

UNITED WITH CHRIST -- SET FREE FROM SIN AN EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 6:1-14

Translation

1 Therefore, what shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, in order that grace might abound? **2** May it never be! How shall we--the very ones who died to sin--still live in it? **3** Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? **4** Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, in the same way we also might walk in the newness of life. **5** For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also be (united with Him in the likeness of His) resurrection. **6** Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (Him), in order that the body of sin might be destroyed (rendered ineffective), that we might no longer be enslaved to sin. **7** For one who has died has been vindicated from sin. **8** But if we died with Christ, we believe that we also shall live with Him, **9** knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, will no longer die; death no longer has power over Him. **10** For that (the death) which He died, He died to sin once for all time. But that (the life) which He lives, He lives to God. **11** In the same way you also reckon yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, unto obedience to its lusts; **13** do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and (yield) your members as instruments of righteousness to God. **14** For sin shall not have lordship over you. For you are not under law but under grace.

Exegetical Outline

The believer has been set free from domination by the power of sin.

1. Freedom from the power of sin is based on the believer's union with Christ (6:1-14).

a. God's grace does not imply that the justified person should continue to sin in order that grace might increase. (6:1-2)

b. The believer's freedom to live a new life is based on his union with Christ in both His death and resurrection. (6:3-10)

A. We are united with Christ in His death; thus we have died to sin. (6:3, 4a, 5a, 6, 8a)

B. We are therefore also united with Christ in His resurrection and empowered to live a new life. (6:4b, 5b, 7, 8b)

C. The union is explained by reference to Christ's death and resurrection. (6:9, 10)

1. Having been raised from the dead, death no longer rules over Christ (6:9).

2. Similarly, He has died to sin once for all, and now lives to God (6:10).

c. The believer is exhorted to reckon himself dead to sin but alive to God (6:11-14).

A. The believer is no longer obligated to sin and is instructed not to obey its lusts (6:12).

B. The believer is not to be an instrument of sin but an instrument of righteousness (6:13).

C. This exhortation is based on the believer now being under grace rather than law; law merely defined sin, but did not enable obedience-- grace does (6:14).

Introduction

This passage begins the crucial section of Romans (chapters 6 through 8) on the subject of sanctification, the believer's growth process from sin to righteousness. In these first few verses, the believer's relationship to sin is described. Grace, far from being a basis for continuing to practice sin, is the very power that enables sanctification as well as salvation. The believer, united with Christ in the likeness of His death, burial, and resurrection, has died to sin and is given the power to live a new life that is pleasing to God.

This understanding is critical to effective biblical counseling. Passages such as this one underscore the radical

distinction between the believer and the unbeliever. The unbeliever, while having no excuse for his sin, does not have the power to live a holy life. The Christian, however, is assured of every resource necessary for righteous living. The basis for this power is grounded in his union with Christ, as explained in Romans 6:1-14.

Commentary

1. Therefore, what shall we say? Shall we remain in sin, in order that grace may abound?

For the context of this rhetorical question, we must move back into the closing of chapter 5, where Paul so emphatically states that where sin abounded, grace superabounded. This section of Romans is filled with comparisons between the sin of Adam resulting in death for all men, and the righteousness of Christ which results in justification and eternal life for all believers. The concluding comparison (5:20), between sin and grace, could lead to the logical but erroneous conclusion that God's grace grants a license to continue in the practice of sin. Taken to logical extremes, one might even infer that we ought to sin all the more, for the purpose of displaying the abundance of God's grace. Lest anyone pursue this deceitful course of antinomianism, Paul raises the hypothetical question and answers anyone who might dare to bring such unmerited objections against the doctrine of justification by faith.

The beginning expression, "what shall we say?," is used by Paul repeatedly in Romans (3:5, 4:1, 6:1, 7:7, 8:31, 9:14, and 9:30). Thus it is a common expression, sometimes used to draw a positive inference (4:1, 8:31, 9:30), but slightly more often to suggest and immediately repudiate a potential but false inference (3:5, 6:1, 7:7, 9:14). Similar wording is used in 6:15 and 7:13 to introduce rhetorical questions. In this way, Paul sets his readers straight on some basic issues even before the questions are even raised.

