

Forgiveness and Freedom

Those who place their faith in Jesus Christ of Nazareth find two immense blessings in their lives.

(a) FORGIVENESS

(b) FREEDOM

Romans chapters 1-5 give us ample exposition on the first blessing, FORGIVENESS. It teaches us that we are in need of forgiveness because we are all sinners. Anyone honest with themselves can see that this is indeed true about each of us – we are all sinners. So, why do we need forgiveness? Because without forgiveness, we will have to face the reality of what our sin dooms us to, DEATH. Not just physical death, but also eternal separation from our Creator God, spiritual death.

In Romans 6, we see the second blessing expounded upon. Those who place their faith in Jesus find ***freedom from the power of sin*** in their lives. The rest of this short booklet will focus on this.

Romans 6:1-14 (English Standard Version)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

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There is in these verses, a description of WHO WE ARE.

We are those who have DIED to sin.

We are those who have been BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS' death.

We are those who have been BURIED with Christ.

We are those who walk in newness of LIFE

You can divide these statements into two categories

(a) There is a DEATH involved

(b) There is a LIFE involved

Certainly, nobody likes talking about DEATH. And we can take hope, that this section does not just talk about DEATH, it also talks about LIFE. But before it gets to talking about LIFE, it talks about DEATH, and that's where we will start as well.

We are those who have DIED to sin. What does DIED to sin mean?

Does it mean that we are those who do not sin anymore? From a very practical sense, we can all agree that it does not mean that. So, we can rule that possibility out¹.

So, what does it mean? The passage uses the additional language, to clarify that initial statement. In addition to saying that we have died to sin, it says that we are those who have been "baptized into the death of Christ", and that we are those who have been "buried with Christ".

In what sense did Christ die? In what sense was Christ buried? In a very literal sense, was he not? ~2000 years ago, Christ went to the cross, died a horrible death, and was buried. That we are all clear on.

This passage now states that WE are baptized (or "immersed") into Christ's death, that we are BURIED with Christ. So, somehow, what literally happened to Christ, has happened to us as well.

What exactly happened when Christ died?

¹ You can also rule it out exegetically from this passage, by considering what is indicated in verses 1 and 12. Verse 1 indicates "continuing in sin", and verse 12 encourages us to not sin. Certainly this passage is not talking about sinless perfection.

Christ, when He was in this world, He battled sin, did He not? He faced temptations way beyond what any of us face (because He never once actually sinned), but then on that final day on the Cross, He died – and with His death, He no longer had to battle temptations any longer.

On that day, when He died on the cross, He became the ONLY human being to render the power of sin as BROKEN. Because He could say truthfully, that He conquered sin! He lived His whole life, never once having sinned.

And this passage says that we are those who are immersed into Christ's death! That the power of sin over us is broken as well!

This is indicated as a FACT. Something that HAS happened!

Once you recognize this truth, you actually find this written all over the Bible, see just a few other examples:

Galatians 2:20 states: "I am crucified with Christ"

Colossians 3:3 states: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"

Do you realize what this means? Our standing in Christ is as individuals over whom SIN HAS NO POWER! Why? Because WE ARE IN CHRIST! That is POSITIONALLY what is true about you! That is your identity.

So, what is the implication of this?

Well, if that's who you are, the most CONSISTENT thing that you can do with your life is to LIVE IN RECOGNITION OF THAT FACT!

It is biblical to be in a pattern of doing something since you are recognized to be someone who should be doing that.

This is also practically clear in many aspects of life.

One example would be the royal family. The members of the royal family are already royalty, simply because they are born into royalty. It is expected that they behave a certain way, because of who they already are!

Or think of the presidency. It is expected that the person taking up the job behave a certain way, because of who they have been appointed to be! Their role demands a certain behavior, and it would be completely inappropriate for the president to not behave presidential.

Good understanding of what the Bible teaches has practical implications for our lives. And this understanding, brothers and sisters, certainly is of immense value for each of us.

This is the basis for our daily sanctification.

This is what gives us HOPE that our fight with sin is entirely CONSISTENT with who we are!

When Jesus died on the Cross, we are all quick to remember that He died as our substitute. But let us also be quick to remember that He died as our representative – meaning that we DIED there WITH HIM!

That is who you are in Christ. That is the basis for you being able to think that sin has no more any power over you.

So, Christian, go and live consistent with that understanding!

Romans 6:11 states “Consider yourselves as such a person!” This is the very first imperative in the book of Romans. It is not a command “to DO”, it is a command to “reach a conclusion”.

This is true LIFE indeed. You will walk in NEWNESS of LIFE, verse 4 states. Hallelujah, Christ did not just die, He did not remain buried, but He rose again! If you DIED with Him, you most certainly will LIVE with Him!

Why would you want to live any other way?

Hear the words of this hymn:

Buried with Christ, and raised with Him too;
What is there left for me to do?
Simply to cease from struggling and strife,
Simply to walk in newness of life.
Glory be to God!

This is the doctrine of UNION with Christ. I did not use that term until now, to reduce the use of jargon, but I will use it now, as we close this booklet.

The key to your holiness is that you fully and believingly grasp the meaning of your personal union with Jesus Christ. May God enable each of us to continually ponder the truth of our union with Christ!

Appendix:

There are two ways in which sin operates:

- It brings allurements to entice us
- It brings discouragement by making us feel that we are not up to the mark

Our position in Christ defeats both these situations.

- For those who have died to sin, they cannot continue in sin, the allurements of sin do not appeal forever. This is why when we sin, we are immediately drawn to confess it and forsake it (keep short accounts)
- Our position in Christ is not based on who we are in ourselves, it is based on who we are IN CHRIST. And He has broken the power of sin. As such, because of our union with Christ, if we feel that we are not up to the mark, we are misinformed – Christ is up to the mark, and we are found IN HIM.

Because of what Christ has done, we have hope that the fight that we are fighting is guaranteed to be successful. Because He has already broken the power of sin.

Practically, we are asked to consider this as being true of us (Romans 6:11).

FACT first. We are FOUND IN CHRIST.

FAITH next. Through the eyes of faith that God has given us, we reckon this to be true of us. We are dead to sin, and alive to walk in newness of life.

We expect that FEELINGS will follow.