

In the first four verses of chapter six Paul has shown how the believer's union with the last Adam involves participation in His death; His death to sin is their death to sin. But even more, as Jesus' death had its goal in His resurrection to everlasting, glorious *life*, so it is with the Christian. Like the Savior to whom they are the joined, believers have also been raised in Him to "*walk in newness of life*" (6:4b; cf. also Ephesians 1:18-2:6; Colossians 2:8-14, 3:1-11; etc.).

Paul's insistence upon these *objective* realities is especially crucial given his contextual emphasis upon Christian sanctification. His intention in this chapter was to address the practical, daily life of believers as they grow in holiness. But he did so by showing that sanctification is nothing more than the life of justification. *That is, growth in holiness is not founded upon personal labors toward the mortification of sin, but the true repentance that is a new way of thinking about oneself and one's relation to God, people, and the world - it is a disciplined, confident understanding of what it means to be "in Christ."* This is most evident by the fact that Paul's very first command to the Romans with respect to their sanctification was that, in their own minds, they were to *reckon* as true the gospel realities of union with Christ (6:11). This does not at all intimate that he had no concern with practical holiness; quite the contrary, Paul understood that true holiness is a matter of *inward renewal* by the transformation of a person's *mind*, and not merely the leaving off of certain sinful practices. Such "mortification" is outward, fleshly, and empty; it has the appearance of godliness but it lacks all value in addressing the true issues of sin. One man has rightly observed that holiness is not an "ethic of subtraction," but growth in true, inward conformity to the *person* of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As sanctification is the living out of justification, so it begins with the believer's personal ownership of the objective truths of *death to sin* and *life to God*. These twin themes are really only two sides of the same coin, and together they form the substance of Paul's instruction in 6:1-23. Thus, following his introduction of them in 6:1-4, Paul proceeded to elaborate upon them in verses 6:5-10, culminating with his exhortation in 6:11.

- In verse 5 he elaborated upon the inherent connection between sharing in Christ's death and sharing in His resurrection.
- Verses 6-7, in turn, provide a more in-depth consideration of the principle of the believer's *death* to sin, specifically in terms of *sin's tyranny*. Most simply, a man is a slave to his master only as long as he lives. When he dies, he is freed from his former existence, and therefore also from his former state of subjugation.
- Similarly, verses 6:8-10 focus upon the principle of *life* in Christ. As Christ's resurrection ushered in His glorified, never ending life, so also the same everlasting life in devotion to the glory of God belongs to those joined to Him. They have died to sin, never to die sin's death again (John 5:24-27, 11:25-26). As a result, they now live to the glory of God.
- This core gospel instruction is then summarized in Paul's first exhortation to the Romans: the Christian is to reckon as objectively true the realities of his own death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. As surely as He died and was raised, so also were they in Him. Yet these truths must be *reckoned* because the believer stills lives in the same body in the same world with the same presence of sin.

Only with this crucial *cognitive* foundation in place would Paul begin to give direction regarding the obligation of practical righteousness (6:12-13, 16, 19). Even so, he was extremely careful to frame and inform this obligation by a repeated reminder of the realities of the believer's death to sin and new life in Christ (ref. 6:13b-14, 17-18, 20-23). Paul understood all too well the truth that an understanding of and approach to personal sanctification that do not continually look to and draw upon one's justification will necessarily result only in another form of self-righteousness.

4. In verse 6:5, then, Paul elaborated on how the believer's burial with Christ into death implies his "resurrection" to newness of life. The reason is simply this: the Christian's union with Christ is his union with Him in every respect. As the divine goal of Jesus' death was His conquest of death - which conquest was demonstrated in His triumphal resurrection from the dead - so those joined to Him necessarily share in His resurrection as much as they do His death. This truth is central to Paul's rebuttal of the Corinthians' questioning of the apostolic teaching regarding the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-28).

