

“Hearing the Truth of Romans 6”

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Understanding A Gospel-Driven Christian Life

Read: Romans 6:1-7

The Book of Romans lays out for the reader the Story of God. It begins with Creation, speaks of Transgression, then Condemnation and finishes with Redemption. God does for His people what they could never do for themselves. Where once sin reigned in death, so now grace reigns through Jesus Christ the Lord (Rom. 5:21).

Romans 6:1 and following speaks of those who through repentance from self and faith in Christ appropriate God's gift and are united **in Christ** to His death, burial and resurrection. It is because of this union, they now are to walk in newness of life (6:4). This newness of life no longer has sin as its master (6:6). In fact, those who are united with Christ are “freed from sin” (6:7). This is the new reality for all those who are united with Christ in His death and resurrection. Just as one's experience **in Adam** once marked the unbelieving so now the experience of those **in Christ** forms their present reality. No one denies their past experience in Adam as being marked by sin, so why do we lay buried under the burden of thinking our current experience is still **in Adam** and not **in Christ**?

I do not believe what the Holy Spirit speaks of in Romans 6 is illusive or imaginary. I believe it is the reality of all those who are **in Christ**. Yet despite us speaking the truth, we still appear to be in bondage to our “issues” or what Hebrews calls “weights and sins” (Heb. 12:1, 2). I firmly believe as Christians, those **in Christ**, sin no longer has authority over us AND we are no longer in bondage to it (Rom. 6:6, 12). In fact, we have died to sin just as Christ did at the cross in conquering sin. Yet if I am dead to sin, why does it appear so much alive in me?

Romans 6 speak of how we appropriate His victory. It is His victory over sin and death that is to mark our Christian (“in time”) experience. I do not believe this is mystical or magical. I believe this is our right, inheritance and reality . . . but how?

Here we must walk with caution. The Christian life is always and only about Christ. There are no magical incantations we utter in mystical ceremony. Yet Romans 6 does use three thoughts that speak to three stages or points on a line of movement that empowers us to move from where we are at in our Adamic experience to where we want to be **in Christ**. Fundamentally, the issue is one of faith, of simple child-like trust. We are, however, still confronted by “what does this mean?”

Following the Scriptural dictates A.H. Strong defines faith in the following manner, “Saving faith is knowledge of, assent to and unreserved trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ as declared in the Bible.” What Strong attempts is the summarizing of what the Scriptures teach. Strong recognizes that saving faith has three parts and each part is contingent on the one that precedes and follows for it to be powerful. My addition is the same faith that saves equally sanctifies. The means of appropriating God's provision for justification is the same means necessary for appropriate His victory over sin, death and hell in the Christian life. Let us take a moment and consider each of these parts.

First, a faith that appropriates and realizes God experiential is first and foremost marked by the knowledge of the object believed. All faith begins by recognizing the truth of God's revelation. As in our current study, if we do not know the basic thoughts of Romans 6, then we will fail to appropriate all that

God is for His people in their daily Christian experience. “[Any] faith that does not lay hold of a present Christ is not saving [sanctifying] faith.” (Strong, *Strong’s Theology*, 837). This is what Paul calls “knowing.”

“**knowing** (**ginosko** [present active participle]) this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6).

“**knowing** (**eido** [perfect active participle]) that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him” (Rom. 6:9).

“Do you not **know** (**eido** [present active indicative]) that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16).

Unless and until we come to understand who God is and what He has done and who we are in Him, we will fail to live out His victory in an experiential, rest filled way. It is on this idea we add our second component.

Second, not only does effective faith need knowledge, but it must also assent or consider that what it knows is true. Many unbelievers write well of the Scripture, but do not believe that what the Scriptures say is for them or true. This is the distinction James makes when he says, “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (James 2:19). Paul’s guard against this is to move from knowledge of to assenting or reckoning that what is true is for you.

“Even so **consider** (**logizomai** [present active imperative]) yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11).

Here Paul calls his audience to “do this continuously”. It isn’t enough for us to have once known these things or to have had a “crisis moment.” Our knowledge of His resurrection is to be ever present within our daily meditations. The appropriation of this onto our own lives is indispensable for this truth to be efficacious in our experience. It is from these two foundation stones that we add our third element.

Third, here we go from knowing and considering to actually resting on or in the truth. Paul uses the word “present” or “yield”.

“and do not go on **presenting** (**paristemi** [present active imperative]) the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present** (**paristemi** [aorist active imperative]) yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13).

“Do you not know that when you **present** (**paristemi** [present active indicative]) yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16).

“I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you **presented** (**paristemi** [aorist active indicative]) your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now **present** (**paristemi** [aorist active imperative]) your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification” (Rom. 6:19).

It is interesting how Paul says, “Present YOURSELF”. You need to make a choice. Presenting is an act of one’s will. The presenting is a choice you make to live your life in dependency on God. The life of faith is

one of trust. You simply believe that who God is and what He has done is sufficient for all aspects of your salvation. This is the pathway of appropriation. This is how we make the reality of His person and work palatable to our senses and our experiences. It isn't that the struggle is over; His victory is our victory. We do not labor for victory; we labor from victory. This is our hope and joy.

My only word of caution is that we do not dissect the "frog" of faith and leave it dead on the table. Faith is alive and vibrant. Faith speaks to relationships, not rituals. Faith is the essence of communion, not calculation. Faith is driven by friendship and fellowship, not formula and function. We are no longer under the dominion of sin because we are dead to it and thus free. In translating The Message, Eugene Petersen desired to place the Word of God before his people and make it more readily accessible. Here is how he translated Romans 6:1-14. Notice the type of imagery he employs to speak of our great transfer from sin and death into light and life.

¹⁻³So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there? Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, we left the old country of sin behind; when we came up out of the water, we entered into the new country of grace—a new life in a new land!

³⁻⁵That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

⁶⁻¹¹Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.

¹²⁻¹⁴That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.

Amen.

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