

# Baptism and a New Reality for Everyday Living

Thomas Robinson, *Gospel of God's Grace for All of Us* 16, April 19, 2015

## Romans 6:1-19 (ESV adapted)

6:<sup>1</sup> What shall we say then? Are we to **remain in sin's realm** that **grace** may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can **we who died to sin** still live in it?

<sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Messiah Jesus** were **baptized into his death**? <sup>4</sup> We therefore were **buried with him** through **baptism into death**, in order that, just as the **Messiah was raised from the dead** through the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life**.

<sup>5</sup> **For if we have been planted with him in a death like his**, we shall certainly be in a **resurrection like his**, <sup>6</sup> since we know that **our old humanity was crucified with him** in order that the body belonging to sin might be rendered powerless, so that we would **no longer be enslaved to sin**. <sup>7</sup> For one who has died has been declared free from all charges of sin.

<sup>8</sup> **Now if we have died with the Messiah, we believe that we will also live with him**, <sup>9</sup> since we know that the **Messiah, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him**. <sup>10</sup> For the death he died **he died to sin**, once for all, but the **life he lives he lives to God**. <sup>11</sup> So you also must understand yourselves to be **dead to sin and alive to God in Messiah Jesus**.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, **do not let sin reign** in your **body** subject to death, to make you **obey its desires**. <sup>13</sup> Do not present the parts of yourself to sin as **instruments of injustice**, but present yourselves to God as **people brought from death to life**, and the parts of yourself to God as **instruments for faithful righteousness**. <sup>14</sup> For **sin will not be your master**, for you are not under law but under grace.

<sup>15</sup> What then? **Are we to sin** because we are not under **law** but under **grace**? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, **you are slaves of the one whom you obey**, either of **sin**, which leads to **death**, or of **obedience**, which leads to **being in the right**?

<sup>17</sup> But grace to God, that you who were once **slaves of sin** have become **obedient from the heart** to the pattern of teaching to which you were **handed over**, <sup>18</sup> and, having been **set free from sin**, have become slaves of God's faithful righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am **using a human illustration**, because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you once presented the parts of yourself as **slaves to impurity** and to **injustice** leading to more injustice, so now present the parts of yourself as **slaves to faithful righteousness** leading to **sanctification**.

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## Galatians 3:26-29

<sup>26</sup> In Messiah Jesus you are all children of God, through faith. <sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into the Messiah have put on Messiah. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Messiah Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you are part of Messiah, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with the Messiah. <sup>13</sup> For in/by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

## From What God Does, to What We Do

Paul has announced the Good News of Jesus in marketplaces and synagogues many times.

He knows that people often find it hard to grasp the impact of it for their lives. Or they resist its meaning. Thus the questions (6:1,15). OK, sounds like God's done a good job.

It's a level I'm not used to dealing with. Why don't I just continue as is and let God do it?

In church history, the reformation so emphasized faith over against the works practices of medieval Catholicism, that sometimes any sort of human freedom/action was seen as dangerous. All was predestined. In reaction, some said the Gospel is only human reform.

Paul keeps both God's actions and ours clear, important, and in tension. He has focused on God's action in the biblical narrative climaxing in Jesus. But he knows the transforming power of that Gospel comes in changing lives, creating new communities, new practice. The Gospel in Jesus shows the world is different from how human powers construct it. Life that is not self-deluded should be based on reality – the all-inclusive reality of God.

## Knowing, Connecting, Living

Paul's argument draws out the implications of the reality about us and the world revealed in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection – the event announced in the Good News. It's both simple and complex, deep, world-changing. Bridging God and human, past and future. It is a historical fact that happened, but with meaning that must be trusted, believed, made part of a new understanding of self, life, meaning, God. It is both knowledge and faith.

Because of its distinct character, we are linked to the event in a way that goes beyond ordinary knowledge of events. It is an event that draws us in. We are connected to it, participate in it. Baptism is the marker of that. We learn about Jesus, come to trust him and what he did. But we are also plunged into him, share his life, share life with others. Baptism is the distinct practice Jesus gave to mark disciples sharing his divine life (Mt 28:19).

Baptism begins a new knowledge of experience that connects all sides of the Gospel (past, present, future, divine, human) that sets us within that reality to learn its power and life. Paul insists that we think about what we know, draw out its meaning, and live from that. Placing Jesus' death and resurrection (our baptism) at the center of things changes the way the whole world looks, who we are, what we can be and do, where we are going.

## The Imperative and the Opening of New Freedom

Paul knows the Gospel can't live as simply an idea. It must and has become action, changed life. Thus Paul move from the meaning of the Gospel to the command of the Gospel (from indicative to imperative). '*Do not let sin reign...*' We are not simply affected by the Gospel, we participate actively, creatively in its work. It does not take away our human freedom but broadens it to include possibilities of life that we could never before have.

The imperative means that all is not fixed (predestined). We live out daily choices, create the future with God. But now by God's Spirit, what Jesus did in defeating sin and death can really be lived out in our ordinary lives. But a command can be rejected. I can choose to reject or ignore the '*pattern of teaching*' and give myself over to old destructive ways.

Paul uses the well-known reality of slavery/debt slavery to point to how we make destructive choices that then entrap and enslave us. The only real debt we owe is to God who wants our freedom, real goodness, participation in his life. Service to God gives power for real freedom that opens up life in God's grace, life that never ends. If you know it, just do it.