The way in which he proved his point in the present verse was through a conditional sentence: *if it is true -and Paul insists that it is - that the believer has become united with Christ in the likeness of His death, then it unavoidably follows that he will also share in the likeness of Christ's resurrection.* Two observations are noteworthy:

- a. The first pertains to Paul's terminology; specifically, what he meant by the term *likeness*. How is it that Christians become united with Christ in the "likeness" of His death and resurrection? Various views have been proposed, but once again the preceding context in chapter five makes his meaning apparent. The believer does not himself die in Christ's death, nor is he bodily raised in His resurrection. The believer's death and resurrection in Christ speak of redemptive-historical realities associated with His role as the last Adam.
 - 1) The issue is one of representation and the believer's "translation" from one aeon and domain to another. By virtue of his spiritual union with Christ the Christian has "died" to the former age with its determining principles of *sin, law, and death*, and has been "raised" to live according to a new set of principles, namely *righteousness, freedom, and life*.
 - 2) When it is recalled that sin is *self-idolatry*; that death is *estrangement* from God, oneself, and everything else; and that the law only serves sin and death by promoting *self-righteousness* in the human heart, Paul's contention becomes clear and unassailable. The believer's union with Christ brings the end of the tyranny of self-idolatry and inaugurates the life that is reconciliation with God and the adoption of sons. And because his new life and relationship with God are determined and secured by the power of divine righteousness reckoned by faith, he now serves a heavenly Father according the "*newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter*" (7:6). The Christian's service to God - and likewise his progress in holiness - are not grounded in personal efforts, but the effectual power and perpetual grace of the Spirit of the new age of redemption (6:14).

- b. The second observation pertains specifically to the second clause and Paul's declaration that those who are united to Christ in His death *shall* also be joined to the likeness of His resurrection.
 - 1) Some have understood his use of the future tense to be expressive of a cause-and-effect relation: the former condition - death with Christ - always implicates the latter, namely resurrection with Him.
 - 2) Others view it as indicating the bodily resurrection at the end of the age.

The strongest argument against the second view is Paul's contextual emphasis upon *present* realities that must be reckoned as true by the Christian. A future resurrection cannot properly be reckoned as a present reality. But when it is recalled that the future *bodily* resurrection presupposes the fact of the believer's current, *spiritual* resurrection to newness of life, then Paul could indeed be speaking of the future resurrection hope of the believer while at the same time maintaining his contextual emphasis upon what is now present.

- 5. As noted previously, verses 6:6-7 have Paul turning his attention particularly to the issue of the believer's death to sin. In the original language 6:6 is a continuation of 6:5, with 6:7 providing a clarifying explanation of 6:6. This linguistic structure is aptly captured by the rendering of the NASB: "...*knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.*"
 - a. Verse 6:6 begins with a participle that acts to modify the verb ("we shall be") of the second clause of 6:5. Paul's intended relation between these terms becomes crucial to discerning exactly how 6:6 continues his thought in 6:5. As always, different scholars reach different conclusions. But what is obvious is that Paul intended for 6:6 to clarify what it means for the believer to have died to sin. Thus he explained that this death is to be understood in terms of the crucifixion of the "old self" with Christ, which itself signifies that his "body of sin" has been "done away with" (i.e., *rendered powerless*). In this way it seems apparent that, what Paul presented as a matter of *doctrine* in 6:5, is treated as a matter of personal, experiential *conviction* in 6:6. The Christian "knows" in his inward experience that his "old man" - the "self" who inhabited the former Adamic age ordered by the principles of sin and death - has passed away with his union with Christ.
 - b. Yet, this is not to say that old ways of thinking and old patterns of sin are gone in the absolute sense. The "passing away" of the old man speaks of the end of the former self with respect to *definition* and *determination*. The Christian is no longer enslaved by the realities that formerly defined him. By God's design, the passing of the old man has its goal in a new determining reality: the "new man" is no longer *a slave to sin* (6:6b). Once more, it is important to recognize that Paul's argumentation is redemptive-historical and not personal: he was not calling people to a course of action but to a recognition of what is true of men in Christ.