2. May it never be! How shall we--the very ones who died to sin--still live in it?

Paul's immediate exclamation (as also in 3:5, 7:7, and 9:14) reveals the absolute absurdity of the false inference. Hodge notes that it is even more than "merely an inconsistency, but a contradiction in terms, as much so as to speak of a live dead man,

or a good bad one."¹ The relative pronoun indicates that we are the *very ones* who *died* to sin. Thus it would be totally ridiculous for us to continue to *live* in it. It would be like a released prisoner racing back into the cell to live out his days on bread and water. If his freedom had been purchased at a high price by someone who loved him (as our redemption has been bought by Christ), he would be insulting the one who redeemed him--just as we would be dishonoring Christ by continuing to live under the dominion of sin.

A grammatical point will aid our understanding. The aorist, "we died" is used with the dative form, "to sin." Cranfield notes several senses in which this dying may be intended: (1) in God's sight (judicially); (2) in one's own acceptance of the salvation given by God (baptismally); (3) in daily putting off sinful practices (morally); (4) at the final resurrection (eschatologically). His conclusion is that either of the first two senses makes the point that true believers must not continue in sin.² Hodge makes the point somewhat more concise. The aorist here references a specific historical event--the believer's trusting in Christ. The dative is one of respect (not "on account of," as some commentators have asserted). We died *with respect* to sin. As in other passages (Galatians 2:19, 1 Peter 2:24, for example), "to be dead to" something is to be freed from its power. In becoming Christians, we are set free not only from the penalty of sin, but from its power in our lives.³

3. Or do you not know that as many as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Baptism was a familiar sacrament to Paul's original readers, one which symbolized the believer's *union* with Christ and his *cleansing* from sin. This is not a reference to water baptism, which has no inherent power to effect regeneration. Believers are commanded to be baptized, but it is not that act in itself that causes salvation to take place.

Hodge brings helpful insight by referencing 1 Corinthians 10:2, where the ancient Jews were *baptized into Moses*, and 1 Corinthians 1:13, where there is a statement about Christians

¹ Hodge, p. 300.

² Cranfield, p. 299-300.

³ Hodge, p. 301-2.

being *baptized into Paul* (although Paul says he was sent to preach, not to baptize). In these cases, and here in Romans 6:3, to baptize "in reference to Moses, Paul, or Christ" is "to be brought into union with them, as their disciples."⁴ The believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection is central to this passage, and to understanding that the Christian is set free in order that he might turn away from sin and live a radically new life. Galatians 3:27 also uses the phrase, "as many as were baptized into Christ," and adds that these have also "put on Christ."

In this passage, however, is also the concept of *death*, as we will develop more fully in the verses that follow. For now, Hodge helps summarize the believer's baptism into, and union with, the death of Christ:

"His death becomes ours; ours as an expiation for sin, as the means of reconciliation with God, and consequently as the means of our **sanctification**."⁵

4. Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, in the same way we also might walk in the newness of life.

Here Paul begins to draw practical conclusions from the knowledge that the Christian has been baptized into Christ's death. Not only did we die with Him, we were also buried with Him. As He was raised from the dead, we are given the power to live a new life.

The word *συνθαπτομαι* is a rare New Testament word that occurs only one other time, in Colossians 2:12. Again there is reference to being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. The context surrounding verse 12 emphasizes the putting off of the "body of flesh" and being made alive with Christ after having been formerly dead in sins and trespasses. As in Romans 6, one cannot fail to see that the believer has been set free from sin to live a holy life. Cranfield notes that "burial is the seal set to the fact of death."⁶ Indeed, when a body is buried, one does not

⁴ Hodge, p. 302.

⁵ Hodge, p. 304 (emphasis added).

⁶ Cranfield, p. 304.

normally expect a resurrection of the dead corpse! The *iva* clause here, bringing in the comparison with Christ's resurrection, shows this purpose for our identification with Christ's death and burial. Hodge notes a causal relation between death and resurrection:

"As Christ's resurrection was the certain consequence of His death, so is a holy life the certain consequence of our dying with Christ...the death and resurrection of Christ render certain the justification and sanctification of His people."⁷

"The *glory* of the Father" here is almost identical with the *power* of the Father, exercised in raising Christ from the dead.⁸ Note also how *glory* is associated with resurrection in 8:17ff. and in 5:2, where we "rejoice in the hope of the *glory* of God."

"In the same way also"...Paul draws an analogy here between the miraculous resurrection of Christ, brought about by God's glorious power, and the new life to be lived by the believer. One cannot help but note that this new life is lived through the *power* of God, not in the strength of the flesh. For one conceived in sin to live a holy life...is indeed miraculous! One who was spiritually dead has now been made *alive*.

