

## An Exposition of the Greek Text of Romans VI

PAUL wrote chapter six of Romans in answer to two questions: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” answering this question in verses 2–14; and “Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?” replying to this question in verses 15–23. These questions were raised, not by the apostle himself, but by his hearers in the first century who did not understand grace, and thus arrived at false conclusions concerning it.

Paul answers the first question by showing that such a thing is impossible, since God’s grace makes provision for an inward change in the believer the moment he receives the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, a change in which the power of indwelling sin is broken and the divine nature implanted. This results in the liberation of that person from the compelling power of the Adamic nature, and his acquisition of the desire and power to live a holy life. This, Paul argues, makes impossible a life of sin.

He replies to the second question by asserting that a Christian does not take advantage of divine grace, since he has ceased to be a bondsman of Satan and has become a bondsman of the Lord Jesus, having a nature whereby he hates sin and shuns the Devil, and loves to serve the Lord Jesus.

In answering these objections to his teaching of pure grace without any admixture of law as a means of controlling the saint and causing him to live a life pleasing to God, Paul deals with the mechanical impossibility of going on in sin. We are occupied in Romans VI, not with the question of *what kind* of a life the child of God should live, a subject which he presents in chapters 12–16, but with the question of *how* or *by what method* the believer is to live that life. The reason why so many children of God who are earnestly trying to live a Christian life which would glorify the Lord Jesus, fail in that endeavor, is because they do not understand the truth of this chapter. Their experience is like that of Paul, who before he came into the truth of Romans VI said, “I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I do not understand: for what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that do I” (7:15). Paul uses three words to designate the three spiritual classes of men, the natural man (I Cor. 2:14), namely, the unsaved person; the carnal man (I Cor. 3:1), the Christian who is not living the victorious life; and the spiritual man (I Cor. 2:15), the Christian who understands God’s prescribed method for the saint which results in his living a holy life. Our exposition of the Greek text of this wonderful portion of God’s Word should, under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, solve the problem of some dear child of God who is not getting consistent victory over sin. It therefore should prove an intensely practical study.

The first question found its occasion in Paul’s statement in 5:20, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The words “much more abound” are from a word referring to a superabundance of something with an additional supply added to this superabundance. Paul’s teaching here is that no matter how much sin there might be committed, there are always unlimited resources of grace in the great heart of God by which to extend mercy to the sinning individual. The reaction of the heart that does not understand grace is seen in the question asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue habitually to live in the sphere and grip of the sinful nature, in order that this grace may be increasingly lavished in superabundant outgoings?” The verb used, refers to habitual action. The word “sin” refers here not to acts of sin, but to the sinful nature,

since Paul is dealing here with the mechanics of the Christian life, not the outward actions of the individual.

His first answer to this question is “God forbid.” The literal Greek is, “May it not become.” He dismisses the very thought as unthinkable. One could translate, “far be the thought.”

His second answer is, “How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” The word “how,” leaves no room for the possibility of the continued habit of sin in the Christian life, for the Greek word means “how is it possible?” “We” is from a word that not only refers to the individuals concerned, but also to the quality or character of these individuals. The fuller translation is “such as we.” “Are dead” is from a past tense verb, which tense also speaks of finality, and we translate “died once for all.” “Sin” is in a construction in Greek which causes us to translate “with reference to sin.” The verb “live” is from a word which speaks here of the life principle, not the actions of the person. The translation thus far reads, “What shall we say then? Shall we habitually abide under the control of sin in order that this grace previously mentioned may be increasingly lavished in superabundant outgoings? Far be the thought. Such as we who died once for all with reference to sin, how is it possible for us to exist in the grip of its motivating energy any longer?”

But let us look at the word “died.” Death is not extinction of being, but a separation. In the case of physical death, it is the separation of the individual from his physical body. In the case of spiritual death, it is the separation of the person from the life of God. Here the word refers to the separation of the believer from the power of the sinful nature. Before salvation, he was compelled to obey its behests. Since salvation, its power over him is broken. We must be careful to note that Paul is not teaching what is called “the eradication of the sinful nature,” namely, that that nature is taken away completely. The Bible teaches that this nature remains in the believer until he dies (Rom. 7:18, 21; I John 1:8), but the believer is not in it in the sense of being in its grip. Thus Paul answers the question as to whether a Christian should continue in habitual sin, by stating its impossibility, and on the ground that that nature which before salvation made him sin habitually, has had its power broken. It is a mechanical impossibility. We paraphrase the question: “Such as we who have been separated once for all from the power of the sinful nature, how is it possible for us to continue to exist in the grip of its motivating energy any longer?” Thus, when God justifies the believer, he also breaks the power of sin in the life. Grace does here what law never did. It not only forbids sin but also defeats its power in the person’s life.

Then Paul proceeds to answer the question from another angle. In his first answer he showed the impossibility of habitual sin in a Christian’s life by reason of the fact that the power of the sinful nature was broken when the believer was saved. Now he shows its impossibility in that the believer is made a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). The life of God, surging through his being, causes him to hate sin and love holiness, and produces in him both the desire and the power to do God’s will.