Douglas Moo's comments are again helpful: "*What is meant is not the believer's duty to put away sin, but the act of God whereby, in response to our faith, he considers us to have died the same death Christ died. Again, the 'moment' of our being 'crucified with Christ' cannot be fixed, either at the cross or at conversion-baptism. The 'redemptive-historical' participation of the believer in the crucifixion of Christ is such that temporal categories cannot helpfully be applied to it. The image of crucifixion is chosen not because Paul wants to suggest that our 'dying with Christ' is a preliminary action that the believer must complete by daily 'dying to sin,' but because Christ's death took the form of crucifixion. The believer who is 'crucified with Christ' is as definitely and finally 'dead' as a result of this action as was Christ himself after his crucifixion [ref. 6:10a].*"

- c. And the implication of this determinative death of the believer in Christ is that he has been *freed from sin* (6:7). By this insistence Paul was recognizing that death brings with it the termination of all previous "life" realities. This statement, too, becomes a source of misunderstanding and stumbling when it is viewed in terms of freedom from the *presence* and *operation* of sin rather than from the *reigning power* of sin. At all points, Paul's redemptive-historical perspective must govern our understanding: the believer's participation in Christ's crucifixion has its purpose in the death of the "old self"; but this passing of the old man brings with it the emergence of the new man who, as a resident of a new age, is characterized by deliverance from the dominion of sin that marked the former age inaugurated by Adam. The second Adam is the fulfillment of the first Adam, *and this fulfillment involves the ushering in of a new age defined by "spirit" rather than "flesh."* Unlike the old, fleshly "Adamic" man, the new man is *spiritual* - he is the man of the Spirit. As such, he lives according to an entirely and radically new principle and paradigm. No longer is he enslaved to self (which is the definition of sin); rather, he has become a slave of God - not perfectly, but *truly*. But even more, because he is a part of the new age inaugurated by Christ, his service to God is no longer according to the principle of *law* (or "letter"), but according to the presence, power, and leading of the *Spirit* (6:15-7:6; cf. also 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, 15:35-57; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; Galatians 3:1-5:18, 6:11-16; etc). In Christ, the new man has been raised to walk in newness of life.
6. It is this principle of life out of death that is Paul's concern in 6:8-10. Fundamentally, as he has argued for the believer's participation in Christ's crucifixion, so he will now argue for his participation in His life. At the same time, it was not enough for Paul to merely establish this connection between Christ and those united to Him; he wanted the Romans to understand the *nature* and *power* of Christ's resurrection life, and in this way understand their own life as they had a share in Him.
 - a. The first thing he did was to again assert by a conditional statement the necessary connection between death and life. Christ's death had its goal in His life from the dead. So also the Christian cannot consider his participation in Jesus' crucifixion without equally considering and affirming his participation in His resurrection. To believe that one died with Christ is to believe that he will also live with Him (6:8).

- b. Once again Paul followed the pattern introduced in 6:5-7. That is, his doctrinal declaration is followed up with his affirmation of personal ownership of its truth. The fact of the believer's share in Christ's resurrection life is a matter of settled conviction: "*We believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again*" (6:9a).

The Christian has never seen Jesus Christ, and he cannot prove His resurrection, let alone its significance as the final, comprehensive conquest of death. Yet, by the leading and ministry of the Spirit of Christ within him, he *knows* in his soul the truth of Christ's triumph over sin and death. He knows that Christ lives, never to die again, for the simple reason that Christ, by His Spirit, lives within him.

