

Experiencing Union with Christ

A Study on Romans 6:11-14

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The essence of Paul's argument in Romans 6:1-10 is that the Christian, through union with Christ, actually shares the death of Christ to sin and his resurrection to life. He is both dead in Christ and alive in Christ. This is an unchangeable fact that is true of every Christian.

Because the Christian shares Christ's death, the sin nature has been judged and its power or authority broken so that the believer no longer has to obey the sin nature as he did before being saved. Since the Christian shares Christ's life, he is alive unto God and can live for God in his everyday experience.

Perhaps you are thinking, "Yes, I understand this in theory. But how can I make it work in my everyday life? How can I experience victory over sin and Christ's resurrected life?" The answer is found in Romans 6:11-14.

PLACING FAITH IN CHRIST'S WORK — BELIEVE — Romans 6:11

"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through [in] Jesus Christ our Lord." The Christian is told to "reckon" himself dead to sin and alive to God. The word "reckon" is another word for faith. It means "consider, count or to take into account." It is a term used in bookkeeping, and implies giving deep contemplation to facts. "Reckon" is a command from God, and is in the present tense — "be continually reckoning." By faith, the Christian is continually and repeatedly to reckon upon his union with Christ. He is to realize the reality of his union with Christ by faith. Since the Christian has died and is alive in Christ, he is to believe this to be so. He is to have a continuous attitude of faith (a confidence that what God has said in his Word is true).

Our failure to experience progressive victory over sin is not God's fault. It is ours because we fail to believe what God has said about our death to sin and our life in Christ. The Christian is to reckon that he has died to sin, and that the power of the sin nature has been broken in his life so that he no longer has to obey it.

The Christian is not to reckon sin dead (for it is very much alive in him), but to reckon himself dead to sin. He cannot make himself dead to sin by struggling, trying, praying or striving. He is simply to believe that he has died to sin in Christ, and then live accordingly. When temptations come, he can say, "I have died to that sin. I no longer have to yield to it!"

Whether we realize it or not, we all constantly make excuses for our sin. God has judged our sin nature and has found no good in it. He expects nothing but failure from the sin nature. Yet, we are always pampering and making excuses for what is clearly our sin:

“I’ve got a hot temper, you know, because I’m Irish. Everyone in my family is a hothead, and there really isn’t anything I can do about it!”

“I waste time and do not use my time for the Lord because I’m lazy by nature (I have tired blood, I’m too tired because my job is so demanding, The t.v. takes too much time, etc.).”

“I’m troubled with lust because I’m young-blooded (or hot-blooded, or cold-blooded, or red-blooded, or strongly sexed).”

“I’m lacking in love, but it’s my circumstances that make me this way — it’s the boss (the people I work with, my kids make me nervous, I’m getting old and cranky, etc.).”

“I’m proud because I’m a Swede (unforgiving because I’m Dutch, stubborn because I’m a Dane, greedy because I’m Scotch, etc.).”

“I can’t help myself, you know, I’m under psychiatric care!”

Excuses, excuses, excuses!

The Christian is also to reckon that he is alive unto God in Christ. Not only can he say negatively that he will not yield to temptation because he is dead to sin, but he can positively say that he will progress in Christianity because he shares the life of Christ. *He is alive unto God*. He is to live constantly in light of this fact, to draw upon the life of Christ that is in him.

Some years ago my automobile, a Rambler better known as “the bucket of bolts,” would not start. I got a push from a friend and took the car to the garage. There the mechanic checked the battery with proper instruments and declared that the battery was dead. No matter how much I wanted to save it, that battery had no life. Then the mechanic got a starter battery and hooked it up to the terminals of the dead battery. I turned on the ignition and there was a surge of power into the engine. The dead battery was utilizing the power of the new battery. Where once there was no power, now there was plenty. Just so, our sin nature is judged and without any power. God has provided new power, the resurrection life of Jesus Christ. We must learn to utilize this new power.

The Christian is not commanded to become dead to sin and alive to God, nor do these truths become facts because they are reckoned to be. The force of the command is that we are to believe the truth that we are dead to sin and alive in Christ. We can do this because of our position and new reality in Christ Jesus — we have union with him, sharing his death to sin and his resurrection unto life.

PUTTING DOWN SIN — NEGATIVE OBEDIENCE — Romans 6:12-13a

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Because the Christian shares Christ’s death to sin through union with him, and is reckoning it to be so, he is now commanded to put down sin in his life. Having an attitude of faith in one’s union with Christ produces action. Faith always results in obedience. The Christian is not to let sin continually reign. Sin’s power was broken when the sin nature was judged. Therefore, sins can be put down.

The Christian is commanded not to let sin reign as king in his life. Sin is a dethroned monarch. The Christian’s job is to keep the sin nature dethroned and the person of Christ enthroned in his life by a determined act of the will. Only the Christian has a will that can obey God.

The human body is the instrument through which the sin nature expresses itself — what the tongue says, what the eyes see, what the hands do, where the feet walk, what the mind thinks. Thus, the way to control the sin nature is to control the body.

The reason a Christian can put down sin in his life is because God has promised that “sin shall not have dominion over you” (cf. Rom 6:14a).

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.” The Christian is not to present his members unto sin, but unto God. The word “instruments” means “weapons.” The Christian no longer has to be dominated by sin, having his body used as weapons for sin.

PRESENTING THE LIFE TO GOD — POSITIVE OBEDIENCE — Romans 6:13b

“But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” The word “yield” means “present or give over.” The Christian is to yield (present) his life once and for all to God (aorist tense).

The presentation of the life to Christ is like marriage. The moment we say “I do,” we have pledged our lives to another person. That initial decision sealed the bond, but based on that initial decision, we have made hundreds of smaller decisions. We must present our lives to God once, but hundreds of decisions will be made based on that initial presentation.

The reason a Christian can present his whole being to God is that he is alive from the dead. He cannot make himself alive by presenting himself to God, but since he is alive in Christ, he is able to make this presentation.

Suppose you had a “hopped up” automobile — 500 horsepower engine, dual carburetor, etc. It might be a beautiful hunk of a car with tremendous power, but until someone gets behind the wheel, turns the ignition and throttles the gas, the power is not utilized. Just so, the Christian has the power in Christ, but must present himself to God so he can utilize the power of Christ in his life.

God says we can become weapons for righteousness if we will present our lives unto him. The only thing that hinders us is unbelief and lack of will to accomplish the task. So often we simply don’t believe that God can use us, but he will if we will believe and obey him.

PROMISE OF GOD — Romans 6:14

“For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Because of Christ’s work on the cross in judging the sin nature, the Christian has the unconditional promise from God that sin will not Lord it over him as it did before he was saved. God has broken the power of sin in the Christian so that, by faith, the Christian can begin to live a life of progressive victory over sin because he shares Christ’s life.

“For ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The Christian is not under the Mosaic Law for sanctification, but is under the principle of grace. It is the grace principle in Christ that gives the desire and power to live a holy life.

CONCLUSION

Before a person can begin to defeat sin in his life, he has to know Jesus Christ personally. If you are without Christ, you must come to him for forgiveness of sin and eternal life. You cannot live the Christian life until you know the Christ of life. He alone can and will give you the power to defeat sin.

Jesus Christ offers salvation to anyone who will receive him by faith. To be a Christian you must believe that Christ died for your sins to deliver you from the woes of hell. After you trust in Christ as Saviour, it is your duty and privilege to follow him and his teachings. Jesus said of those who believed on Him, "I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish."