers are to render him inoperable, although the old man, the old carnal nature is still in us. This is why we have tension between the flesh and the spirit: "*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would*" (Gal.5:16-17).

So if you let up in your prayer life, stop going to church, and reading the Bible, the old man begins to get strong again and tries to reassert himself, and it's harder for you to put him down. We could liken the old nature, the flesh, to a dormant virus in the natural. There are some viruses

that are never cured, but through medication, they are put to sleep or in a dormant state. The medical term is *remission*. One could have leukemia, but it be in remission. It's not spreading, but it could be awakened. The old man has been put in remission. He has been rendered inoperable. He is in a deep coma, and only we can reactivate him through fleshly stimulation. When the law was given, it codified sin, and woke up sin that was in a deep coma. Paul said, "*For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*" (Rom.7:9).

God has put the old nature into a comatose state in the born-again believer. The law can't activate it; the devil can't activate it; only we can activate it. When the old man is crucified with Christ, the body of sin is rendered inoperable, "*that henceforth we should not serve sin*." Paul did not say that we *shall not* or *cannot*, but that we "*should not serve sin*." This is called a tense of choice: *Shall not* means *it will not happen*. *Should not* means *it could happen, but I don't have to let it happen* (the subjunctive case in Greek grammar).

"*For he that is dead is freed from sin*." Sin has no power over a dead person. Paul wrote in Eph. 2:1 that before Christ made us alive in the spirit, "*And you has he quickened (made alive) who were dead in trespasses and sins*."

Before Christ we were dead **in** sin—now we are dead **to** sin!

"*Now if we be dead with Christ,*

we shall also live with Christ. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him" (nor does it have power over those who are risen with Him. Death is only a transition from this life to the next. We will not remain in death.) *"For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he lives, he lives unto God"* (v.10).

We have looked at our death and burial in Christ. Through repentance, we received the grace of God and the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, who paid our penalty, having died in our place. The wiggly worm of our past life has become a beautiful butterfly, a new creature in Christ. Now we are walking in the Spirit, becoming more in the image of Jesus everyday:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass (mirror) the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2Cor.3:18). In Greek *"are changed"* is once again **METAMORPHOSIS**—an inward transformation to something other. We are being changed from one stage of glory to increasing glory by the Spirit of God, as we continue to look into the mirror of the Word. In the Greek grammar, the present participle *"beholding"* denotes continual, uninterrupted action. As long as we continue to behold the face of Jesus through the Word of God, we are being—little by little—changed into the very same image.

I like to illustrate it to the devel-

oping process of an old Polaroid instant photo (popular in the 70's). When the film first came out, there was no clear image; it looked muddy. Gradually, as the photo developed, you could see a blurry image emerging, but it was still undefined. Little by little, the image became sharper and clearer, until finally, an exact reproduction of the one whose image was taken was picture perfect. In like manner, we are being transformed into the very same image of Christ: *"You have put off the old man with his deeds. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him"* (Col.3:9-10). Instead of sin having power over us, making us do its bidding, we have the power—we have the choice. God cannot make us do anything against our will. He has returned to us our right of choice that Adam lost. Sin can't do it. The devil can't do it. The law can't do it, and the flesh can't do it, unless we allow it to rise up.

The Believer's Responsibility

We now come to *our* responsibility. Paul said we are to *reckon* two things:

1. The *old man is crucified*, and the sinful nature has been rendered powerless.

2. We are *alive unto God*, and His new life has been imparted to us.

Before we were dead *in sin*—Now we are dead *to sin*: *"Likewise, reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto*

God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (vs. 11). Jesus has dealt with sin once and for all. He's done with the sin question. Hebrews 9:27: "*So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*" When He returns at His second coming, it will not be for the purpose of getting rid of sin. He got rid of the sin problem once and for all on the cross. The question is, *Have you gotten rid of the sin problem once and for all?* When sin tries to rise up, are you going to use your Christian veto power to overrule it? This is what happens when we reckon ourselves dead to sin—we break sin's power. The presence of sin is not removed, but its power to control us is deactivated and cannot overpower us except by a deliberate act of reuniting ourselves with the lust of the flesh.

"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (vs.12). We have to *let* sin reign. In order for me to sin now that I am born again, I would have to *let* sin back onto the throne of my heart. I have to *let* it in my head, filling it with temptation. I have to *yield* my members to fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Instead, I want to smack him so hard, he will never come out of the coma.

Colossians 3:5: "*Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth...*" In verses 1-4, Paul stated the fact that the believer is "*risen with Christ*"—"dead to the

old life," and living a new life that is hidden from the world. "*Therefore*"—for this reason—"if this is so" is what Paul was implying—"Put to death your fleshly members!" I don't know what the folks who say that you have to "sin a little bit every day" are going to do about this verse. Then you are a big sinner, because when you break one commandment, you are guilty of the whole law (Js.2:10).

"Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin..." (vs.13). The word *instrument*—*HOPLIA* in Greek is sometimes translated *armor* and means *weapons*. (In Eph.6:12, *the whole armor* is *PANHOPLIA*.) Paul depicted sin as a king. King Sin drafts sinners into his army and uses them as weapons against God, and then he pays them their wages: "*For the wages of sin is death...*" (Rom.6:23). The Greek meaning of wages is *a soldier's pay*. He pays off his soldiers with death.

Sin can't make me yield to unrighteousness. I make the decision. I'm not going to be a weapon of sin. Every time that you yield to sin, you are a weapon of the devil. You are hindering God's cause, especially after you give a testimony of the Lord, and then go around yielding to sin, and the unsaved see it. You have destroyed your testimony and put a stumbling block in the way of those watching you. "*We are the epistles of Christ known and read of all men*" (2 Cor. 3:2). You have the power to resist sin. Sin cannot overpower you

until you initiate the action. But once you initiate sin, it takes over and makes you its slave.

"...But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as weapons of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (vv.13-14). Sin shall not have the lordship over you to make you obey it. You have veto power. *"What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (vv.15-16).

When you yield yourself to sin, you become dead in trespasses and sin again, and God's penalty of eternal death is upon you. When we obey God, we are in a right standing with Him, and we have the power to yield to whom we will. *"But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* (vs.17). Notice the past tense—*were*. The teachings of the Bible helped us to obey God, and He delivered us, freed us from the power of sin.

"Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to unclean-

ness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness," (vv.18-19). You see, once you yield to the devil one time, it doesn't stop there. It goes from iniquity to iniquity to iniquity, etc. But yielding yourself as a servant to righteousness will produce a holy life, and God will not be able to find any fault in you.

"For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (vv.20-22). Paul repeated the fact that we are free *from* sin. In fact, four times in these few verses Paul said that we are freed from, and are not under the dominion of sin. Some may think there are three "gods" we could serve: God, the devil, or ourselves. But if you don't serve God, you are serving the devil. He will let you think you are doing your own thing, but you are really doing his thing.

But now, being made free from sin, you have become a servant to God and your fruit unto holiness. Jesus said, *Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them.*" I don't judge anyone by his works, but I do look at his fruits. Because Jesus said, *"A good tree can't bring forth bad fruit, and a bad tree can't bring forth good fruit"* (See Matt.7:16-20).

"For the wages of sin is death;

but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (vs.23). The soldier’s wage is death for everyone in the devil’s army. He makes everyone who serves in his army a weapon against God and His kingdom and His Christ. But the Christian can say, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith* (the teachings and doctrines that delivered me) *of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gal.2:20). I don’t live by King Sin’s dictates. I live by the Word of God. This is the supreme gift.