- c. And precisely because Jesus Christ now lives forevermore by virtue of His conquest of death, His resurrection from the dead testifies that "*death no longer is master over Him*" (6:9b). This statement, in turn, is the subject of Paul's clarification in verse 6:10, which clarification reveals that death's loss of mastery over Christ has two corresponding aspects:

- 1) The first is that death itself no longer has any relation to Him: "*the death He died, He died to sin, once for all.*" Paul's meaning is simply this: because death is the wages of sin (6:23), and by His cross Jesus judged and destroyed sin by satisfying the demands of justice against it (8:1-3), He also conquered the death that sin had brought upon the world. And having done so, death can no longer come against Him. He was brought under its power and curse by becoming the "sin-bearer," but in suffering for men the fatal punishment of sin's guilt and condemnation He robbed death of its jurisdiction, and so also emptied it of its power. Thus the Scripture proclaims: "*Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?*" (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).
- 2) But the conquest of death also means the triumph of life: "*the life He lives, He lives to God.*" Death is estrangement from God, and Christ endured that estrangement as the vicarious sin-bearer - "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*" But having satisfied divine justice for the sake of divine mercy, Jesus has been reconciled to His Father and restored to the right hand of power, where He now lives to God.

Paul's point is not that Jesus did *not* live to God prior to Calvary; clearly He did. His point is that Christ's resurrection represents the fulfillment of the great promise and hope anticipated by all of salvation history. God has triumphed in Christ so as to overthrow the kingdom of Adam and establish the kingdom of His Son (Psalm 2, 110). Christ's glorious, everlasting rule and effectual priestly ministry at the right hand of the Majesty on high speak in a *superlative* way to a life lived to God, for they speak of fulfillment (cf. Matthew 16:13-18; 28:18-20; Romans 8:28-39; Ephesians 1:18-23; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:9-20; Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:1-9).

7. But in the midst of all of this glorious consideration of Christ and His work, one must not lose sight of the fact that Paul's contextual concern is with *the believer's life of sanctification*. He has gone into such detail and broad explanation of the dynamics of Christ's redemptive work precisely because they apply directly to the believer. Thus the language Paul used in reference to Christ is intentionally used of His people:

- Christ's crucifixion is the crucifixion of those united to Him; so also His burial and resurrection are theirs. In every way they share in Him.
- Conversely, as the vicarious sin-bearer He was *united to them* in their suffering under the power of sin and death as the principles of dominion defining the Adamic age. Men are joined to Him, but Christ also fully joined Himself to men.

Jesus Christ participated with Adam's fallen race by taking upon Himself their humanity and subjecting Himself to the defining realities of the age over which Adam presided - estrangement, condemnation, and wrath. And He did so in order that they would participate with Him - a participation marked by deliverance from the Adamic age and its principles, and the inauguration of a new life in a new age presided over by the new and final "Adam." In this way Christ is preeminently *Man unto man*: He became Man in order that, in Him, man should again become truly human; in Christ man becomes man.

As Man, Jesus died to sin once for all - His death was singular, unique, and determinative - with the result that His now triumphant life is lived to God. But He was not simply clothed in humanity; He is Man unto man. Because men find their true humanity in Him, the things that mark His glorified humanity also mark those united to Him, and it is the comprehension and belief of this truth that is the very marrow of the lives they now live:

"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11).

All that Paul predicated of Christ in this context - which he summarized in verse 6:10 - he now predicates of those who believe in Him. As He died to sin, so also have they; as He now lives to God, so also do they. By being joined to Him, they participate in Him in every way. This is the very marrow and the exceeding glory of the great gospel reality that the believer is *in Christ Jesus*. It is also the singular point of uniqueness of the Christian religion. For every other religious system finds its focal point in *man* and his efforts to reach out to deity. Christianity is unique, not in its bare God-centeredness - for many religions are theocentric - but in the fact that *its theocentricity is found in its radical anthropocentricity*. Christianity is unique in that the revelation and glory of God are in Jesus Christ. He is the fullness of the self-disclosure of God's person and purpose, but He brings this disclosure by being both *God unto man* and *Man unto God*. Christ Jesus is equally the definition of God and man, and this is precisely why the Christian life begins, progresses, and reaches its consummation according to the reality that it is *in Christ*.

"You laid aside the old self...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him - a renewal in which there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised...but Christ is all, and in all."