

OPENING SCRIPTURES:

Our opening Scripture consists of the last two verses of **ROMANS CHAPTER FIVE** because much of what PAUL is teaching in **the first fourteen verses of CHAPTER SIX** is to counter a possible misunderstanding of what he wrote previously in those two verses: **[READ ROMANS 5:20-21]** –

It is this issue of '*GRACE ABOUNDING OVER SIN*' that leads PAUL to ask at the beginning of **ROMANS CHAPTER SIX**: "*Are we to CONTINUE in SIN so that GRACE may increase?*"

In every believer there is a battle between the leading of **THE HOLY SPIRIT** who indwells us and **THE OLD SIN NATURE** that tries to pull us back into '*the old domain*' the Scriptures call, '*THE WORLD*'?

*[To gain insight into how this spiritual battle plays out in the life of a believer, see **ROMANS 7:14-25** where PAUL describes his own personal battle with his innate sinful nature.]*

This is the issue PAUL is dealing with in **ROMANS CHAPTER SIX**, and it is the battle we fight every day in our **CHRISTIAN LIVES**.

EXEGESIS

[READ ROMANS 6:1-2] – The challenge is to understand **HOW TO LIVE UNDER GRACE WHILE STILL POSSESSING AN OLD SIN NATURE** (*hereinafter: OSN*) that daily tries to drag us back into the life we lived before we committed lives to **JESUS CHRIST**.

So **THE KEY QUESTION** becomes: "*Can a believer continue to hold on to our former **WORLDVIEW** and the **LIFESTYLE** we lived before **THE HOLY SPIRIT** took up **AN INDWELLING RESIDENCE** in us?* Said another way: "*Shall we continue in **SIN** that **GRACE** may abound*"? This is the question **PAUL sets forth in VERSE ONE**.

PAUL answers this question in **VERSE 2** with an emphatic response: "***MAY IT NEVER BE***"!

In an article written on the phrase, "***MAY IT NEVER BE***"! **JORDAN POLVERINI** refers to its use in **ROMANS 6:2** as '***A NEGATION OF ABHORRENCE***'.¹ This expression occurs fifteen times in the New Testament, and ten of those fifteen occurrences are in **PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS**.

"***MAY IT NEVER BE***" is the most forceful negative expression afforded by the Greek language and it is intended to draw **PAUL'S** readers to repulsion over specific claims he believed to be heinous.

So we do not have to spend a lot of time trying to figure out **PAUL'S** position on this subject: **GRACE IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR SINFUL BEHAVIOR**. What **PAUL** taught is:

(1) *We receive salvation by **GRACE-ALONE**. **WORKS** play no part in **JUSTIFICATION**. **SALVATION** is not something we earn; it is a free-gift of **GOD'S GRACE**, based solely on what **JESUS** did on the Cross.*

BUT HE ALSO TAUGHT:

(2) *We misunderstand the Gospel if we believe we can continue in sin with impunity – (not an impunity that reverses our **JUSTIFIED POSITION IN CHRIST**) – but an impunity that brings divine discipline into play if our **SINS** are not followed by **SINCERE REPENTANCE**.*

PAUL follows his '***MAY IT NEVER BE***' with a reason '***IT SHOULD NEVER BE***' – He says: "*How shall we who died to sin still live in it*?' So what does he mean by '*died to sin*'? In order to understand this phrase, we have to look ahead to **VERSE 10**.

¹ Polverini, Jordan B., "May It Never Be! Paul's Noteworthy Structural Usage of *Μὴ Γένοιτο* in Romans, *Journal of Ministry and Theology*, Pg. 1, 2023.

In VERSE 10, PAUL says of CHRIST: “For the death He died, He died to sin once for all, but the life He lives, He lives to God.”

Now we know JESUS lived a sinless life, so *the sin-in-question* cannot be His sin; therefore, it must be *THE SIN OF ADAM* and *ALL OF OUR PERSONAL SINS*. And in this context, it must mean, ‘HE DIED AS A SIN OFFERING.’ This is SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT – and the benefits of it are applied to us when we believe the Gospel and trust in CHRIST’S DEATH ON THE CROSS as the sole basis for our SALVATION.

