

A Call to Sanctification

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?” Romans 6:1

In this first verse of Romans Chapter Six, the apostle Paul introduces the subject of sanctification. Previously, in Chapter Five, Paul taught that we are justified and saved by faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrificial, atoning death on the cross for our sins. Now Paul rhetorically asks, “After being saved by God’s grace, should we continue to keep sinning?”

In the very next verse (Romans 6:2) Paul emphatically answers his own question with, “Absolutely not!” This signifies that after salvation something extraordinary should occur in the life of a believer, and the Bible calls this sanctification. Sanctification is the setting apart of the believer exclusively for the will and purpose of God – to know Him intimately and to practice lawfulness instead of lawlessness. The Bible says, “But know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself (Psalm 4:3).” Sanctification can be described as coming under God’s Sovereignty, which should be the normal experience and outcome of salvation. In fact, if sanctification does not occur, neither does salvation. The Bible says, “Without sanctification no one shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).” Therefore, the salvation, sovereignty and sanctification of God should all occur in the life of a true believer and disciple of Jesus Christ. The possibility and the provision for a believer to be able to experience all three was bought and paid for by Jesus’ blood when He died on the cross. To not fulfill God’s whole purpose for His people by “continuing in sin” would be a travesty and a possible indication that person may not even be saved; for our sanctification to God is the true fruit of our salvation (Romans 6:22). The Bible says, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment (Hebrews 10:26-27).”

God is above all a Holy God. The Bible says, “I the Lord your God am holy (Leviticus 19:2).” God desires to have spiritual fellowship and communion with us. But this is impossible unless a person is positionally right with God (living justified by faith in Christ’s completed work on the cross) and is also experientially right with God (living sanctified by faith in Christ’s completed work on the cross). Therefore, God calls every Christian to live a sanctified life – a life in which we no longer practice sin but live wholly devoted to God. The Bible says, “Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy for I am Holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).’” For a Christian, there is no exception to God’s call to sanctification. The Bible says, “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a sanctified life. Therefore, He who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8).”

When God calls us to live a holy life, He does not mean merely a religious, moral life *apart from faith in Christ’s completed work on the cross*. Man is prone to thinking that his own goodness is sufficient and he does not comprehend that God hates human righteousness. The Bible says “even our best actions are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).” This kind of man-made morality is a bastard holiness that springs from the flesh and is not born of the Spirit. It is a counterfeit “Christianity” that attempts to nullify the power of Christ’s death on the

cross. The Bible calls this kind of morality “having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5).” Biblical sanctification or holiness is Christ sovereignly living in you as your Lord and King. The Bible exhorts you to “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts (1 Peter 3:15).” As we continue in our devotional study of Romans Chapter Six, we will see that we are no longer doomed to chronically practice sin. We are already dead to sin and alive to God! The Bible says, “No one who is born of God will continue to practice sin because His seed abides in him; and he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9).” This is true Christianity, which is based on our faith in Christ’s completed work on the cross and not on our natural ability to be religiously moral. As Paul said, “We are of the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (*our natural ability to practice morality*) (Philippians 3:3).”

We are saved by grace and our faith in the truth (Ephesians 2:5; Titus 2:5). However, once we are saved, our lives should produce the fruit of sanctification, which is the proof of our salvation. Jesus warned that anyone who claims to be a Christian but continues to practice lawlessness will not enter the kingdom of heaven. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23).”

But here is the dilemma faced by most sincere Christians who have a “good and honest heart (see Luke 8:15).” How do we experience deliverance from the power of sin? The answer is as simple and profound as it was for you to receive Christ by faith and be saved. How did that occur? The gospel – the word of forgiveness from sin – when preached to you became real. You may have believed, for example, the Bible verse where Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me (John 14:6),” or the Bible verse, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).” You believed this word of truth to the point of acting on it. This is the same way the word of deliverance from sin can become reality to you as a born again believer. The Bible says, “Reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11).” If you believe this word of truth to the extent that you act on it, you will enter into deliverance from practicing sin, and “the truth will set you free (John 8:32).” Until you make this truth of the cross your own, you will continually be overcome by compromising sins. It is just a matter of believing what God says. If you believe, you will be saved. If you believe, you will be free from practicing sin. It all hinges on your decision to believe or not believe. It is your choice. In our next devotional study, we will look at how we can experience the normal Christian life – a life free from the entanglement of sin so that we might serve God with a pure heart.

Tomorrow: Romans 6:2

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