"We might walk in the newness of life" expresses the purpose for our death and burial with Christ. The Greek word "walk" is often used to describe a person's way of life. Paul uses this metaphor elsewhere, for example, in Ephesians 4:1. Similar imagery is used in the Hebrew of the Old Testament; note Psalm 1:1. We are now to *live* a new life. The aorist here is likely one of inception, as we begin that walk with Christ. Cranfield notes the contrast between the words *καινοϛ* and *νεοϛ* (new), the former better describing "the transcendent worth of the new way of life" and being "particularly associated with the eschatological hope" in the New Testament.⁹ Bauer's definitions include something "unused," or the sense of something not previously present ("unknown, strange, remarkable"), or "in contrast to something old." *Νεοϛ* has slightly different connotations, being used for "young" or for "new, fresh." It is used in Colossians 3:10 to

⁷ Hodge, p. 305.

⁸ Sanday and Headlam, p. 157.

⁹ Cranfield, p. 305.

describe the "new man" in Christ. However, καινος certainly brings out the contrast with the former way of life, and a manner of life not previously present.

5. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall also be (united with Him in the likeness of His) resurrection.

The γαρ at the outset of this verse confirms what was stated in verse 4 and begins an expansion of the results of the believer's union with Christ.

"We have become" is a perfect tense that must not be overlooked as we examine this verse. Our union with Christ in His death has *continuing results*, as this entire passage emphasizes and explains.

The Greek συμφυτος is a word that brings much discussion among commentators. Bauer's translation is "grown together." Hodge, along with Sanday and Headlam, notes the image of grafting onto a tree, and he also points out that this is more than a mere analogy, as "the life or death of a tree necessitates the life or death of the branches."¹⁰ Cranfield believes commentators have read too much into this word, and that a simple "united with" suffices.¹¹ However, while "united" is an adequate translation in this verse, the imagery of "grown together" brings out the intimacy of our union with Christ and the fact that His death and resurrection *cause* both our justification and sanctification. It is worth noting that in 11:16-24, Paul uses the horticultural metaphor of grafting, although he does not use συμφυτος at that point.

Since there is an ellipsis here, the words "united with Him in the likeness of His" must be supplied to make sense of the whole verse. Αλλα has the force of certainty here rather than contrast ("but"--almost the sense of "how much more"), as noted in Bauer regarding the apodosis of conditional sentences, and by Cranfield.¹² The future tense of "we will be" surely does not exclude an allusion to the final resurrection, but may also

¹⁰ Hodge, p. 306-7; Sanday and Headlam, p. 157.

¹¹ Cranfield, p. 307.

¹² Cranfield, p. 306.

indicate the certainty of our union with Christ and its spiritual consequences.¹³

6. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (Him), in order that the body of sin might be destroyed (rendered ineffective), that we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

Here Paul further expands our crucifixion with Christ, its purposes and practical results. "Knowing this" may be a reference to the believer's experiential knowledge,¹⁴ or merely Paul's introduction of another relevant fact.¹⁵ Either way, what follows gives further defense against the inferences of antinomianism.

"Our old man" is a New Testament phrase that needs some explanation. Its definition is important, as even theologians disagree about whether the believer possesses two *natures*. "Old man" may refer to the sinful nature, or perhaps one's history in Adam. Other significant passages referencing "old man" are Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9-11. Cranfield sees in these two passages an *exhortation* to put off the "old man."¹⁶ However, the aorist participle in Colossians 3:9, plus the aorist "was crucified" in this very verse, indicate that the "old man" is *already* dead and has *already* been put off. Colossians 3:8 exhorts the believer to put off *practices* which characterize one's former way of life. In the context of Ephesians, the believer is exhorted, beginning in 4:1, to live in a manner worthy of the calling and position already given to him by God. The believer is termed a "new creation" in 2 Corinthians 5:17. There is certainly room for discussion here, but Hodge is helpful in his discussion of the word "man:"

"The word *man* is used, because it is no one disposition, tendency, or faculty that is changed, but the man himself; the radical principle of his being, the self...such a radical change of nature cannot fail to manifest itself in a holy walk and conversation."¹⁷

¹³ Hodge, p. 307.

¹⁴ Sanday and Headlam, p. 158; Hodge, p. 308.

¹⁵ Cranfield, p. 308.

¹⁶ Cranfield, p. 309.

¹⁷ Hodge, p. 308-9.

However one might define "old man," there is undoubtedly a change so radical that it must of necessity be manifested in the believer's daily life.