The principle at work in VERSE 2 is described by the phrase “WE WHO DIED TO SIN,” and it presumes two things: (1) **IMPUTATION** and (2) **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** – i.e., our position in IN CHRIST. So let’s define these two terms more fully:

(I.) IMPUTATION – The pertinent Greek term that is translated IMPUTATION in the New Testament is *λογίζομαι* (pronounced *lōgítzomai*). This word’s root meaning is related to ‘counting’ and it is used to signify ‘the crediting of something to the account of another person.’ In this case, what is imputed are both THE SIN OF ADAM and ALL OF OUR PERSONAL SINS – and ALL of these were imputed (or transferred) by GOD THE FATHER to JESUS CHRIST on the Cross.

(II.) POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION – Refers to ‘A COMPLETED WORK’ as opposed to ‘TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION’ which is: ‘A WORK IN PROGRESS.’ In other words, at the instant we believe the Gospel, we enter into a relationship with JESUS CHRIST that is depicted throughout the New Testament by the phrase, ‘IN CHRIST.’ And since we are ‘POSITIONALLY IN CHRIST,’ and since (according to VERSE 10) ‘HE DIED TO SIN’ when He offered Himself up as ‘A SIN OFFERING,’ ... at that very instant, in the eyes of God, ‘WE ALSO DIED TO SIN’ – This is what we mean by ‘**POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION**.’

Now in VERSE 10, there is a second important phrase. After asserting ‘JESUS DIED TO SIN,’ PAUL draws a conclusion; he says, “and the life He (JESUS) now lives, He lives to God.” So since we are ‘POSITIONALLY IN CHRIST,’ this answers the question posed in VERSE 2: ‘How shall WE who died to sin still live in it?’ The answer is, just as CHRIST DIED TO SIN and ROSE TO LIVE FOR GOD, so we also, in that we are considered by God to be ‘IN CHRIST’ ... we also are to live in a manner that is pleasing to God – and this means ‘forsaking the old way of thinking and living.’

Much of what was in the forefront of Jewish life in the Old Testament pointed forward to better things that would be revealed in the New Testament. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS clearly points out that THE JEWISH SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM was AN EARTHLY PARADIGM from which ISRAEL should have understood that a final, more worthy sacrifice was coming that would end the repetitive killing of animals and would resolve the sin-problem once-and-for-all. And because that single, worthy sacrifice was made by CHRIST – and because WE ARE POSITIONALLY IN HIM, no longer are we obligated to live under the rule and power of sin.

Now this carries forward to a point PAUL will make, specifically regarding BAPTISM. [READ ROMANS 6:3-5] – In these verses, UNION WITH CHRIST is represented by the term ‘BAPTISM’ – PAUL says: “Those of us who have been BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS have been BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH.” Notice, the text does NOT say, “we who have been BAPTIZED in WATER.” There is no mention of water anywhere in this passage. What PAUL is explaining by his allusion to BAPTISM is THE ‘HOW-PART’ OF BEING IN CHRIST.

Though WATER BAPTISM is the symbol that stands behind his message, what PAUL has in mind here is NOT a religious ritual; it is a relationship; it is being IN UNION WITH CHRIST.

Now this has confused a lot of people over the centuries.

- The term *‘βαπτίζω’* (pronounced *Baptizō*) – means *‘to submerge, or to immerse.’* But more fundamentally, *BAPTISM* means *‘to identify with someone or something.’*

This is made crystal clear for us when we look at 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-2:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea – 1 Corinthians 10:1-2.

Obviously, MOSES did not baptize 2-MILLION ISRAELITES in the waters of THE RED SEA – and beyond that absurdity, how is one *‘baptized in a cloud’*? The Israelites crossed THE RED SEA on dry land – and THE CLOUD was a manifestation of God’s presence that led ISRAEL through the wilderness. So *“all were baptized into Moses”* must mean something else – and it does ... It means, *‘from that moment forward ISRAEL was uniquely identified with MOSES and the leadership he provided for the nation.’*

Likewise, here in ROMANS CHAPTER SIX, PAUL is not using βαπτίζω to refer to the ritual of WATER BAPTISM. Just as the ISRAELITES were identified with MOSES at a specific time in their history, so we are identified with JESUS in every aspect of the ATONEMENT.