Paul speaks of this in Philippians 2:11, 12, where he says “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, carry to its ultimate goal your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the One who is constantly supplying you the impulse, giving you both the power to resolve and the strength to perform His good pleasure.”

This truth Paul presents in verses 3 and 4 where we are taught that all believers were baptized into Jesus Christ and thus shared His death, in order that they also might share His resurrection life.

We look first at the phrase “baptized into Jesus Christ.” It is set in a context of supernaturalism. In verse 2 we have the supernatural act of God breaking the power of indwelling sin for the believer. In verse 4 we have the supernatural act of God imparting divine life to the believer. Verse 3 reaches back to the action spoken of in verse 2 and forward to that spoken of in verse 4. We were baptized into Jesus Christ so that we might be baptized into His death on the Cross, in order that through our identification with Him in that death, we might die with reference to sin, that is, have the power of indwelling sin broken. We were also baptized into His death so that we might share His burial, and thus His resurrection, and in that way have His divine life imparted to us. Thus this baptism accomplished two things. It resulted in the power of sin being broken and the divine nature being implanted, which operation took place at the moment the believer placed his faith in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, since the results were operative in the believer the moment he was saved, the baptism into Jesus Christ in which that person shared His death, burial, and resurrection, must have taken place, potentially, previous to his being saved, and actually, at the moment of salvation. Our Lord died, was buried, and arose almost 2000 years ago. In the mind and reckoning of God, each believer was in Christ then, in order that he might when he believed, participate in the benefits which His death, burial, and resurrection brought forth. Therefore, the baptism referred to here is not water baptism, but the baptism by means of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). Let it be said in passing, that the writer believes in the ordinance of water baptism as obligatory upon all believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is their testimony to the fact of their salvation, and he finds plenty of scriptural warrant for it elsewhere. No ceremony of water baptism ever introduced a believing sinner into vital union with Jesus Christ. Furthermore, many true children of God never have fulfilled their obligation of testifying to their salvation in water baptism. And who is prepared to deny that they have been united to Christ? Paul is concerned here with the supernatural working of God resulting in an inner change in the spiritual mechanics of the believer’s life, and as a clear thinker who stays within the compass of his subject, Paul does not introduce the symbol where the supernatural alone is in view.

But how are we to understand the word “baptism”? This word is the spelling in English letter equivalents of the word *baptisma* (βαπτισμα), the verb of the same stem being *baptizo* (βαπτίζο). The Greek word has two distinct uses, a mechanical one, and a ritualistic one, to be determined by the context in which it is found. Since the word “baptism” is only the spelling of the Greek word *baptisma* (βαπτισμα), and not a word native to the English language, it has no meaning of its own and therefore must derive its meaning from the Greek word of which it is the spelling. Furthermore, it must be interpreted and translated in its two meanings just as the Greek word is. We will present usages of the Greek word as found in classical Greek, and in the Koine Greek of secular documents, the Septuagint, and the New Testament.

For the following instances of the purely mechanical usage of *baptizo* (βαπτίζο) in classical Greek, I am indebted to my honored and beloved teacher of Greek at Northwestern University, Professor John A. Scott, Ph.D., LL.D., classical Greek scholar

who in the field of classical criticism has refuted the theory of Frederick August Wolf, who claimed that the Iliad and Odyssey were not written by the poet Homer but are a composite of the poetic expression of the Greek people, publishing the results of his findings in his book, *The Unity of Homer*, and who in the field of New Testament criticism has written the book, *We Would Know Jesus*, in which he demonstrates the historical accuracy of the four Gospels as confirmed by contemporary records, thereby rendering valuable assistance to the cause of evangelical Christianity in view of the destructive tendencies of that which passes for present day criticism of the New Testament: “The first use of *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) is in the ninth book of the Odyssey, where the hissing of the burning eye of the Cyclops is compared to the sound of water where a smith dips, *baptizes*, a piece of iron, tempering it. In the Battle of the Frogs and Mice it is said that a mouse thrust a frog with a reed, and the frog leaped over the water, baptizing it with its blood. Euripides uses the word of a ship which goes down in the water and does not come back to the surface. Lucian dreams that he has seen a huge bird shot with a mighty arrow, and as it flies high in the air it baptizes the clouds with its blood. An ancient scholium to the Fifth Book of the Iliad makes a wounded soldier baptize the earth with his blood. It is the ordinary word for staining or dyeing, and words derived from it meaning “dyer” and “dyes” are common. The most common meaning is to plunge into a liquid, but it is so common in other meanings that in each case the meaning must be determined by the context.” In Xenophon’s *Anabasis* we have an instance where the word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) has both a mechanical and a ceremonial meaning. Before going to war, the Greek soldiers placed (*baptizo* (βαπτίζω)) the points of their swords, and the barbarians the points of their spears in a bowl of blood.

