

A Study in Romans

Study Six

Romans 6:5-7:6

Day One

6:5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-

7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

v. 5 – It is not often that I like the King James translation, but for this verse it is a must. The King James reads: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” This “planted together” would represent one plant being rooted in another plant, deriving its sustenance and life from that plant. The best example I can give is the Spanish moss that grows on (and hangs down from) trees in the southern part of the United States. The moss is a distinct species, but it only grows as part of a tall tree; it cannot exist alone. It derives its life from the life of another.

We are planted in Christ’s death and resurrection. It’s all about Him, in Him and for Him. I cannot even affect my own spiritual death; I can only partake of my death through His death. Then my life after that is also in Him. I have a life, like the Spanish moss, but I would cease to exist spiritually if I was cut off from His life.

There are several other passages I think of here. Jesus said:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples” (John 15:1-8).

Our fruit can only be produced with and through resurrection power, not self-power. I cannot decide to bear fruit; I must bear it in and through Him.

Two other passages come to mind:

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:9-12).

We are walking in resurrection life, the same life that Christ had when He was raised from the dead. My being “born again” is no less miraculous!

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).

Since I walk in resurrection power, I must then set my mind on resurrection things. I have also partaken in Christ’s ascension and my home and headquarters is now nothing less than heaven itself. That is where my commander-in-chief lives

vs. 6-8 – I have been freed from sin. The power of sin is broken in my life and in yours. But again you may ask, “Then why do I still sin?” But the issue is that you are now free to choose to serve God. Previously, you were not even free to do that. Now I have the means to be set free, although the reality of walking that out can be difficult.

I used the example in an earlier study that there are still “pockets of resistance” in my being, even though the war is over. It is my job now to bring those pockets under control in the power of the Spirit. And we don’t realize how strong sin is in our lives, how far we’ve fallen from God until we start the journey toward God.

Day Two

9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

Vs. 9-11 – Christ died once and for all; He will never die again. The same is true for you and me. The second death has no power over us, for we will live with and in Christ forever. But that has implications for this life. We must “count” or consider ourselves dead to sin.

But again you ask, “But I still sin!” But you are not to even set your mind on this issue. You must not be sin- or self-conscious. You must be God-conscious! If you sin, ask God’s forgiveness and move on. Don’t dwell on it. The fact that you know you have sinned means that the power of sin is broken in you life. You are now living for God and sin is a foreign land for you. You may visit there, but you are an alien, a foreigner. You know where you live and that land is resurrection land.

v. 12 – Sin may have an influence in your life, but you are rooting that influence out in the power of the Spirit. It is a battle, for sin wants to rule. But Christ wants to and will rule in the power of His Spirit. Don’t let sin reign. Wage war with it; make it uncomfortable to be present in your life. Apply the power of the Spirit. Don’t make peace with sin and Christ will give you the victory.

Day Three

13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

v. 13 – This is a command: Do not surrender your body to sin! So if it is a command, then it must be under our control to do so. Yet without the Spirit’s presence in my life, I would not be able to even consider doing this. There are times when I have had to pray like this: “Lord, I don’t like that person. Lord, I can’t like that person. But you can. So right now I ask you to do what I can’t—I ask you to allow your love to flow through me.”

Or at another time I have prayed: “Lord, I’m worried. I know I shouldn’t, but I do. And I can’t “not” worry. So I am asking that your peace and faith flow through me right now.” To my way of thinking, this is offering my body as an instrument of righteousness. Do you need to follow the same pattern in some area of your life?

v. 14 – Sin shall not be my master. That seems like a far-fetched statement. Yet the very fact that I am conscious of my sin says that sin no longer has the hold over me that it once did. Does that make sense? The very fact that I am concerned about sin means that the passing pleasure of sin no longer holds the attraction that it once had.

v. 15 – We do not sin so that grace can come into our lives. That would like getting sick so we can take more medication. Health is better than sickness, wellness is better than medication and righteousness is better than the grace that follows sin.

v. 16 – It seems to me that it is my choice as to whom I will serve, but then the one that I serve will exert power and influence over my life. If I choose sin, then sin will dominate me and I will be its slave. If I choose obedience, then the power of the Spirit will dominate me and I will serve Him. The choice is yours. Have you chosen wisely?