To be *‘BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST,’* or more specifically, *‘TO BE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH,’* is a way of saying ... *‘when we became followers of JESUS, we did not just participate in a religious ritual; we became spiritually identified with His DEATH,’ i.e., with HIS ATONING ACT.’* And this *‘identification’* carries with it an intimacy such that *(in the eyes of God)* His death became our death.

The ritual of WATER BAPTISM symbolically depicts this deeper truth as a symbol of our commitment to the Lord. This is why **it is not WATER BAPTISM that saves us.** WATER BAPTISM always follows after a life-commitment to CHRIST and the full-acceptance of HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS as THE SOLE BASIS for our SALVATION. This life-commitment to CHRIST – over time – brings about a life-transformation, a transformation-process we call *‘PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION.’* This is the meaning of the phrase *‘newness of life’* in VERSE 4. And PAUL restates this in 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17:

*Therefore if anyone is **IN CHRIST (JUSTIFICATION)**, he is a new creation; the old things passed away (AORIST TENSE: AT THE MOMENT WE WERE JUSTIFIED); behold, all things have become new (PERFECT TENSE: A LINEAR PROCESS OF BEING CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST). ”*

There are two interpretive errors that have been applied to PAUL’S teaching on this subject:

(I) PAUL’S TEACHING CAN BE MISREPRESENTED AS A FORM OF ANTINOMIANISM:

ANTINOMIAN – Is a compound term (*ἀντί* [*anti*] = *‘against’*) and (*νόμος* [*nomos*] = *‘law’*) meaning, *‘against’* or *‘opposed to the law.’* **ANTINOMIANISM** is the belief that moral laws (or any law code for that matter, e.g., *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*) have no application at all to the Christian Life since our salvation is based on *GRACE-ALONE*. But it is ANTINOMIANISM PAUL is arguing against in CHAPTER SIX by that expression, *‘GOD FORBID.’*

AUGUSTINE often compared the spiritual healing of GOD’S GRACE to being healed from a physical illness by a physician². In his many allusions to this, the physician, of course, is CHRIST. In this analogy, GRACE is comparable to the physician’s care and the medicine that was prescribed for the patient’s recovery. Even in our age of modern medicine, we value the medical care we receive in proportion to the seriousness of the malady for which the medicine was prescribed. No man measures medical care by minimizing the seriousness of his disease; he does not say, “O,

² Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, Chapter 43, Pg. 70; and *The City of God*, Book X, Chapter 29.

the medical care aside, it was just cancer.” NO! Rather, to the degree the disease was grave, to that same degree we value the care we received that led to the remission of the illness.

Considered from a practical perspective, when cured from a disease, *no one wishes for a recurrence of the disease because of the effectiveness of the cure. To do so would be senseless!* Having recovered from an illness, no one says, “*let the disease reoccur*”! — ‘**GOD FORBID.**’ Likewise, to reengage SIN because of the effectiveness of GRACE is no less absurd.

(II) PAUL’S TEACHING ALSO CAN BE MISREPRESENTED AS A FORM OF LEGALISM:

LEGALISM – Is the opposite of **ANTINOMIANISM** and stresses strict observance of laws or religious traditions as the primary way a relationship with God is established. FRED CHAY defines LEGALISM as: “*keeping man-made rules and religious regulations in order to earn God’s acceptance for justification or sanctification*”³. CHAY goes on to say, “*Theologically, it (LEGALISM) is a position completely opposed to the concept of GRACE*”⁴. Both of these extremes (**ANTINOMIANISM** and **LEGALISM**) are wrong.

PAUL’S MESSAGE is one of OPTIMISM, for he links our new life IN CHRIST to the certainty of our future RESURRECTION. If we are UNITED with Him in HIS DEATH, we will be UNITED with Him in HIS RESURRECTION. OUR RESURRECTION is as certain as CHRIST’S RESURRECTION – and CHRIST’S RESURRECTION is documented historically. This takes OUR HOPE out of any esoteric realm and places it directly in space-time history.

This passage lays out for us the three stages of the ATONEMENT.

- CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED – and we are UNITED with Him in His CRUCIFIXION.
- HE WAS BURIED – and we are UNITED with Him in His BURIAL.
- And HE WAS RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD – and in this also we are UNITED with Him.