The word "crucified" is certainly a reminder of the horrible death that our Lord died. Some might wish to read into this a slow and painful process, and certainly the believer's growth may at times seem this way! However, Hodge reminds us that the word is probably used simply because it was the manner of Christ's death.¹⁸ The agony and time period ought not to discourage the believer in his sanctification, nor provide an excuse to remain in sinful practices a bit longer.

Finally, the second half of this verse discloses purpose. The believer is no longer under an obligation to the "law of sin and death," to render service to sin as a slave to a master.

"The body of sin" is a phrase that has created differences of opinion. Is it the physical body as the seat of sin? Perhaps the flesh, or the sinful/corrupt nature? It could be another term for the "old man" just mentioned. Paul uses a similar phrase in 7:24, "this body of death." The genitive here for "sin" could be one of possession; Sanday and Headlam describe "the body which is given over to death...the body in its present state of degradation...the body which is so apt to be the instrument of its own carnal impulses."¹⁹ Jay Adams stresses the body's habituation to sin:

"When Paul speaks of the body as sinful, he does not conceive of the body as originally created by God as sinful (as if he were a Gnostic), but rather of the body plunged into sinful practices and habits as the result of Adam's fall. There is no ultimate mind/body (flesh) dualism here, but only a tension in believers occasioned by the regeneration of the inner man and the indwelling of the Spirit in a body habituated to do evil. This leads to an inner/outer struggle. This warfare increasingly is won by the Spirit, Who renews and activates the inner man, who helps the body to put off sinful patterns and to put on new biblical responses. Bodily members are to be yielded less and less to sin and more and more to God (Romans 6:13, 16, 19). This is possible

¹⁸ Hodge, p. 309.

¹⁹ Sanday and Headlam, p. 158.

because Christ has given life not only to the believer's soul (inner man), but also to his body (Romans 7:24; 8:10, 11).²⁰

Certainly, the earthly body is accustomed to sin prior to regeneration, and some sinful habits have strong physiological components (gluttony, drunkenness). The inner man and the body are so closely related that they are somewhat inseparable as we examine the nature of sin. Hodge notes the personification of sin, as a body having members, here and in later verses.²¹ But the good news here is that this "body of sin" is to be rendered ineffective in its enslavement to sin.

The word *καταργεω* is worthy of examination here. Bauer has several definitions that give clarity to what Paul has in mind: (1) "make ineffective, powerless, idle," (2) "abolish, wipe out, set aside," and (3) "be released from an association with someone or something." While the second one lists this verse as an example, all three contribute to our understanding. "Abolish" is perhaps stronger than "make ineffective," though both do apply. The third is surely not out of line with this verse; the believer is released from his former association with sin, having been enslaved to it! (However, the "body of sin," rather than the believer himself, is the object of *καταργεω* here--in contrast to 7:2, 6.) The concept of slavery permeates this section of Romans, as exemplified by the closing few words, "that we might no longer be enslaved to sin." Both the *ινα* and the articular infinitive express the purpose of the believer's crucifixion with Christ. He is freed from his former service to sin's demands.

7. For one who has died has been vindicated from sin.

Paul states a general principle, with the *γαρ* to indicate reason, for the statements he has just made about our union with Christ in His death. Both of the purposes expressed in verse 6 indicate a freedom from enslavement to sin. The principle stated here has a wider application, and a couple of possible interpretations that help us in understanding the verse.

First note the perfect tense, *δεδικαιωται*. The action of setting free is an action *completed* in the past, and the results continue in the present. The believer is already set free from

²⁰ Adams, p. 160.

²¹ Hodge, p. 310.

sin. This has powerful implications and results for ongoing sanctification.

Paul might perhaps be alluding to human legal principles here. A dead person can no longer sin, nor can he be held accountable in a human court of law. Hodge notes these two senses in which physical death frees a person from sin.²² In addition, a dead slave is no longer able to serve his master.²³ Physical death brings a certain freedom from sin, even though it does not absolve the person of accountability before the throne of God.

There is also the sense here of an ethical death, our union with Christ in His death. Cranfield emphasizes this point, and emphasizes the meaning of δικαιωω as justification from sin.²⁴ Certainly this is consistent with Paul's normal usage of that word (see Romans 3:24, 26, 28, and 30, for example).

Looking at the statement from both of these angles gives emphasis to the fact that Christ has not only delivered believers from the penalty of sin, but also from its power. That deliverance has a permanent character, as does physical death.

8. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we also shall live with Him.

