



Pastor's Page

In chapters 5-8 of his Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul deals with the business of living the Christian life. It's as if he is writing an operator's manual for us—but the problem is, when was the last time you picked up and read your car or computer operator's manual? I thought so. Have you picked up and read Paul's version of a Christian operator's manual?

In the first half of Romans chapter 6, Paul makes the point that "newness of life" (right living) is a natural consequence that flows from a person's right-standing before God. We are no longer "enslaved to sin", but are "alive to God in Christ Jesus", such that through the power of the indwelling Spirit of Christ we begin to "walk in newness of life."

When Paul was explaining the teachings of Jesus, he stressed the fact that righteousness—holiness—with all its accrued blessings, is freely ours in Christ. His righteousness and his faithfulness is ours as a gift of divine grace through faith, and this is apart from obedience to the law. There is nothing that we can add to what Christ has done for us.

From experience in society it is not unreasonable to think that we might somehow earn brownie-points for being good, and so there were many believers in the New Testament church who opposed Paul's teaching. For them, the purpose of the law was to hold back sin and enable people to progress toward holiness and somehow earn divine blessings. In Romans 6:1, Paul actually records one of their counter arguments against him: If the Christian life is all about grace then obviously law-obedience is unnecessary. They claimed what we should actually do is continue to be disobedient so that the grace of God's forgiveness can abound. In a way it sounds like a good argument, but as Paul points out it is very difficult for a believer to live in sin when they are dead to sin.

In that same section of Romans chapter 6, Paul tells us no less than three times that believers have "died to sin", (verses 2, 7, & 11), or as he puts it later, are "set free from sin". Earlier in the book of Romans Paul has explained that we are free from the guilt of sin, but here he explains that we are free from the power of sin in our lives as well.

Of course, we must remember that free from the *power* of sin does not mean that we are free *from* sin. As the great theologian John Calvin affirmed, "We acknowledge that regeneration is so effected in us that, until we slough off this mortal body, there remains always in us much imperfection and infirmity, so that we always remain poor and wretched sinners in the presence of God" (The Geneva Confession of 1536).

As Paul would say, we who are united to Christ in his resurrection are alive to God through his empowering grace. "Christ in us" becomes our battle cry, just as it is life to our earthly bodies. When we open our eyes to Christ's indwelling love, it shapes our lives and weakens sin's power.

So my friends, don't let sin rule your lives; but rather, give yourself to God as one who is raised from death to life.

Yours in Christ,

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