So we are UNITED with CHRIST in every stage of the ATONEMENT – and this UNITY is *depicted but not brought about ...* by the ritual of BAPTISM.

[READ ROMANS 6:6-7] – THE OLD SIN NATURE HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST:

THE OLD SELF is another way of referring to **THE OLD SIN NATURE**. There are times PAUL refers to it as ‘**THE FLESH**’ and also as ‘**THE NATURAL MAN.**’ It is a reference to how all women and men enter into life as descendants of ADAM. We receive the OSN under the principle of IMPUTATION as part of ADAM’S ORIGINAL SIN. ADAM’S SIN, and his resultant OSN, were imputed to EVE and then to ALL DESCENDANTS OF ADAM. *The only human being born without an OSN is JESUS CHRIST.* JESUS is related to ADAM *legally* but JESUS is *not descended from him* and thus He came into the world without an OSN and without the sin of ADAM having been IMPUTED to Him. *In this JESUS is unique among men.*

There is a purpose for which our OSN’S were crucified with CHRIST: *In order that our body of sin might be done away with ... so that we no longer are ‘SLAVES’ to sin.* Just as the Creation was affected by sin and all sorts of things changed in the physical universe under the curse of GENESIS THREE ... so also our physical bodies are impacted by sin, and as a result, our bodies easily respond to sinful impulses and temptations, making them, far too often, *instruments of sin.*

Now in spite of this, PAUL says: “*HE WHO HAS DIED IS FREED FROM SIN*” – **VERSE 7.** This does not *just* mean we are freed from the eternal consequences of sin – *we are* – but this also means *we no longer are obligated to live under the dominion of sin* – **NOW.**

³ Chay, Fred, *Legalism is Lethal in the Spiritual Life*, Grace Line Inc., Scottsdale, Arizona, 2010, Pg. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Pg. 8.

Does this mean we never will commit a sin after being saved? — I wish that is what it meant ... but as long as we are alive in these unredeemed, mortal bodies, we still have VOLITION, and therefore we still have the ability – *not the right* – but the ability to commit sin.

[READ ROMANS 6:8-10] – Here the emphasis is on LIVING IN THE POWER OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION. *Just as the rite of WATER BAPTISM symbolizes our figurative BURIAL with CHRIST, it also represents our identification with His RESURRECTION* – And this means – having been IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST’S RESURRECTION – we are to live our lives in THE POWER OF THAT RESURRECTION.

This is a repetition of what he already has said, but PAUL repeats it here as a confirmation that both our relationship to THE WORLD and our relationship to GOD have been altered.

Because JESUS took on Himself the JUDGMENT FOR SIN when He died on the Cross, there is a sense in which we died with Him, *i.e.*, OUR OLD SELVES – OUR OSN’S – died with Him and we no longer are the people we once were – WE ARE A NEW CREATION.

This is depicted in WATER BAPTISM by the rising up out of the water, representing JESUS rising up from DEATH to A NEW LIFE.

Just as CHRIST rose from the DEAD and overcame DEATH, so also THE POWER OF SIN has been defeated – (*but not abolished*) – in us. There are remnants of the Fall still apparent in the world ... Just compare the world we live in with the curse of GENESIS THREE ... *and* ... We learn from this that whereas it was natural for us to engage in all sorts of sinful acts prior to our salvation, it is not natural now. *Even when Christians sin, Christians are not comfortable sinning.*

[READ ROMANS 6:11-14] – Notice the word ‘CONSIDER’ in VERSE 11 – “CONSIDER yourselves to be DEAD TO SIN BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.”

The word translated ‘CONSIDER’ is a word I mentioned a moment ago. It is the word λογίζομαι (*pronounced lōgízomai*) – It is the verb often translated ‘to impute’ but here it is translated, ‘to consider.’

The root meaning of λογίζομαι has to do with ‘counting’ or ‘reckoning.’ Here it carries the sense of ‘reckoning inwardly’ by ‘gathering reasons from which to draw valid conclusions.’ It can mean, ‘to take into account, to weigh the matter, to deliberate within yourself.’

Now this verb is written in the *Present Tense, Middle Voice, Indicative Mood*, and it is an *Imperative*. So let me explain what all this means:

IMPERATIVE: An Imperative is a **COMMAND**, not a recommendation.