εἰ δε ("but if") has the sense of "if...it is really true that...." It may have a causal sense at times.²⁵ Here, the first half, which reiterates the preceding verses (3-6 especially), forms the grounds for a certain deduction. If we have really died with Christ--and we surely have if we are believers--then surely we will also live with Him.

"We believe" is not mere wishful thinking, but as Hodge notes, an "assured conviction," "a confidence, founded on the promise and revealed purpose of God."²⁶ The believer, knowing that he has been united to Christ in His death, must also know that he is united with Him in His life (see verse 4b).

²² Hodge, p. 310.

²³ Sanday and Headlam, p. 159.

²⁴ Cranfield, p. 311.

²⁵ BDF, #372 (2b), referenced by Cranfield, p. 311.

²⁶ Hodge, p. 312.

The exact sense of "we also shall live with Him" is open to a couple of possible interpretations, present life and future eternal life. Sanday and Headlam emphasize the prominence of eternal, resurrection life here.²⁷ But both Cranfield and Hodge discern a *present* sharing in His life.²⁸ Both may undoubtedly be true, but the strong statement of purpose in verse 4, "that we might walk in the newness of life," indicates that our life right now is impacted by our union with Christ. We are surely promised eternal life with the Lord, but this passage (and others, such as 8:11) makes an equally certain promise of the power to live a new life while remaining on earth. It is also useful to recall that we were once spiritually dead in sins and trespasses, but have now been made alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:1, 5).

9. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, will no longer die; death no longer has power over Him.

Εἶδοτες, translated here simply as "knowing," may either mean "and we know" or "because we know." The former is preferred by Cranfield, who believes that Paul is simply introducing another relevant concept.²⁹ However, I am inclined to agree with Hodge that the latter is most consistent with the flow of argument:

"We are sure we shall be partakers of the life of Christ, because we know that He lives...the perpetuity of Christ's life is presented as the ground of assurance of the perpetuity of the life of believers."³⁰

This verse forms the grounds for the deduction drawn in the last half of verse 8, the assurance believers have of life with Christ in both the present and the future. Here the *eternity* of Christ's life, and ours, is slightly more prominent than the new quality of earthly life that we now possess. Christ died once, but He has been raised from the dead and will never die again. Note the aorist passive *εγερθεις* for a past historical action, and the verb

²⁷ Sanday and Headlam, p. 159.

²⁸ Hodge, p. 313; Cranfield, p. 312.

²⁹ Cranfield, p. 313.

³⁰ Hodge, p. 313.

αποθνησκει, present in form but stretched into the indefinite future by ουκει. However, both concepts are intimately related.

"Death no longer rules over Him." The verb here, κυριευει, is one that emphasizes the exercise of lordship over another. The present tense here indicates a general, timeless characteristic. One might rightly ask whether death ever had any lordship over the Lord Himself! Certainly Christ has power over life and death, and He willingly submitted Himself to death according to God's eternal plan of redemption. As Hodge so aptly puts it, "He voluntarily submitted to death for our sakes, and was the master of death even in dying."³¹ The emphasis here seems to be on Christ's submission to death, rather than His mastery over it, which is taught elsewhere.

10. For the death He died, He died to sin once and for all time. But the life He lives, He lives to God.

This verse gives explanation to what was just stated about the finality of Christ's victory over death. Note the use of γαρ. The neuter relative pronoun leads to the translation, "the death He died," rather than to Christ Himself. The aorist "died," used twice here, references the historical event of His crucifixion.

"Died to sin" is an expression that requires some careful exegesis, particularly since the believer is also said to have "died to sin" (verse 2). In both cases, there is a *separation* from sin.³² The believer is separated from the penalty and power of his own sin by the work of Christ. Christ Himself, although sinless, took on the burden of our sins and satisfied God's justice. He is even said to have *become sin* on our behalf, though He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). The dative here is no doubt a dative of respect. Christ died *with respect to* sin.

Εφαπαξ, "once and for all," is a word that stresses the decisiveness of Christ's sacrificial death. It is used three times in Hebrews (7:27, 9:12, 10:10), along with the similar word απαξ (9:26, 28) to emphatically declare the completed work of Christ, particularly in contrast to the sin offerings of human priests. In the second half of the verse, we are presented again with the life/death contrast once more. Earlier verses have

³¹ Hodge, p. 314.