It seems that I am destined to be a “slave.” It is just a matter of who will be my master. Someone who chooses not to be a slave of Christ is not free; they are simply a slave to the power of sin. I know that slavery can be a “charged” word, but it applies to the issue of sin and righteousness. I want to be a slave of obedience. Do you?

Day Four

17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

v. 17 – Yes, let us give thanks to God! Today should be a day of thanksgiving. Read the words of the prophet Isaiah:

In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy one of Israel among you" (Isaiah 12:1-6).

Can you share your testimony or a testimony with someone today? Remember, the goal is not to be self- or sin-conscious, but God-conscious. Keep God's benefits uppermost in your mind today:

Praise the LORD, O my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits--
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,

5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's (Psalm 103:1-5).

And notice the unusual phrase “the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.” Literally this means that you and I were poured into the mould of the apostolic teaching on Christ. We take the shape and form of that to which we were introduced. Yet the Romans wholeheartedly gave themselves to this pouring and we should as well. We don't have to serve the Lord and obey Him, we get to serve and obey Him. We bear the resemblance of God by choice, but it is His power that produces this distinguishing mark. Yes, the exhortation is correct: Thanks be to God!

v. 18 – Paul stated the facts: we are free from sin but slaves to another power, that being obedience and righteousness.

v. 19 – Paul was a great teacher, even when he wrote. He was always looking for practical examples that would help his audience grasp what he was saying. Too often we teachers have made the things of God complex. This makes many people believe that the things of God are beyond comprehension.

Unfortunately, slavery must have been something that everyone could relate to in Paul's times. Yet Paul used it as an metaphor for spiritual things. Keep in mind that the church in Rome was probably only 15 or 20 years old at this time. They did not have the spiritual heritage that we so take for granted today. And keep in mind just how enslaved the Gentile world was to sin. We only need to go back to the first chapter of Romans to be reminded of the depths of their slavery to perversity.

v. 20 – Paul frequently repeated himself to hammer the point home. I had a seminary professor once who spent the first 30 minutes of each class reviewing. It got a bit monotonous at times, but at the end of the term, you had a great idea of what was really important to him about the subject matter. I get the same sense from reading Paul. You could disagree with, but you could not ignore, his main points.

It is interesting to think that when we were slaves to sin, we were “free” from righteousness. You cannot expect righteous behavior from someone who has not surrendered to Christ. It may happen, but you cannot expect it. Either a person is a slave to sin or God; those are the only two choices.

Day Five

21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

v. 21 – I have a friend who has a ministry to young people and prison inmates. He talks to young people about the dangers of drug abuse from firsthand experience. Basically he tells his audience that drugs do give some pleasure and relief from pain and rejection. But he adds that drugs also take something and what they take is far worse than what they give. My friend tops the story off by relating how he actually took someone’s life while on drugs. Needless to say, he always has a rapt audience when he speaks. He also received feedback because he admits that drugs do give you something that at the time seems worth the risk.

What my friend says is consistent with what the writer of Hebrews said: “By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. 25 He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time (Hebrews 11:24-26).

There is often a pleasurable aspect of sin; to deny that is to deny reality. But when we condemn sin, we must tell the rest of the story and that is that the pleasure is short-lived.

v. 22 – These are the options available to people: sin and death or obedience and eternal life. That is what is at stake when we reach out to the lost. Some see God as a tyrant and refuse to surrender their lives so they can be free from His commands. But freedom from God is slavery to sin and the consequences are eternal separation from Him. That is why we must pay any price to reach others and make evangelism the highest priority of any church activity.

v. 23 – Sin has a payback and it is death. Salvation has no payback, for it is a gift. The gift of Jesus is the only thing in life that is too good to be true, but is true. Every other offer that sounds too good usually isn’t real. But the offer of Jesus is real. We have two distinct offers to make to people and we must spell out the “deal” as clearly as possible. Sin and die, or repent and receive the free gift of eternal life. It is amazing to me that anyone would reject that deal, but they do. But we must continue to extend the offer as long as we can.

Day Six

7:1 Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?

2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.