In secular documents of the Koine period, Moulton and Milligan report the following usages: “a *submerged* boat, ceremonial *ablutions*, a person *overwhelmed* in calamities, a person *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) upon the head.”

We have in Leviticus 4:6 the words, “And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord,” where “dip” is from *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) and “sprinkle” is from *rantizo* (ραντίζω) (Septuagint), the first referring to the action of introducing the finger into the blood, and the second, speaking of the ritualism of sprinkling that blood.

In the New Testament we find the word translated “washings” in Hebrews 9:10, speaking of the ablutions of Judaism; referring to ceremonial washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and of tables (Mark 7:4); and to the ceremony of water baptism (Matt. 3:7, 16; John 4:1; Acts 16:33; I Corinthians 1:14; I Peter 3:21). A purely mechanical usage is seen in Luke 16:24 where the rich man asks that Lazarus dip (baptize) his finger in water and cool his tongue.

The usage of the word as seen in the above examples, resolves itself into the following definition of the word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) in its mechanical meaning: “the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition.” And that is its usage in Romans VI. It refers to the act of God introducing a believing sinner into vital union with Jesus Christ, in order that that believer might have the power of his sinful nature broken and the divine nature implanted through his

identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, thus altering the condition and relationship of that sinner with regard to his previous state and environment, bringing him into a new environment, the kingdom of God. That is what Paul refers to when he says, “hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). We have this same mechanical usage of *baptizo* (βαπτίζω) in I Corinthians 12:13, “For by means of the instrumentality of one Spirit were we all baptized into one body,” where Paul speaks of the act of the Holy Spirit placing or introducing the believing sinner into the body of Christ, as in our Roman text he refers to the same act, but speaks of the Head of the Body rather than the Body itself. The word “Spirit” is in the instrumental case, which case designates the means by which the action in the verb is accomplished. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent who Himself baptizes (introduces) the believer into vital union with the Lord Jesus. It should be clear from this that the baptism by means of the Spirit is not for power. Its sole purpose is to unite the believing sinner with his Saviour. Power for holy living and for service comes from the fullness of the Spirit. The baptism is an act which takes place at the moment the sinner believes, never to be repeated. The fullness is a moment by moment continuous state as the believer trusts the Lord Jesus for that fullness (John 7:37, 38).

We are now ready for the further examination of verses 3 and 4. The words “so many of us as” in the Greek, do not imply that some were not baptized, but designate all collectively. This is checked up by I Corinthians 12:13 in the statement “were we all baptized.” This again points to the fact that Paul is speaking here of the baptism by the Spirit, for all believers are in Christ, and yet all have not fulfilled their obligation of conforming to the ordinance of water baptism. The words “know ye not,” in the original are literally “or are ye ignorant?”, the Greek showing that the persons addressed were not ignorant of these facts, but conversant with them. The word “into” is from a Greek word which denotes an “inward union.” The translation is as follows: “Or, are ye ignorant of the fact that all we who were baptized (introduced) into an inward union with Christ Jesus, into (a participation in) His death were baptized (introduced)?”

We now consider verse 4. The words “newness of life” do not refer to the new kind of life we are to live before the world. They do not refer to our Christian testimony as seen in our thoughts, words, and deeds. They speak of the new life implanted which is a motivating energy, providing both the desire and the power to live a Christian life. We are to walk, that is, conduct ourselves in the power of the new life which is imparted to us in regeneration. Whereas, before salvation, we walked in the power of the Adamic nature which gave us the desire and power to sin, we now are to walk in the energy of the new life God has imparted, which gives us both the desire and power to live a holy life, The translation is as follows: “Therefore, we were buried in company with Him through the intermediate instrumentality of this baptism (introduction) into His death, in order that even as Christ was raised out from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus also we by means of a new life (imparted) should conduct ourselves,” or “thus also we from the power of a new life (imparted) should derive the motivating energy for our walk (thoughts words, and deeds).”

To sum up verses 2–4: It is not possible for a saint to continue living a life of habitual sin, because the Holy Spirit has baptized (introduced) him into vital union with Christ Jesus, this introduction having taken place potentially and in the mind and economy of God at the time our Lord died on the Cross, was buried in the tomb, and was raised from

the dead, in order that the actual benefits of the believer's identification with Christ in these might be his at the moment he puts his faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, these benefits being the breaking of the power of indwelling sin and the impartation of the divine nature.