(And this is the first imperative written in the Book of Romans, and the first of FOUR IMPERATIVES that appear in these last four verses!)

PRESENT TENSE: The Present Tense of an Imperative refers to something that is to happen **NOW**.

MIDDLE VOICE: It is REFLEXIVE ... meaning the subject, *i.e.*, anyone reading PAUL’S LETTER, is to make the decision to follow his instructions **NOW**. (*‘Reflexive’ means the volition of man is involved. It is not a decision that is forced on us, but one in which we voluntarily, moment-by-moment, choose to ‘consider ourselves dead to sin.’*)

INDICATIVE MOOD: The Indicative Mood means ‘what is in view is *objective*, not *subjective*.’ And I am mentioning this last because I think what PAUL is saying is this: “CHRISTIANITY BEGINS AND ENDS WITH GOD AND WHAT HE HAS DONE HISTORICALLY.”

Our relationship with God is grounded in THE INDICATIVE ... All other religious or Moral Systems are focused on something man must do – on man’s performance. CHRISTIANITY is based on the gracious act of God in history when He sent His Son, JESUS CHRIST to die on the Cross as our SAVIOR so we can have a relationship with God that is not based on human merit but on GRACE.

So we are to “CONSIDER ourselves to be DEAD TO SIN BUT ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS” – and we can do this with confidence because it is true!

Now CHRISTIANITY is not void of MORAL INSTRUCTION, in fact, PAUL is about to lay out several expectations he has for THE ROMAN CHURCH – and these expectations apply also to us. And they are grounded in the Indicative ... in the historical fact of God’s Grace expressed in Christ.

Before PAUL has said a word about moral expectations, he has spent 5½-CHAPTERS telling us what our condition is as A FALLEN RACE and what GOD ALREADY HAS DONE to restore us to Himself. Only after all of this does he address how we should live in response to what God has done – and He does this by using **FOUR IMPERATIVES**:

Consider yourselves dead to sin ... Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies ...

Do not continue presenting the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness, *(BUT)* Do present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness ...

RIGHTEOUS DEEDS or **MORAL LIVING** or **WHATEVER ELSE** may fall into these categories ... are done out of gratitude for what God has done for us, not in order to earn anything from the Lord.

- Once we were **ENEMIES OF GOD**, now we are **SONS OF GOD**.
- We came into this world under the condemnation of **ADAM’S TRANSGRESSION**, but now we have been **ADOPTED** into the family of God and we no longer are **IN ADAM**, we are **IN CHRIST**.
- We were dead in **OUR OWN TRESPASSES AND SINS**, now we are **FORGIVEN** and therefore **DEAD** to the old way of life.
- Once we were **DOMINATED BY SIN** and subject to continuous, abject failure under **THE DOMINION OF OUR OSN’S**, but now we are **FREE FROM THE FUTILE TRAP OF LAWKEEPING** ... we are under **GRACE**.

VERSE 14 – Encourages us because it is God’s promise that “SIN SHALL NOT BE MASTER OVER YOU.” Does this mean we will never give in to temptation? No – but it does mean there always is a way to escape.

One of the first Bible verses I memorized was 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13:

For no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to men; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it – 1 Corinthians 10:13.

We are too weak to keep THE LAW, but GRACE is empowering. This is PAUL’S message. We are not to pervert GRACE by citing it as an excuse to commit sin; rather, we are to live transformed lives by the power of God’s Spirit in us.

THERE ARE THREE KEY THEOLOGICAL THEMES IN THIS PASSAGE THAT ALSO ARE PRACTICAL:

FIRST – Every Christian is inseparably in **UNION WITH CHRIST** ... both in His **DEATH** and in His **RESURRECTION** – and therefore our salvation is sure, certified by **JESUS’ OWN RESURRECTION**.

SECOND – **HOLINESS IS NOT OPTIONAL**. Holiness flows from **THE TRANSFORMED LIFE** we have **IN CHRIST**. ***THIS IS TEMPORAL SANCTIFICATION** ... the process of conforming our minds to think as God thinks – and therefore to act as He expects us to act.*

THIRD – Every Christian is to live life enabled by GRACE, **NOT** by LEGALISM. When PAUL said, ‘*ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW,*’ he was not exaggerating.