

Dead to Sin

A Study on Romans 6:2

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Have you ever talked with a professing Christian who told you, “I am dead to sin. I no longer sin and do not have sin in my life since I trusted Jesus.” This statement would bring confusion and defeat to a new Christian, but a mature, seasoned Christian would know that the person who made such a statement was self-deceived and hypocritical

Romans 6:2 is usually the proof text for those who claim sinless perfection. Doesn't this verse say that Christians are dead to sin? We find that Romans 6:2 does not teach sinless perfection. The context, tense of the verb, and meaning of the word “dead” all prove sinless perfection to be a perversion of God's Word.

REVIEW OF ROMANS 6:1-2a

Romans 6 has to do with the Christian's progressive victory over the power of present sin in his life — evil thoughts, lusts, temper, laziness, failure to witness, envy, hate, jealousy pride, etc.

In the first five chapters of Romans Paul definitely taught that all men are sinners and separated from God, but that hell-deserving sinners can be justified (declared righteous) before God by his grace on the condition of faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is a pure gift from God without any human works. The fact that salvation is by grace alone could cause some to pervert the gospel and say, “If I am saved by grace, then I can live as I please, for this will enable God to give me more grace.” In order to refute this antinomian attitude, Paul asks the question, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” The question is whether a Christian can continue in sin after being justified. This does not refer specifically to acts of sin, but to the sin nature. All acts of sin spring from the sin nature in both the saved and the unsaved. The question then is whether the Christian can continue to be dominated by the sin nature as he was before he came to Christ. Can the Christian habitually, repeatedly and continually feed and yield to the sin nature as he did before conversion? Can he be a slave to the sin nature as the unsaved are? The question is not about continuing *to* sin, but continuing *in* sin.

Paul's first answer to this question is one of outraged indignation and he recoils at the thought of a truly saved person continuing in sin. He replies emotionally, “God forbid!” To think that a Christian could — let alone should — continue to be dominated by sin is

untenable, unthinkable, blasphemous and inconsistent with God's grace in salvation. A genuine believer is going to show evidence of progressive sanctification.

Of course, a Christian will do acts of sin, but he will never again love sin as he did in his unsaved state, and he will have a desire to put sin out of his life. Why? Because God has done something to the sin nature in the Christian.

SECOND ANSWER

“How shall we that are dead [have died] to sin, live any longer therein [in it]?” Here Paul explains why a Christian cannot continue to sin: he has died to sin.

The Tense: Here the tense is not “are dead,” but “died” or “have died.” This is an aorist tense, and refers to an act or event that occurred in the past. So, the translation should be, “How shall we, that (are of such a nature as regenerated persons) have died to sin live any longer in it?”

The Christian has died to sin. It is a completed, perfect and past act. This death is related to the death of Christ for sin on the cross. This occurred once in the past, when Christ died for sin. The Christian actually and positionally died to the sin nature when he was crucified with Christ on the cross. When Christ died on Calvary for sin, we were there in him, and we died there with him. We were in Christ when he bore our sins. There were two bodies on the cross: Christ's sinless human body; and his body, the Church. There were also two deaths on the cross: Christ's death for sin; and the Christian's death to sin. At the cross, God broke the power of indwelling sin in the Christian's life. Christ not only died for the acts of sin that we do, but he died for our sin natures so the Christian now sustains a new relationship to the sin nature. The sin nature *remains*, but no longer *reigns* in the believer. Thus, to die to sin is to have a different relationship to it than before salvation; it is to be separated from it.

The Reason: The Christian has God's promise that He has broken the reigning power of the sin nature over the Christian through Christ's work on the cross. So, the believer does not need to yield to the sin nature any longer, but can begin progressively to conquer sin in his life. There will always be struggles with sin, but a Christian can have progressive victory to a great degree. While he *may* be defeated at times, he does not *have* to be defeated by sin in his life.

Points to Ponder: While the Christian died to sin, sin did not die to him. Sin is very real in the life of every Christian, but God has broken the power of the sin nature so that the believer no longer has to obey it. Notice that Paul does not make an appeal for Christians .to

die to sin. Instead, he asserts the fact that they have already done so in Christ's death. This is an actual, real and factual death to the sin nature. The Christian is not asked to put himself to death to sin by his own efforts; he is simply to believe that he died to sin in Christ and to claim God's judgment over the sin nature at the cross. As he counts on or reckons on this, the Christian puts to death the deeds of his body and crucifies the flesh:

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:12-13).

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col.3:5).

The Conclusion: “Shall we continue in sin? . . . God forbid. How shall we that have died to sin live any longer therein?” The Christian cannot continue in sin because he has died to sin in Christ. It is impossible for the Christian habitually to sustain the same relationship to indwelling sin — dependence, yielding, and cordiality with it — as he did when he was an unsaved person.

PRACTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

What does it mean to go on habitually sinning? Does not experience tell us that a Christian may sin over and over again in certain areas, especially the thought processes? Although the sin nature has been judged, it is still in the Christian and very much alive. God has positionally broken the power of the sin nature, and the Christian no longer has to obey it in his experience. Before salvation he was a slave to sin, in bondage to it, obeying its dictates, and loving it. Because the true Christian has died to sin, when he does acts of sin, he will hate it, long to be delivered from it, and seek to conquer it based on Christ's victorious death on the cross. No Christian will ever completely conquer sin in this life, but he will have a desire to conquer it

What if a Christian does yield to the evil nature? God has made provision for this: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). God's desire is that the Christian not yield to the sin nature. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for

our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). If a Christian does do acts of sin, God has provided the death of Christ which cleanses when confession is made.

What if you are a Christian with some very weak areas that constantly cause you to stumble? Claim Christ’s death for that sin, declare your death to it, confess it, and go on obeying God, determining not to give place to that area of the old nature again. If the sin recurs, go through the same process. Do this as often as the sin recurs.

What if a person continually and habitually keeps sinning and never shows any remorse or desire to conquer the sin? In such a case it is questionable that the person is really a Christian.

CONCLUSION

God has promised to deliver all who have believed on Jesus Christ from the guilt and penalty of sin, and also to deliver them from the power of sin in their daily lives.

All of our problems stem basically from sin. We need God to solve the sin problem for us, and he has done just that in Christ. When a person trusts in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, at that moment he has forgiveness of sin and eternal life, and he is fitted for heaven. At that moment God begins a work of progressively delivering him from the power of sin and progressively changing him into the image of Christ, fitting him to live on this earth.

Only Jesus Christ can deliver from sin. Have you received him? Do you have a personal relationship with Christ? If you do not know him, I invite you to receive him as your own Lord and Saviour. He alone can deliver you from sin.