

The Christian faith is not merely a matter of *looking back to the Birth of Christ*. Yes, Christianity is historical, and it is founded on the reality of God “invading” space and time to be born in our flesh. But faith in Jesus Christ also impacts our day-to-day experience, and gives us firm confidence for whatever we face in the future. This is the practical impact of Romans 6-8. At the Reformation, a sound biblical understanding of being joined to Christ in His death and resurrection gave the church a new security and sense of assurance. May we likewise be greatly encouraged in the solidity of our faith because of Christ’s strong grip on our lives.

Mon/Tues: Read Romans 8:1 & Romans 6:12-18

Cheap Grace = Cheap Salvation

God saves us from the condemnation of sin, Romans 8:, by what is described in Romans 6. He has delivered us from the dominion and rule of sin, as well as from its guilt and penalty. The result is that we are now *under God’s grace* (Romans 6:14), and no longer enslaved to the rebellious desire to sin. This is why Paul breaks out with words of thanksgiving in Romans 6:17-18; we who are joined to Christ by faith are now under the “rule of grace” and able to live obediently as servants of God and His righteousness. Sin is dethroned! We are now in God’s gracious hand for Him to guide us as His willing servants!

That’s great, you may say, but why does Paul need so many words to explain this freedom from sin in Romans 6:1-23? Also, why does the Apostle need to return to what God has done to deliver us from sin’s power in Romans 8:7-9? Also, why does Paul have to labor in Romans 7:14-25, using words of personal anguish to describe his struggle with sin? If God has defeated sin in us and removed our guilt, so that now “grace rules over us” (Romans 5:21 & 6:14), why so many *additional* words about sin in the Christian’s life? Why not just declare victory and move on to the victorious love of God towards us in Romans 8:18-39?

The answer is that we and the Roman Christians need to be reminded of the importance of *persevering* in the faith, and to hear the sober reality that this struggle in sanctification is indeed life-long! Moreover, they needed to hear Paul’s shocked question in Romans 6:1, to wake them up to the danger of a *superficial* view of sin and a *cheap view* of grace: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

Nowadays, very rarely do we hear the pastors speak about sin or the Christian’s struggle with it. Even more rare it is to hear about the *danger of sin*, and the need to flee for refuge in Christ from the wrath to come! People are very rarely driven to confess with Paul in the words of Romans 7:24: “Wretched man (or woman) that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?” People love to hear sermons about self-improvement, but less so sermons about self-abasement! *Amazing Grace* is a popular hymn, but many fail to notice that what makes that grace amazing – is that it “saves a wretch like me.”

Meditate and Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, exalted to the right hand of your Father, we believe you ascended in order to pour out the Holy Spirit upon your church and to send that Holy Spirit into the world in order to convict men of “sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8-11). Please send that convicting Spirit afresh upon our land and upon your church. Out of your sovereign good pleasure, cause us again to hunger and thirst for your righteousness, and drive us into the depths of your Law, so that we might know the blessing of a deep and abiding sense of our sinfulness, which will make our salvation all the sweeter. Amen.

Wed/Thurs: Read Romans 6:1-14 and Colossians 1:13-14**Sifting for Purity**

The experience of believers in their sin is that our struggle with sin is a constant “war,” in which we boldly face sin, day in and day out. We must reckon *with the indicatives (or facts) of the Gospel every time we struggle with its imperatives*. Take for example the imperatives which fill Romans 6:12-14: “**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...**” We may be tempted to say: How can I accept these imperatives? I have tried to obey them in fighting against sin, and my heart quails when I see my sinful failures compared to these rugged commands! Well, dear brother or sister, take heart from the indicative (Romans 6:14) that rules over all our failures: “Sin does not and will not have dominion over us.”

Why? Because God has rescued us from living under that evil kingdom, and “delivered us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13-14), a Kingdom of Grace, as Romans 6:14 concludes! Dear believer, when we sin now as Christians, it is grievous – but neither sin nor Satan can ever throw us overboard in the Christian life! We may stumble and fall in sin as we sail on the ship of God’s grace (to use Charles Spurgeon’s picture), but we can never be lost overboard under the waves of death and sin which flooded our lives before! Christ is our Captain, and we will not be lost!

Meditate and Pray: Lord Jesus, thank you that there is an absolute security for us because of your protective Hand. When we sin, we grieve your Spirit within us, and our hearts break because of our sin. But thank you that your response is to say to us exactly what you said to Peter, in order to make sure that his (and our) faith won’t fail:

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32).

Friday: Read Romans 6:12-14**In the Kingdom of Grace**

When it comes to the lofty commands requiring us to reckon ourselves “dead to sin but alive to Christ Jesus,” remember that *the indicatives of the Gospel precede the imperatives!*

The force of the imperative can be understood only in the light of the relation of the indicative to the imperative... “Let not sin reign” – this is the imperative. And it flows from the indicative (“Sin does not have the dominion”). It is only because sin does not reign that it can be said, “Therefore let not sin reign”.

Professor John Murray, *Commentary on Romans*

Meditate and Pray: Our faith rests on what God has done – the indicative facts of the Gospel! Because God has broken the dominion of sin in our lives, Paul can say with certainty, “Sin will not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14). Our future is secure, and God’s sanctifying work in us *will* succeed, because we are now subjects of His Kingdom of grace!

Sat/Sun: Read Romans 6:1-14**Life in Union with Christ**

We can sum up Romans 6 by citing God's actions as the foundation of our holiness and freedom from the reign of sin. God has crucified us with His Son (Romans 6:3-4), thereby putting to death our sin natures and breaking sin's reign in our minds and hearts. Only then does God command us, as His free people: "Do not to let sin 'reign in your mortal bodies.'"

But you may wonder about Paul's use of the picture of baptism in Romans 6:1-4. Is it when we are baptized that God crucifies our old sin nature? Is Paul actually saying, in the last analysis, that it is something *we do* in being baptized that provides us with the power and ability to resist sin and increase in holiness?

In fact, there are dear brother and sisters whose view of baptism traces itself to this passage. There are churches that teach that one must be immersed in order to properly conform to Paul's words about being "buried in baptism" here in Romans 6:3-4. Is Romans 6, then, about our commitment to God in baptism, as the motive for our efforts to live holy lives, or is it a baptism which God performs spiritually to rescue us Himself from the power of sin? An important question! The answer is that Romans 6:1-11 is about our union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and not about mode of baptism.

Focusing on Romans 6:3-4, the Apostle Paul is not in any way referring to the mode of baptism. In verse 3 the element into which we are baptized is not water but Christ Himself, and in verse 4 it is His tomb. Water has not served as a tomb for any but unbelievers in Scripture (e.g., the world in Noah's day, and Pharoah's army). What the Apostle is speaking about is our multi-faceted union with Christ, as symbolized by our being baptized into His name.

Rev. Bill Harrell *Bible Reading Notes*, Romans 6:3-4, 1995

Meditate and Pray: When we are baptized, whether as an infant or an adult, isis the name of our triune God into which we are baptized (Mt. 28:19), not into water. The fact of our being cleansed in God's sight results not from our being drowned, but from our union with Christ by faith, whereby the cleansing power of His death and resurrection is applied to us by His Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice that God's baptism of us spiritually brings us life and not death! Amen!