In verses 5–10 we have Paul's "in other words." He, master teacher that he is, seeks to make clearer his teaching in verses 2–4 by elaborating upon it in verses 5–10, and by presenting the same truth in a different way. We will look at verse 5. The word "if" in the Greek is not the conditional particle of an unfulfilled condition. It is a fulfilled condition here, its meaning being, "in view of the fact." "Planted" is from a compound word, one part of the word meaning, "to grow," and the other part implying close fellowship or participation on the part of two persons in a common action or state. The whole word speaks of an intimate and progressive union. The words "have been" are from a verb which speaks of entrance into a new state of existence. The verb is in the perfect tense, which tense in Greek speaks of an action completed in past time having present results. The word "likeness" speaks of a likeness which amounts well nigh to an identity. The translation so far is as follows: "For in view of the fact that we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death with the present result that we are identified with Him in His death." All believers from Adam's time to the time of the Great White Throne judgment were baptized (introduced into vital union) into the Lord Jesus when He died on the Cross. This vital union with Him resulted in our participating in His death, He dying a vicarious death in our behalf, we dying with reference to our sinful nature. In the case of our Lord, the result was that, having died once for all with reference to our sins, He will never die again (6:9). In the case of the believer, the result was that, having died once for all with reference to the sinful nature, he is forever delivered from its compelling power.

The words "we shall be," are "a future of logical result." They do not point to the future physical resurrection of the saint. Paul speaks of that in Romans 8:11. Here he is speaking of the spiritual resurrection of the believer which occurred potentially when Christ was raised out from among the dead, and actually, at the moment he believed. Thus, Paul argues that in view of the fact that believers have become united with Christ in the likeness of His death, the logical consequence of that identification with Christ in His death is identification with Him in His resurrection. The translation of verse 5 follows: "For, in view of the fact that we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, with the present result that we are identified with Him in His death, certainly we also (as a necessary consequence) shall be in the likeness of His resurrection." As our Lord came out of the tomb in the same body in which He died, but with that body energized by a new life principle, (His precious blood having been poured out at Calvary, Levit. 17:11), and thus walked in newness of life, that is, walked in the energy of a new life, so the believer, identified with Him in His resurrection, leaves his old dead self in the tomb of his former life, and now walks in the energy of a new life principle surging through his being, the divine life imparted through his identification with Christ in His resurrection.

Paul now takes up this two-fold result in verses 6–10, the breaking of the power of the Adamic nature in verses 6–7, and the impartation of the divine nature in verses 8–10. We will look first at verses 6–7. The word "man" is not translated from the Greek word for "man" which refers to an individual male member of the human race, but from the

word for “man” that is racial in its implications. It refers to the human race as contrasted to animals. Here it refers to the individual man or woman, boy or girl, seen as a human being, a personality.

There are two words in Greek which mean “old.” One refers to that which is old in the sense of having existed from the beginning, the emphasis being upon the length of time it has been in existence. The other refers to that which is antiquated, Out of date, belonging to a world of has-been, worn out. The second is used here. The expression, “our old man,” refers therefore to the old unrenewed self, that person which we were before salvation did its work in our being, a human being dominated entirely by the Adamic nature, having a heart darkened by sin, totally depraved in its entire being. It is the person when looked at from this side of salvation that is antiquated, out of date, belonging to a world of has-been.

The words “is crucified” are more properly, “was crucified,” coming from a past-tense verb in the Greek. When we died with Christ, that old unregenerate totally depraved person we were before salvation died. The words “of sin” are in a construction in the Greek called “the genitive of possession.” The body here is the physical body possessed by the sinful nature in the sense that the latter dominates or controls it. The word “destroyed” is from a Greek word which means “to render idle or inoperative, to put an end to, to make inefficient.” The words “serve sin” are from the verb whose stem is the same as the noun translated “bondslave.” It refers to habitual slavery to something. Our translation reads: “Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that the body (then) dominated by sin might be rendered inoperative (in that respect), and this for the purpose that we should no longer be habitually rendering a slave’s obedience to sin.” Thus God has put an end to the domination of the sinful nature over the believer, and has rendered the physical body idle, inoperative, in that respect.

Verse 7 is an illustration of the truth taught in verse 6. The words “is dead,” are from a past tense in the Greek which speaks of the fact of a past action, the tense also speaking of finality, and should be translated “died once for all.” The word “freed” is from the Greek word which is usually translated “righteous” in its noun form, and “justify” in its verb. As a man who has died physically is freed from bondage to sin in which he was held, so a person who has died to sin in a spiritual sense, is released from its bondage. Thus the human body is released from bondage to sin in that the crucifixion of the old self results in the body being liberated from the power of sin. The word “freed” is in the perfect tense, which tense is so often used when the writer is speaking of God’s work of salvation in the believer, since this tense speaks of a past completed action having present, and in a context where salvation is spoken of, fixed and permanent results. Verse 7 therefore reads “For he who died once for all is in a permanent state of freedom from sin.”

Having dealt with the breaking of the power of the Adamic nature in verses 6–7, Paul now turns to the matter of the impartation of the divine nature in verses 8–10. The first is the negative aspect of sanctification, where provision is made for the defeat of the sinful nature. The second is the positive side of sanctification, where provision is made for the introduction of a new life, Christ Jesus Himself (Col. 3:4), into the being and experience of the believer.

