

Romans – Justified through faith

Week 10, 11 & 12 – Romans 5 & 6 (God's people united in Christ)

Introduction

Paul explains the relationship of grace to sin in our lives from two different angles; v1-14 which emphasises how we are united with Christ in death and resurrection and v15-23 which emphasises our kingdom transfer. Both halves address those who, wrongly, considered the gospel of grace a licence to sin yet escape the consequences of it (known as “antinomians”).

Week 12: Romans 6:1-23 (United to Christ and enslaved to God)

1. United to Christ, or the logic of our baptism (v1 – 14)

a. We died to sin (v2)

The word *can* is better translated *shall*. Paul is not declaring the impossibility of continuing to sin but the moral incongruity of it. The ‘dead to sin’ does *not* mean we are or should be impervious to temptation or to sin following conversion, if he meant that he wouldn't have to encourage us in v12 to not ‘let sin reign in us’. He means that as far as sin is concerned we are legally dead – it no longer has any rights over us. We need not feel guilty or condemned by sin as we have been justified and declared righteous.

b. We were baptized into Christ's death (v3)

Baptism, amongst other things, signifies our union with Christ. Our sin and our old life were put to death on the cross along with Jesus.

c. God intends us to share also in Christ's resurrection (v4-5)

By faith inwardly and baptism outwardly we have been united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

d. We know that our old self was crucified with Christ (v6-7)

Working backwards: To ensure our freedom from slavery to sin God had to do away with ‘the body of sin’ – this is not our human physical body but the old-man the sinful nature. It is done away with by our ‘old self’ being crucified along with Jesus on the cross. The ‘old self’ cannot mean our sinful nature or the sentence doesn't make sense – it means our old humanity, who we used to be in Adam, the whole pre-conversion person has been crucified with Jesus. This is emphasised in v7 by Paul declaring that the “dead have been freed or ‘justified’ from (his/her) sin”. Once we're dead, sin no longer has any legal hold over us.

e. We believe that we will also live with Christ (v8-10)

Our union with Christ begins with a once-for-all death to sin and continues with an unending life of service to God. Jesus was not resuscitated, like Lazarus, subject to another physical death but resurrected – raised to an entirely new plane of living, no just longer subject to death but now it's master (see Rev 1:18).

f. We must count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God (v11)

Not ‘make believe’ or screwing up our faith to believe what we don't really believe, but instead to realize and remember that our former self DID die with Christ, thus putting an end to its career. Our old life has ended, with the score settled, the debt paid and

the law satisfied. Once we understand this we shall want to have nothing more to do with it.

g. We must therefore offer ourselves to God (v12-13)

The 'therefore' is the conclusion of Paul's argument – because of everything he said previously the logical next step is to fight on the side of our rightful ruler against the usurping rule of sin – to not let sin continue to reign where it no longer has the right to. Paul encourages us to use our bodies and talents and abilities to further God's kingdom rather than for sinful, selfish desires.

h. Sin will not be our master (v14)

This is a promise not a command – we ARE under grace not law and sin no longer has power over us. We acknowledge our dependence on the work of Christ for salvation, and stand justified and therefore free.

2. Enslaved to God, or the logic of our conversion (v15-23)

Paul mirrors v1 in v 15.

a. The principle: Self-surrender leads to slavery (v16)

There was such a thing as voluntary slavery – the poor and destitute could offer to be a slave in return for food and housing. If we offer ourselves as slaves we are accepted as such and the only way out is to be bought out. Conversion is an act of self-surrender; self-surrender leads to slavery; and slavery demands a total, radical obedience.

b. The application: Conversion involves an exchange of slaveries (v17-18)

There are only two slaveries; to sin or to God. We've been rescued from the lordship of sin into the lordship of God.

c. The analogy: Both slaveries develop (v19)

Slavery to sin is a steady deterioration into further wickedness but slavery to righteousness leads to holiness. This is sanctification – the process of being changed into the likeness of Christ.

d. The paradox: Slavery is freedom and freedom is slavery (v20-22)

Each slavery is also a kind of freedom although one is authentic and the other spurious. Also each freedom is a kind of slavery, although one is degrading and the other ennobling.

e. The conclusion (v23)

Sin pays wages – you get from it what you deserve; death. God gives a free gift (you are given what you do *not* deserve) which is eternal life in Jesus.

"When the devil asks us 'Why not continue to sin? Go on! Feel free! You are under grace, God will forgive you.' Our first response must be the outraged negative 'God forbid!' we need then to follow this up with remembering who we are."

- John R. W. Stott

Q1. What can we do to increase our awareness of the truth that we really are dead to sin?

Q2. How far can the analogy of our slavery to God be taken? How would our lives change if we took this literally?

Memory Verse:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
– Romans 6:23