

Feb 23, 1986

INTRODUCTION

1. Consider the progress of truth in this book:
 - a. Introduction 1:1-17b. Condemnation 1:18-3:20.
 - b. Justification 3:21-5:21. The permanence of justification is clear (5:1-21).
2. Now the question is raised: the past has been met (5:1), but what about the present? The problem faced is how to overcome sin as a power. The contrast is no longer wrath and justification, but sin and holiness.
3. Two major sections are in this chapter: 1) vv. 1-14 show that continuance in sin is impossible because of union with Christ in death and life (declaration). 2) vv. 15-21 show that acts of sin are unwarranted because a believer is "under grace" and sin inevitably leads to bondage and death (exhortation).

1. A QUESTION v. 1

The question is raised by 5:20, 21. It concerns the practice of sin as a habit (present tense). The question shows that justification does not mean "to make good," but "to declare good." God "justifies the ungodly" (3:24). Obviously, the answer is not found in a "thou shalt not" law, in gratitude to Christ Who died, in good resolutions, prayer, in watchfulness, but it is found in Christ.

2. A PROTEST v. 2

The question (v. 1) is repelled with scorn. "God forbid" is "let it not be." Then Paul shows the shameful-ness of the question by noting that justified people are dead to sin. This does not mean the death of sin as a power, but death in and with Christ in the actual fact of His death. Christ's death was the believer's also (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Pet. 2:24). What the One did, all did (5:18, 19). Render "we that are dead to sin" better "we who died to sin" (aorist). Christ died not only for sins (1 Cor. 15:3), but for sinners. Thus the question is answered by a further explication of grace. The power against continuance in sin is faith in the Cross. Christ died for what I am as well as for what I did.

3. A REMINDER vv. 3, 4

No one is to be an agnostic (transliteration of "know"). Since believers died to sin, it is unwarranted to live in it. Why? as dead men cannot sin, so union

with Christ. Who died involves absolute severance from sin and continuance in it no more. Since they do not know what death to sin means, Paul explains:

a. As baptism into Jesus v. 3

The idea "baptism" means "identification" (cf. 1 Cor. 10:2). While many would like to see this as water baptism, it will forever be true that no amount of water will put one "into Jesus." Moreover, since the death noted (v. 2) is spiritual, the baptism is also. It is not a ritual, but a real baptism, namely, that of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:12).

b. As union with Jesus vv. 3, 4

This includes His death, burial and resurrection (vv. 3, 4). Obviously, this does not relate us to Christ's work for sin which is unique, but to sin which concerns the place of sin in a believer's life. Death is the key note of the passage. The death of the believer is not detached from the death of Christ. Resurrection is also a part of the issue. True, Christ raised Himself (Jn 10:18), but here it is the glory (external omnipotence) of the Father which does it.

4. A CONSEQUENCE vv. 5, 6

a. Death-life v. 5

The first class condition and the perfect tense (have become) relate death and resurrection life. "Planted together" is the process by which a graft becomes united with the life of a tree. So the believer belongs grafted into Christ being connected on the one hand necessarily means being connected on the other.

b. No service to sin v. 6

The old man is the old self, the non-regenerate person, the Adamic nature, the flesh. This had a co-crucifixion with Christ. Why? So that the body of sin, i.e. the seat or instrument of sin, might be destroyed. This does not mean annihilation, but reduced to a state of impotence, inertness (cf. Heb. 2:14) It is robbed of its power by the counteracting principle of union with Christ.

CONCLUSION Do Christians sin? Yes. Must Christians continue to sin? No. Why? Union with Christ has taken place. This is God's dynamic for holy living. So be it.