

VICTORY OVER SIN – Romans 6:1-4 (Part-one of a sixteen-part study)

There is one critical passage in the New Testament which provides us with the key for how and why the Christian can experience victory over sin. It is Romans chapter six. In its context, Paul has just completed the most significant dissertation on justification by faith alone, in Christ alone, to be found anywhere, in all of his epistles. Just as he transitions from despair to hope in Romans 3:19-26, by letting us know that we can be justified before God by faith in Christ, Romans 6 directs us from the exhilarating joy of the conversion experience, to the sobering reality of our need for progressive sanctification. So, he poses a series of incisive rhetorical questions, followed by the all-important answer, in Romans 6:1-2, where we read the following –

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

Paul begins to amplify upon the importance of justification through faith in these two verses, by declaring it to be a judicial transaction which results in an individual’s spiritual transformation. It not only produces a change in one’s legal status before God, but also creates the *“potential”* for a meaningful change of behavior in the one who has experienced a conversion to Christ. The initial hint of this capability is expressed in the final rhetorical at the end of v2, where the apostle confronts us with the incongruity of being dead to sin, while at the same time, still living in it. We all know from personal experience that our conversion to Christ doesn’t eliminate the possibility of committing sins. But we do need to be made aware of the opposite. And that is Paul’s point.

Victory over sin not only can, but should, be the behavioral reality in the life of every Christian. How? Through our union with Christ! Without this monumental revelation expressed here by the apostle under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, no believer would naturally possess such an understanding of the spiritual transformation which takes place within every new convert to Christ. But if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, then not only have your sins been forgiven, not only are you in possession of eternal life, but in the most profound and yet practical manner imaginable, what you are about to read in Romans 6:3-4, is also true of you.

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

My initial response to yet another Pauline rhetorical at the beginning of verse three would be: “No Paul. I do not know that I have been baptized into Christ’s death. How could I know of something so supernaturally surreal on my own? Thank you for sharing this with me.” And yet, until we do know this, experiencing genuine victory over sin will not take place in the life of the Christian. Until we do know this, any attempt at living the Christian life will end in failure or legalistic self-righteousness. Nevertheless, the *“newness of life”* that is spoken of by the apostle at the end of v4, *“potentially”* exists for every believer, as we come to the realization that putting our trust in Christ for salvation has transformed us from within. How? By means of our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection on our behalf. And it is this union with Christ, and only this union with our Savior, that makes a life of victory over sin possible.