³² Hodge, p. 314.

demonstrated the believer's union with Christ's *life*, resulting from his union with Christ's *death* and burial. Contrasted with "the death He died" is "the life He lives." Notice the change of tense. His death is a historical event, but His life is ongoing and eternal. He lives now "to God," as the believer must also (v. 13). This may be considered a dative of special advantage. He lives in absolute devotion to God and to His purposes. One might also say, "in the very presence of God," an intimate uninterrupted communion with the Father, as Christ's devotion to God existed prior to His death as well as after His resurrection. The Christian must now live to please God rather than self. Cranfield notes that verses 9 and 10 together:

"...throw a flood of light on the character of this new life which is to be ours; for they reveal the transcendent security of its basis in the absolute finality of His death to sin and in His risen life which He lives to God, which is forever beyond the reach of death."³³

11. In the same way, you also...reckon yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The final four verses of this section are exhortations to the believer based on the completed work of Christ and his union with the Lord. This first one clearly references the preceding verse and builds on it. Christ died to sin and lives to God. So must the believer, "in the same way" (οὕτως και), be dead to sin and alive to God.

The imperative, λογισθε, is neither wishful thinking nor pretending nor acting "as if,"³⁴ but a sober consideration of what is already true on the basis of Christ's work on behalf of the believer. (This verb can hardly be considered indicative, although the forms are the same. Note also the imperative βασιλευετο in the next verse.) It means to consider, reckon or take into account. This exhortation is reminiscent of Ephesians 4:1, where the Christian is called to live in accordance with his glorious position in Christ. It is not based on feelings, but established facts. After all that has been said about the believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, how can he dare to remain in sin? On the contrary,

³³ Cranfield, p. 314.

³⁴ Cranfield, p. 315.

he must reckon with the facts and consider himself dead to sin. The present tense here indicates a general characteristic for Christian living.

The $\mu\epsilon\nu\dots\delta\epsilon$ construction indicates "on the one hand...on the other hand." Once more, death is viewed in contrast to life. It is a package deal; the Christian is, on the one hand, dead with respect to sin, but on the other hand, living for God. The dative here (see notes to verse 10) is most likely one of special advantage, as the believer lives his life to serve and please God.

The infinitive, $\epsilon\iota\nu\alpha\iota$, may or may not be in the original text. It is not essential to the basic sense of the text and is omitted by a number of manuscripts.

The closing phrase, "in Christ Jesus," is not mysticism nor physical locality,³⁵ but rather continues the basic theme of this passage. God sees believers as righteous, holy, and blameless because of the righteousness of Christ and His death on their behalf. The believer is "dead to sin" and empowered to live an increasingly righteous life, because of the completed work of Christ. Sin and death no longer have power over the Christian.

12. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, unto obedience to its lusts.

"Therefore" ($\text{o}\upsilon\nu$) begins the closing series of exhortations which are inferences from all that has been said before. Again there is a present imperative that describes what ought to be characteristic of the believer's life. He is not to let sin *reign* in his life. Along with $\kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\epsilon\upsilon\omega$, $\beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\omega$ describes a relationship where authority is exercised over another. In fact, this word is used for a king. Sin has previously taken the role of a king, or put it another way, an *idol* usurping the rightful role of God. The Christian, bought with the blood of Christ, owes his allegiance to God, not to sin. The articular infinitive shows the purpose of sin's rule: that the person enslaved to it might *obey* its lusts (as a slave)--rather than God's commands. The present tense of the infinitive (*obey*) indicates an ongoing activity. The term for "lust," $\epsilon\pi\iota\theta\upsilon\mu\iota\alpha$, is one which portrays intense, passionate desire. It may be used in a positive sense, as when Paul describes his eager desire to be with Christ in Philippians 1:23. The focus is on *God* in such instances. But in this verse, as in

³⁵ Cranfield, p. 316.

James 1:14 and Ephesians 4:22, "lust" is the best translation because of the sinful self-focus in the context. The "desires" of sin, or of the corrupt, sinful nature of man, are *lusts*.

The phrase "mortal bodies," similar to "body of sin" in verse 6, invites comment. It seems to be, in a practical sense, equivalent to "you (plural)." In other words, do not let sin reign in *you* or in *your lives*. Hodge notes that the body is not the source of sin, but "the organ of its manifestation" or "that through which the dominion of sin is outwardly revealed."³⁶ The actions of the body reveal the allegiance of the heart. Although the believer's body is still subject to death, his actions can, even now in this life, display the life of the risen Christ.