We look first at verse 8. The “if” refers to a fulfilled condition. There is no doubt about the fact that each believer died with Christ. “Be dead” is again from a past tense

verb speaking of an accomplished fact. “Believe” is not to be taken here in the sense of “trust,” which sense it has in contexts where the believer’s faith in the Lord Jesus is referred to, but in the sense of a dogmatic belief. It is a belief that rests upon the logic of “since such and such a thing is true, it naturally follows that such and such will be the case.” The future “shall” is not “a future of time,” but of “logical result.” The words “live with Him” do not refer to any fellowship in the sense of companionship which the believer may have with the Lord Jesus either in this life or in eternity. The preposition “with” is followed by the pronoun “Him” in the instrumental case. This case in Greek speaks of the means whereby the action or the state represented in the verb is accomplished. The word “live” here speaks of, not the experience of the believer, but the motivating energy which determines his conduct. That motivating energy is a Person, the Lord Jesus. He is the Life by means of which we live our new lives. He is our new existence. This is exactly what Paul means when he says, “For to me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

The Christian life is not primarily a system of ethics to be obeyed, for which obedience there is supplied both the desire and power. It is a Person living His life in and through another person, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). That is what Paul means when he prays that Christ might be formed in the saints (Gal. 4:19). The Greek word “form” has no idea of physical shape, or of moulding some solid substance, or of creating or producing something. It refers to the action of an individual giving outward expression of his true inward nature. Paul prays that the lives of the saints may be so yielded to the Lord Jesus, that He may be able to give outward expression of His own glorious Person in the thoughts, words, and deeds of the believer in whose heart He lives. Thus, the believer is not only alive in salvation by virtue of the fact that Christ is his life, but he lives his Christian life in dependence upon Him, or by means of Him. That is what Paul means by the words, “shall live with Him.” The translation reads, “Now, since we died once for all with Christ, we believe that we shall also live by means of Him.” Thus, as we died in company with Christ on the Cross, so also we shall live in company with Him, participating in the same life which He possesses. We offer the following paraphrase, “Now, since we died once for all with Christ, we believe that as a necessary consequence, we shall also derive our spiritual existence and the motivating impulse for our Christian experience from Him.”

Verses 9 and 10 are presented as the basis for the above assertion, namely, that since we died with Christ we shall also live with Him; “Knowing that Christ having been raised out from among the dead, dies no more; death no longer has dominion over Him, for the death which He died, He died with reference to sin once for all: but the life He now lives, He lives with reference to God.” Thus, the believer died with reference to his sinful nature once for all, resulting in his deliverance from its power. He now lives with respect to the life of God. His new life is Christ.

In verses 1–10, Paul has replied to the question “What shall we say then? Shall we continue habitually to live in the sphere and grip of the sinful nature, in order that this grace may be increasingly lavished in super-abundant out-goings?,” by asserting that the mechanical set-up in the inner being of the believer is different from that in the unbeliever. In the latter, the sinful nature has supreme and absolute control. Nor does the unbeliever possess any goodness by nature which would combat the evil tendencies of the evil nature and produce goodness in his life. All one can expect from this mechanical

set-up is a life of habitual sin. But, Paul asserts, in the case of the believer, this mechanical set-up has been changed. The new set-up which God installed is one in which the power of that sinful nature is broken, and one which includes the impartation of the divine nature, which latter combats the evil tendencies of the sinful nature (Gal. 5:17), and produces in the believer's life, the Christian graces (Gal. 5:22, 23). This makes impossible a life of habitual sin.

This new spiritual machinery operates in every child of God. But the degree of efficiency with which it works is dependent upon the care which the believer bestows upon it. An automobile engine under normal conditions will operate for a long time without any special attention. But if one expects the highest degree of efficiency from it, he finds it necessary to have a mechanic check over the various parts at frequent intervals and make the adjustments and repairs that are necessary.

A like situation obtains in the case of the mechanics of the Christian life. If the Christian desires the highest degree of efficiency from the salvation which God has given him, he must himself give special attention and care to his personal adjustment to this machinery. The Christian who is not informed as to the truth of Romans VI is in a position somewhat like the man who purchased a new automobile, but ignorant of the details of the mechanism, did not bestow the proper care upon it. Soon only three out of the six cylinders were operating. His car ran, but he was not getting the maximum of power from it. The engine stalled in traffic, became over-heated, and would not climb hills in high gear. After he had learned the details of the mechanism and had the parts properly adjusted, the engine gave him excellent service.

In the case of a Christian who does not understand Romans VI, the new spiritual mechanism which he received when he was saved, operates, but not at its highest efficiency. When he understands what Paul is teaching in verses 1–10, and puts into practice the directions relative to his adjustment to this new mechanism in verses 11–13, then he will be obtaining the highest degree of efficiency from it. And this is the explanation why some Christians are living such mediocre lives, while others are living Christlike lives. It is not that the child of God does not want to live the highest type of a Christian life. He does. If he fails, it is because he does not know how. Listen to Paul again, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18). This personal adjustment of the believer to his inner spiritual mechanism, Paul presents in verses 11–13.

