

READING – Romans 6 (Paul’s translation)

1-14

So what does this mean? Am I saying that we should sin as much as possible, in order to see more and more grace? Of course not! Sin belongs to our old life; and you do realise we’ve died to all that, don’t you? The water of baptism represents the grave. When we’re lowered into it, we join Jesus in his death; when we rise out of it, we join him in his new life, a life made possible by God’s glorious power.

Once united with Jesus in his death, we’re guaranteed to share in the wonder of his resurrection. So our old self gets nailed to the Cross, once and for all, setting us free from sin’s prison. To die with Jesus is to be liberated from sin’s clutches.

So I say again, if we share Christ’s death, we will also share his new life. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, he can never again be subject to death; he’s beaten death at its own game, and overcome sin once and for all. And now he lives forever.

You need to think of yourself in an entirely new way; the chains of sin that were binding you have been shattered so that you can live as God designed you to live. So don’t let sin dominate your life any more; stop caving in to what it wants. Your body isn’t neutral; you can either use it for bad or for good. It’s your choice. Choose to offer yourself to God, that he might use you for good. Sin can’t order you around any more. Rather than standing beneath the accusing finger of the law, you now stand under the cleansing waterfall of God’s grace.

15-23

Am I now introducing another excuse for sin? Not at all. We still have an owner we should obey. But thank God it’s now him and not sin! Slavishly following sin can only end one way – in death. But because you’ve wholeheartedly embraced the good news, you’ve left those old chains behind, and freely volunteered your obedience to God himself.

I’m using this analogy to make it easier for you to understand. Your body’s like a tool. It can be used for good or evil. Your hand can form a fist, steal, hurt people. This becomes a way of life, and things go from bad to worse. But the same hand can help others, give generously, soothe. Practice this new way of life, and you’ll find you want more and more to live God’s way, putting as much distance between yourself and sin as you can. When you look back to that old life, don’t you just cringe? You can see how much damage it did. And what did you get out of it? Oh, sin pays alright, but it pays nothing but death. God, on the other hand, offers the free gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

notes follow overleaf ...

CHRISTLIKENESS (our 4th key)

In Romans 6, St Paul presents us with the most radical interpretation of the call to Christlikeness – death

Then Jesus said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." (Luke 9:23,24)

In death,

we give up any ownership

- time
- possessions ('what did he leave?' 'Oh, everything ...')
- money ('there are no pockets in a shroud')
- body
- mind

we leave everything behind

- ambition
- worry
- desire

we lose any and all entitlements or rights

- to have things my way
- to be treated like this rather than like that
- to retaliate
- to control
- to enjoy comfort
- to receive attention and recognition
- to perfection from others
- to selective obedience
- to live according to emotions
- to reward

In fact, the only thing a corpse retains are its wounds (John 20:27). And these, through the power of Jesus, become the places of victory and breakthrough.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

- 1 List all the things you leave behind when you die
- 2 What are the implications of Romans 6 and its insistence that, theologically speaking, you are dead?
- 3 In what ways are you clinging to the old life?
- 4 What signs are there in your life of a dying to self and the new life which Jesus promised?
- 5 If we're already dead, how come the things of this old life still have such a hold on us? What can we do to loosen these ties?