13. Do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and (yield) your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

"Do not yield...but yield." The word *παριστημι* means to yield or to present as an offering. It is used again in Romans 12:1, where believers are exhorted to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This verse gives similar counsel. Notice the change in tense (both imperatives) from present to aorist. The present is perhaps a command to *stop* yielding. Prior to conversion, the believer was enslaved to sin and yielded to its rule. Now he must stop doing so and begin yielding to God. No longer a slave of sin, he is now a servant (slave) of God. The aorist here, according to Sanday and Headlam, means to "dedicate by one decisive act, one resolute effort."³⁷ There is certainly an initial yielding at conversion, but sanctification is an ongoing process, sometimes a struggle with former temptations. Perhaps it could better be understood as an inceptive aorist. The believer has made a commitment to begin yielding, increasingly as he matures in Christ, to God's command.

The word for "members," *μελη*, primarily means "limb" or "bodily part." This language is consistent with "body of sin" and "mortal bodies" used previously. Hodge interprets it in a broader sense to include "any natural capacity,"³⁸ which seems wise since

³⁶ Hodge, p. 319.

³⁷ Sanday and Headlam, p. 161.

³⁸ Hodge, p. 317.

sin involved much more than the mere use of bodily parts. Notice that in the second half, "yourselves" is added to "your members." This is certainly consistent with passages such as Romans 12:2, and Christ's command to love the Lord your God with your entire being--your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. The believer's entire life is committed to the Lord, and his "members" to the practice of righteousness. The phrase, "as alive from the dead" is inserted, coinciding with the whole sense of this passage. Just as Christ is raised from the dead, the believer is empowered to live a new life (verse 4).

This verse is certainly filled with interesting word studies! The Greek *οπλα* may be "instruments" or "weapons," as in the "weapons or our warfare" (2 Corinthians 10:4). In view of the spiritual battle that believers continue to encounter, such terminology is certainly not out of place. However, the more general sense of "instruments" is adequate in this context.

"Instruments" is placed besides two opposing genitives, unrighteousness and righteousness. The sense here is one of performing unrighteous or righteous actions. The genitive could perhaps be adjectival ("unrighteous/righteous instruments") or objective (performing unrighteous or righteous acts). Cranfield sees it as a genitive of purpose, citing BDF #166, and this also makes good sense.³⁹

Two contrasting, corresponding datives are placed in this verse, "to sin" and "to God" (the latter used twice). The dative of special advantage best explains this usage, as the person either serves sin by his unrighteousness actions, or serves God through righteous deeds.

14. For sin shall not have power over you. For you are not under law but under grace.

This final verse crushes antinomianism once and for all. It is the very opposite of the absurd thought that God's grace gives the believer a reason to remain in sin.

The particle *γαρ* is one that gives reason. Here is the reason that the believer is exhorted to yield his life to God instead of to sin, which is personified in this verse. His union with Christ has broken forever the power of sin along with its

³⁹ Cranfield, p. 318.

penalty. This former slavedriver has no more legal claim on the one who has been set free by Jesus Christ. Again we encounter the verb *κυριεω*, which describes ruling over or lording it over someone (see Appendix 1). It is a strong word which describes the authority exercised by human kings as well as by God Himself. The future tense gives encouragement to the believer. Not only is he justified with relation to his past sins, but in the future, sin *shall not* rule over him! Now, instead, Christ the Lord rules over him. Note the hopeful comment of Hodge:

"It is not a hopeless struggle in which the believer is engaged, but one in which victory is certain."⁴⁰

A second *γαρ* gives reason for the statement that sin's power is broken, and it is this statement that defeats antinomianism so thoroughly. It is precisely *because* the believer is under grace, rather than law, that sin has no power over him.

The exact meaning of *νομος* is important, because it would be erroneous to conclude that the believer may ignore God's law. Paul clarifies elsewhere that the law is good, holy, and righteous (Romans 7:11), even though no man is justified by keeping the requirements of the law (Romans 3:28). Cranfield sheds light on the issue by noting how Paul contrasts "under law" with "under grace." The law condemns, but God's grace places believers under His undeserved favor.⁴¹ The Christian is not "under law" as a means to salvation, although, paradoxically, it is his position as a recipient of God's grace that enables him to be obedient to God's commands.

Conclusions

Salvation is a free, gracious gift from God based on Christ's death and resurrection. The Christian is justified solely by faith in Christ and not at all on the basis of his own works or merit. Paul concludes his dissertation on this important doctrine by stating that "where sin abounded, grace *superabounded!*" (Romans 5:20). Perhaps some who hear this may be skeptical. Does this mean that God's grace gives license to the ungodly to sin all the more, so that His grace might be even more abundant? This inference, though seemingly logical, is absurd.

⁴⁰ Hodge, p. 322.