The first responsibility of the believer is to reckon himself dead to sin. The word "reckon" is the translation of a Greek word meaning "to count, compute, calculate, take into account." That is, the believer is to live his Christian life upon the basis of the fact that the power of the sinful nature is broken. He is to take these facts into his reckoning as he deals with temptations that confront him or evil impulses that come from within. His attitude should be that, in view of the fact that the power of the evil nature is broken, he is under no obligation to obey its behests (Rom. 8:12). He has been emancipated from sin, and the proper procedure is to read God's emancipation proclamation to the insistent demands of the Adamic nature. The believer must also realize that whereas before salvation, he could not help it when he sinned, yet since God saved him, should he sin, it is because of his free choice, since sin's power has been broken. He is responsible for that sin. This should make him think twice before he contemplates an act of sin at the demand of the evil nature.

Then, he must also count upon the fact of his possession of the divine nature. This will keep him from depending upon himself and his own strength in his effort to live a life pleasing to the Lord Jesus, and will cause him to throw himself upon the resources of God. He will be trusting the Lord Jesus to fill him with the Holy Spirit (John 7:37, 38), with the result that the Holy Spirit will do two things for him. He will suppress the activities of the evil nature (Gal. 5:17) and He will produce in the believer a Christlike life (Gal. 5:22, 23). Paul says in Galatians 5:16, 17, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the cravings of the flesh, for the flesh has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit has a strong desire to suppress the flesh, and these are entrenched in a permanent attitude of opposition to one another, so that ye should not do the things that ye would desire to be doing;" and in Galatians 5:22, 23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

Contrast this adjustment of the intelligent Spirit-taught saint, with that of the believer who is not aware of the fact that God has broken the power of sin in his life, with the result that he is more or less under its compelling power, try as he may to live free from sin. Since he is ignorant of the fact that God has placed within him His own nature, he depends upon himself and his own strength in an effort to defeat sin in his life and live a life pleasing to God. This believer is living a defeated life because he is not in proper adjustment to the new mechanical set-up in his spiritual being. When he learns of the facts which Paul presents in verses 1–10, he has in his possession a knowledge of the scriptural method of gaining victory over sin and the living of a life pleasing to God, and, acting upon instructions which he finds in verses 11–13 he has victory all along the line. The translation of verse 11 follows: "Thus also, as for you, constantly be taking into account the fact that you are those who are dead with respect to sin, and indeed those who are living ones with reference to God in Christ Jesus." A paraphrase may make things clearer yet. "Thus also, as for you, constantly be taking into account the fact that you are those who have had the power of sin broken in your lives and those who have had the divine nature implanted."

We come to verse 12. The words "let not sin reign," are in a construction in the Greek which forbids the continuation of an action already going on. The word "reign" is in the Greek "reign as king." The tense speaks of habitual action. "That ye should obey" is literally, "with a view to habitually obeying." The word "lusts" is literally "cravings." "Thereof" does not go back to "sin" but to "body." The gender of the pronoun requires this. "Lusts thereof" refers to the cravings of the human body, which cravings come from the sinful nature. The translation reads, "Therefore, stop allowing sin to reign habitually as king in your mortal bodies, with a view to your habitually obeying the cravings of that body." God is never unreasonable in His demands upon His own. What He asks of us is always within our ability to fulfill as we appropriate the divine resources of grace. Since the power of sin is broken and the divine nature is implanted, we are well able to keep sin from reigning in our lives.

In verse 13, Paul presents other exhortations to be obeyed upon the basis of what God has done for us as recorded in verse 11. "Yield" is from a Greek word which means "to put at the service of." Together with the word "neither," it forbids the continuance of an action already going on. "Stop habitually putting your members at the service of," is the translation. Our members refer to our hands, feet, tongue, eyes, mind, for instance. The

word “instruments” is in the Greek, “weapons of warfare.” The second use of the word “yield” is in a tense different from that used in the first occurrence of the word. The first time it is used in this verse, it refers to habitual action, the second time, to an act performed once for all. The translation reads, “Neither keep on putting your members habitually at the service of sin as weapons of unrighteousness, but put yourselves once for all at the service of God as those who are living ones out from among the dead, and put your members once for all at the service of God as weapons of righteousness.”

The Christian therefore never acts alone. He either acts in the energy imparted by the evil nature, or in that imparted by the divine nature. He makes the choice. He need not choose to obey the evil nature, for its power over him is broken. The inclination of his power of choice is on the side of the divine nature. As a child of God, his choices naturally gravitate towards the latter. His responsibility is to see that he keeps his power of choice in that direction. Gradually, just as a tree bends with the prevailing winds, so the will of a child of God bends more and more habitually and even automatically towards the divine nature and the doing of the right and away from the doing of what is wrong. That is what Paul refers to when he speaks of “the good fight of faith.” It is a constant battle to keep our choices in the direction of the right and our faith in the Lord Jesus for the divine enablement by which we are able to do the right.