3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

v. 1 – Now we begin to understand the reason why we must die and be buried in Christ—so that the Law has no claim to us! I have often said that Christianity is the best deal on earth. God sets the rules and then is willing to come live in us to help us follow the rules.

No other “religion” offers man that kind of help. All the others give man the rules but offer no assistance. But our God is a great and merciful God.

Vs. 2&3 – As I have stated before, Paul was a great teacher. He was able to use so many examples from real life to help us understand what he was teaching. Of course, Jesus was the Master Teacher who did the same thing. How about you? When you teach—and I do hope there is some setting where you do some teaching—do you make it accessible to the people, or do you shroud the truth in hard-to-understand terms and concepts. Theology (the study of God) is of no use if the hearer cannot understand what you are saying! That is not God’s way!

Over the years, I have worked at becoming a better teacher, but I still have a long way to go. Any time I encountered a question or concept that I could not answer, I took the time after the fact to figure out what answer I should have given. Inevitably I am asked that same question again and next time, I was ready. It is amazing how God never wastes any experience in my life and in yours. Everything happens for a reason, so be prepared to make the best use of every question, problem, dilemma or riddle.

Speaking of riddles, I don’t think you can be an effective teacher if you don’t have an intimate, working relationship with the book of Proverbs. Proverbs is a treasure chest of wisdom, and wisdom is God’s knowledge applied to everyday situations. I have a book called *A Daily Dose of Proverbs*, which you can order by going to <http://www.purposequest.com/store.htm>. I would highly recommend this book as a resource to help you apply truth to daily life.

Day Seven

4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

5 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

vs. 4-6 – The only way I can bear fruit for God is to work in the power that God provides. My own efforts are useless. Yet I still must choose to work in that power. My role is to decide; God’s role is to provide—the ability to do what is pleasing to Him. I have died to my former life and all the demands of the Law. I now live to and for God. We are to bear good fruit in:

1. Prayer

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name (John 15:16-17).

2. Good deeds

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:9-10).

3. Holiness

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

Are you bearing fruit in these areas? If not, what can you, in the power of the Spirit, to improve? Can you think of any other areas where we are to bear fruit? What are they? How are you doing in those areas?

We once bore fruit that led to death, but now we have been transferred to another kingdom and the expectation is fruit that will bear life. I trust that today you will bear some good fruit for God. But don't worry about finding it; God is there to help you bear it. Just cooperated and obey.

As I am finishing this week's study, I ran across a passage in Thomas Merton's book, *New Seeds of Contemplation*. I think his words shed more light on what it means to be alive in Christ and dead to sin:

To live "in Christ" is to live in a mystery equal to that of the Incarnation and similar to it. For as Christ unites in His one Person the two natures of God and of man, so too in making us His friends He dwells in us, uniting us intimately to Himself. Dwelling in us He becomes as it were our superior self, for He has united and identified our inmost self with Himself. From the moment that we have responded by faith and charity to His love for us, a supernatural union of our souls with His indwelling Divine Person gives us a participation in His divine sonship and nature. A "new being" is brought into existence. I become a "new man" and this new man, spiritually and mystically one identity, is at once Christ and myself. The language of the New Testament and the teaching of the Church explain, to the mind of the believer, that this spiritual union of my being with

Christ in one “new man” is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, the Spirit of Christ. . . The union of the Christian with Christ is not just a similarity of inclination and feeling, a mutual consent of minds and wills. It has a more radical, more mysterious and supernatural quality; it is a mystical union in which Christ Himself becomes the source and principle of divine life in me. Christ Himself, to use a metaphor based on Scripture, “breathes” in my divinely in giving me His Spirit.

Exterior things come and go, but why should they disturb me? Why should joy excite me or sorrow cast me down, achievement delight me or failure depress me, life attract or death repel me if I live only in the Life that is within me by God’s gift?

Why should I worry about losing a bodily life that I must inevitably lose anyway, as long as I possess a spiritual life and identity that cannot be lost against my desire? Why should I fear to cease to be what I am not when I have already become something of what I am? Why should I go to great labor to possess satisfactions that cannot last an hour, and which bring misery after them, when I already own God in His eternity of joy? (pages 159-160).