⁴¹ Cranfield, p. 320.

Instead, Paul demonstrates conclusively that *because* of God's grace, and only because of it, the believer has died to sin and is no longer under its enslaving lordship. By his union with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, he is empowered to live a new, righteous life as a servant of God.

Application

This is a crucial passage for pastors and other biblical counselors in their efforts to assist struggling believers along the pathway to sanctification. It's easy for immature believers to gloss over their own sin, confident that God will forgive. It's equally easy to become discouraged and weary in the battle with powerful habits from one's former way of life. To the first, this passage gives a loving warning, plus specific exhortations. To the second, these words provide encouragement, because God has forever broken the power of sin over the believer. Victory is certain, even though battles must still be fought in this life.

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Appendix 1

Word Studies

1. βαπτίζω (used 77 times in the New Testament)

Bauer

1. Jewish ritual washings.
- 2a. Baptize in a special sense (John the Baptist).
- 2b. Christian baptism...by disciples, or as a sacrament after the crucifixion/resurrection.
Baptize with respect to, or in the name of (Romans 6:3).
With the purpose given...forgiveness of sins.
3. Figurative sense related to the idea of Christian baptism.
 - a. Typologically of Israel's passage through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:12).
 - b. Holy Spirit.
 - c. Martyrdom.

Liddell and Scott

1. Dip, plunge, to be drowned, sink (a ship).
2. Draw wine by dipping cup in bowl.
3. Baptize.

Louw and Nida

1. Wash.
2. Baptize.
3. Cause religious experience...to employ water in a religious ceremony designed to symbolize purification and initiation on the basis of repentance.

Other Uses by Paul

Paul uses this verb 13 times in the New Testament. Six of these (nearly half) are in 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, where he discusses his own role, or lack of it, in baptism of believers. Here he makes the point that his God-given purpose is to preach the gospel rather than to baptize. Later in this book, he speaks of the Jews being baptized into the name of Moses (10:2), then of Christians being baptized by one Spirit into one body (12:13). Two references (1 Corinthians 15:29) concern the practice of being baptized on behalf of the dead, a practice that Paul is not recommending, but merely using as an illustration to expose the lack of logic used by those who deny the resurrection. Paul's final usage is in Galatians 3:27, where he states that those who have been baptized into Christ have also put on Christ. These usages indicate a particular kind of union (especially Romans 6:3,

1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27), as well as discipleship (note the baptism "into Moses").

2. κυριεω (used 7 times in the New Testament)

Bauer

Be lord or master, rule, lord it (over), control.

Of persons with genitive of that over while rule is exercised.

Of things, likewise with genitive (Romans 6:14, used of sin; Romans 6:9, used of death).

Liddell and Scott

1. Be lord or master of. Passive: Be dominated or possessed.

2. To have legal power to do.

Louw and Nida

Rule or reign over, govern, with implication in some contexts of "lording it over."

Other Uses

Almost all (6 of 7 total) New Testament uses are in Paul's epistles, and four of these six occurrences are in Romans. The subject of this verb varies: death (Romans 6:9), sin (6:14), law (7:1), Christ ruling over all (14:9), the apostles (2 Corinthians 1:24, used in a negative sense), and God as Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). In the one usage outside of Paul, the subject is Gentile kings (Luke 22:25). In all cases is the idea of exercising very strong, even absolute, authority. The strength of this verb contributes to our understanding of Romans 6:1-14, because it shows the enormous power of sin and death over the unbeliever--a power now broken by Christ for the one who trusts in Him.

Appendix 2 Textual Variant

	Byzantine	Western	Casearean	Alexandrian
Romans 6:12				
ταις επιθυμιας αυτου	451		Ⲙ	A B C 81 326 1739 1881 cop
		it vg	syr arm	
Church fathers: Origen, Methodius, Jerome, Augustine, Antiochus, John-Damascus.				
αυτη εν ταις επιθυμιας αυτου	K		Ψ	C (3)
αυτου for αυτη	614 629	88 181		104 1241
αυτων for αυτου	syr			
Church fathers: Basil, Chrysostom, Euthalius (Theororet), Ps-Oecumenius, Theophylact.				

Conclusions

External evidence weighs strongly in favor of the first reading, particularly with the fair number of Alexandrian family manuscripts. This family has a more primitive style and maintains some orthodox readings, in contrast to the standardization attempts of the Byzantine family. Internally, the second reading appears to be one where a couple of words have been added for possible clarification--to obey *sin* (personified) in its lusts, rather than simply to obey *its lusts*.

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