When we do this, we have God’s promise that then sin shall not have dominion over us: for we are not under law but under grace. There is no article before “law” in the original. We saints are not under law as an unsaved person is with the obligation to obey a commandment which gives neither the desire nor the power for obedience. We are under grace, which sweetly exhorts to a holy life, and gives both the desire and the power necessary to live that life.

We come now to the second question, “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace?” It is the reaction to Paul’s statement in 6:14, “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” But there is a difference in the way these two questions are put. In the first, the Greek text tells us that a life of habitual sin is referred to. In the second, the Greek tense indicates that occasional, infrequent, single acts of sin are spoken of. The thought in the speaker’s mind is, “Since your doctrine of superabundant grace teaches the impossibility of a life of habitual sin on the part of the Christian, will the fact that a Christian is not under the uncompromising rule of law but under the lenient sceptre of grace, allow for at least an act of sin once in awhile?” The idea that grace is lenient as over against the uncompromising rule of law, is an erroneous one. The Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart of a child of God, is infinitely more cognizant of sin in the life of the saint than any system of law ever could be. He is grieved at the slightest sin. In the first question, the desperately wicked heart offers an excuse for sinning in that a life of habitual sin gives God an opportunity to display His grace and thus glorify Himself, which is of course a perversion of the teaching of grace. In the second question, this same person seeks a loophole somewhere in God’s plan of salvation whereby he might sin once in awhile, and thinks that he has found one in the fact that the Christian is beyond the reach of the law of God which could condemn him. Therefore, he argues that he can sin with impunity, and grace will always forgive.

One can see at once from what Paul tells us in 6:1–14, that the person who asks such a question as well as the one in 6:1, is an unregenerate sinner. O child of God has no desire to go on in habitual sin nor yet to sin once in awhile. A Christian is at time guilty

of wilful sin. That is, he may yield to temptation, knowing that it is sin. But to provide for a planned life of infrequent acts of sin, is altogether foreign to the nature of the saint. Paul answers this question as he did the first one, by the words “God forbid,” “far be the thought.” Then he uses an illustration to show that it is a mechanical impossibility for a Christian to desire to sin even once in awhile. The question is “What then? shall we commit occasional acts of sin (as opposed to a life of habitual sin) because we are not under law but under grace?” The definite article does not appear before “law” in the original. Law as a method of divine dealing is referred to.

Paul’s second answer is, “Do ye not know that to whom ye keep presenting yourselves for service as bondslaves resulting in your obedience (to that person), bondslaves ye are to the one whom ye are obeying, whether it be bondslaves of sin resulting in death, or bondslaves of obedience resulting in righteousness?” The word “servants” in the A.V. does not adequately translate the full content of the Greek word which Paul used. His first century reader understood the various implications of the word and therefore understood Paul’s argument better.

In the first place, there are various Greek words which refer to a slave. One speaks of a slave captured in war. Another refers to a person born into slavery. The latter word is used here. The sinner by his first birth comes into this world with a totally depraved nature which he inherited through this first birth. This makes him a bondslave of Satan, for this fallen nature causes him to love sin. When he is born from above through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in answer to his faith in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour, he is given the divine nature which causes him to love the things of God, and thus he becomes a bondslave of Jesus Christ. Paul argues that because the believer has had his slavery transferred from one master to another, in that he has been given a nature that causes him to forsake his former master Satan and cleave to his new Master, the Lord Jesus, that it is both unreasonable and impossible for him to desire to serve his old master any more, even on infrequent occasions.

Another implication which the word had in the first century was that the slave is one bound to his master. The Christian before salvation, was bound to Satan by the shackles of sin. In his identification with Christ in His death, these shackles were stricken off, and in his participation with Christ in His resurrection, he was bound to his new Master, Christ. It is the nature of a slave to serve the master to whom he is bound, Paul argues. Thus, it is the nature of the Christian to serve Jesus Christ.

The word spoke of the slave as one whose will is swallowed up in the will of his master. Before salvation wrought its work in the believer, his will was swallowed up in the will of Satan (Eph. 2:1–3). His totally depraved nature bent his will always in that direction. But since God in salvation broke the power of that evil nature and thus released the believer’s will from the control of the evil nature, and gave the believer the divine nature which at once inclined that liberated will toward God, the Christian’s will is swallowed up in the sweet will of God. How unreasonable it is, Paul argues, to think that a Christian would want to sin even occasionally.

Again, the word referred to a slave who is devoted to the interests of his master to the extent that he disregards his own interests. Before salvation, the believer served Satan recklessly, and to the disregard of his own interests. All he received for his slavery was death. But now his slavery has been transferred. He serves Jesus Christ, his new Master, not counting the cost to himself. Do you think, Paul argues, that a bondslave who loves

his Lord and Master that much, would presume upon His grace, and desire to commit an occasional act of sin? Paul argues therefore in verse 16 that to suggest that a child of God desires to commit an occasional sin, would necessitate his becoming a slave of Satan again, which is an impossibility since that would involve a change of nature brought about by his loss of the divine nature and his acquisition of the Adamic nature again. Because the divine nature is the eternal possession of the believer, and the Adamic nature could only be his through natural generation, it is impossible, Paul answers, for a believer to become a slave of Satan again, and therefore it is not possible for him to make provision for occasional acts of sin in his life.

And so Paul says in view of all this, “But God be thanked that ye were (but are not now) by nature bondslaves of sin, but ye obeyed from your heart that type of teaching to which ye were delivered.” The definite article does not appear before “servants” in verse 17. The absence of the article qualifies. Emphasis is upon character, quality, or nature. Thus we translated, “by nature bondslaves of sin.” That is, the quality or nature of the person made him a bondsman of sin. Regarding the translation “that type of teaching to which ye were delivered,” we might say that while Paul’s teaching to which he here refers, was given the Christians and thus could be said to have been delivered to them, yet the Greek verb here is passive, and speaks of the believer being delivered to the teaching. That is, Christians are so constituted that they naturally desire to obey the Word of God. They have in salvation been handed over to its obedience. Therefore, a child of God does not make provision for occasional acts of sin, since he has ceased being a slave of Satan, and he has been so constituted inwardly by God that he renders obedience from the heart, willingly, to the Word of God. Paul adds this word of explanation to what he said in verse 17, “Having been set free from sin, ye became slaves of righteousness.”

Now, after having explained that the thought of occasional sin in the life of a child of God is not to be entertained for a moment, because the believer’s slavery has been transferred from one master, Satan, to another Master, even the Lord Jesus, and this, because the believer has had the power of the indwelling sinful nature broken and the divine nature implanted, Paul proceeds to show the attitude which the believer should be careful to maintain with reference to his change of masters. Paul apologizes for using such a human illustration as slavery to explain one’s former relationship to Satan and one’s present relationship to God. But he says that he finds it necessary to do so because of their defective spiritual insight which in turn is due to certain moral defects. The translation reads: “I am using a human term of speech because of the weakness of your flesh, for even as ye put your members as slaves at the service of uncleanness and lawlessness resulting in an abiding state of lawlessness, so now put your members once for all as slaves at the service of righteousness resulting in holiness.”

One might ask at this point, why such an exhortation is necessary if the power of the evil nature has been broken and the divine nature implanted, resulting in a transfer of affection to another Master, even the Lord Jesus? Why is it necessary for Paul to exhort believers to put themselves at the service of Christ, when they have a nature that impels them to do so? The answer is that the will of the believer, even though it is inclined in regeneration towards Christ and the doing of good, still has a certain bent at times to the doing of evil, the result of the habitual and constant inclination it had towards evil before grace did its work. The habits formed by years of sin must be overcome. That moral twist must be unbent. *The only way to do this is to form new habits of the will by keeping our*

*choices inclined towards obedience to our new Master, Christ. The divine nature is there to keep our choices in line with the Word of God as we yield to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and trust Him to work in us, but we must ever be on the alert lest those habits formed by years of choosing the wrong, lead us to render obedience to our old master, Satan. As we establish new habits of choice, gradually our renewed wills are bent more and more in the direction of the good, and it becomes increasingly easier to do the right and increasingly harder to do the wrong.*

Then Paul reminds the believer of the wasted years spent in sin, with their evil consequences. “For when ye were slaves of sin, ye were free with respect to righteousness.” That is, in our unsaved state, there was no restraint put upon sin in our lives by any righteousness we might have had, for we had none. And because there was no check upon sin that would restrain evil in our lives, sin ran rampant. The apostle reminds the believer: “Therefore what fruit were ye constantly having at that time? of which things now ye are ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” Thus another reason is presented why the believer does not want even to provide for an occasional sin in his life. He is ashamed of the years which he spent in sin, and of the corruption it bred. And so Paul concludes his argument with the words: “But now having been made free from sin and having become bondslaves of God, ye are having your fruit resulting in holiness, and the end, eternal life. For the pay which sin doles out is death, but the free gift of God is life eternal in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Thus Paul answers the second question: “What then? shall we sin occasionally because we are not under law but under grace?” by asserting that that cannot be the desire of a child of God and cannot be a fact in his life, and for the reason that he has had his slavery transferred from Satan to the Lord Jesus, this act of transference having been accomplished by the breaking of the power of the evil nature, which nature caused the person to love to serve the Devil, and by the impartation of the divine nature which impels the believer to serve the Lord Jesus.

Thus God’s grace not only justifies the believer, that is, takes away the guilt and penalty of sin and bestows a positive righteousness, even the Lord Jesus Himself in whom the believer stands perfectly righteous for time and eternity, but it sanctifies him, in that it breaks the power of sin in his life, and produces in him a life which glorifies God.

Dear Christian reader, if you have not been obtaining consistent victory over sin, will you not let this study of Romans VI point the way to the victorious life? There is victory for you when you understand and follow God’s directions with regard to the correct technique of how to gain this victory.

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<sup>1</sup>Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Treasures from the Greek New Testament: p.79-106). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.