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ZWTF

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Martin Zender Zapping You Whenever Thoughts Flow

ROMANS Part 51

Chapter 6:1-7



Death of the Old Humanity

What, then, shall we declare? That we may be persisting in sin that grace should be increasing? 2 May it not be coming to that! We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it? 3 Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death? 4 We, then, were entombed together with Him through baptism into death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life. 5 For if we have become planted together in the likeness of His death, nevertheless we shall be of the resurrection also, 6 knowing this, that our old humanity was crucified together with Him, that the body of Sin may be nullified, for us by no means to be still slaving for Sin, 7 for one who dies has been justified from Sin.

Paul begins this chapter (to him it wasn't a chapter; he wrote a long continuous letter) answering a logical question that anyone might have posed on the heels of his remarkable second-to-last statement at the end of the "previous chapter," in 5:21, which we repeat here:

Yet law came in by the way, that the offense should be increasing. Yet where sin increases, grace superexceeds."

These are both remarkable statements, but the most remarkable of the two is, "Where sin increases, grace superexceeds." This was a new thing from Paul's pen—from any pen. It would be like someone claiming today that Earth's rotation had reversed itself overnight and now the sun would be rising in the West. *And then it does.* Sin was never treated this way under the law of Moses. Under that rigid code, where sin increased, the weight of the rocks superexceeded. Where sin increased, your Excedrin headache spilled out onto the ground.

Here is where the logical but somewhat ridiculous person would ask: "Since grace superexceeds where sin increases, then why not just sin more so that we can get more grace?" This is Romans 6:1, paraphrased. I say it's a logical question because it at least acknowledges the truth of Paul's previous statement. This is more than can be said for the questions of the Romans-readers of today. Very few people today believe what Paul says in 5:21. They read it, rub their eyes, shake their heads, then go back in their minds to the law of Moses. "No further questions, your Honor." It does not even compute. The question of 6:1 is never asked in churches, because no one in the church ever hears that grace out-paces *all* sin. The fact that I'm constantly asked the Romans 6:1 question proves that I'm teaching Paul accurately. If I wasn't teaching Paul,

I'd never be asked this question. Pastors and teachers of Christianity: If you're not fielding this question, you're not teaching Paul. You're teaching law and *calling* it Paul.

I attended Catholic church for 18 years, and according to the priests and the nuns there in charge of my religious education, sin only increased the number of prayers I had to say and the amount of sugar I had to give up for Lent. More sin increased my guilt before God. Protestant churches are the same. They all barter in guilt. They thrive on guilt. They are experts at increasing your guilt. They need your guilt because without guilt, you would not need them anymore.

I say that the question (Romans 6:1) is somewhat ridiculous because every sin sown reaps some sort of earthly trouble. "If you go slap that big guy in the mouth, God will not change his opinion of you." That may be true, but what about the opinion of the big guy I'm about to slap?

DON'T CANCEL YOUR MAIL

The big mistake many people make here is that they think that Romans 6:1-2 cancels out Romans 5:20. They imagine that, since Paul says not to test the principle, the principle would somehow fail on application, or that the principle is bogus. This is like saying that a "No Swimming" sign in front of a lake makes the lake disappear. I will set the record straight: Romans 5:21 means what it says. You cannot out-sin grace. Nothing you can do can screw up God's favor of you. In fact, in the face of sin grace only increases. Simple principle, right? Yes—unless you've been bombed as a youth with a religious education. To most Christians, Romans 5:20 may as well be the equivalent of $e=mc^2$. They stare at it and drool incoherently. Whenever I teach on this verse, the incoherent droolers work up their most incredulous, whiny voices and say (the italics are theirs), "Oh, so *you're* saying I can just *go out* and commit *murder* and rape little *girls*, and I'm *still* saved and grace *still* covers me and God just *looks the other way*, and *away* I go to heaven."

SELF-CONDEMNED QUERY

This question/challenge proves its poser to be a disbeliever of Romans 5:20—and just about everything else in Romans. This is how revolutionary Romans is. It is so far removed from the thinking of the law and of your average religiously educated person that these people may as well be reading Sanskrit. It proves that Romans is the most unknown book in all of Scripture. Great men of God write reams of commentary upon this



“They can still somehow come out of the book of Romans preaching a life-and-death battle against sin.”

book while personally managing to believe barely a word of it. They were all formally educated. They can still somehow come out of the book of Romans rejecting the truth of the salvation of all and the sovereignty of God. They can come out still preaching a life-and-death battle against sin. Wonder of wonders: they can still come out believing in eternal torment. Few, if any, come out grasping grace. They, themselves, stare at the revolution until a puddle of drool forms at their feet. They say the word “grace,” but its meaning escapes them.

I actually like being asked the murder/rape question. It sets me up for my standard/killer answer. Let me set this up again and show you how I handle it. This response is not copyrighted, so you are welcome to use it whenever you get the chance. I do hope you get the chance. In order to get the chance, however, you must be sure that you are teaching accurately out of Romans. Otherwise, you will never field this question. No pastor or orthodox minister ever gets asked such a question, because no pastor or orthodox minister (who I have ever heard or heard of) teaches grace to be superior to every possible sin; there's always *something* you can do to screw up your God-life. That I get this question several times a week assures me of my correct teaching. This is why I'm so bold. So here we go:

Q: “Oh, so *you're* saying I can just *go out* and commit *murder* and rape little *girls*, and I'm *still* saved and grace *still* covers me and God just *looks the other way* and *away* I go to heaven.”

A: “Congratulations. You're finally understanding salvation by grace. It's about time.”

“LIVING IN SIN”

Verse 2: “May it not be coming to that! We, who died to sin, how shall we still be living in it?”

This verse seems at first glance to blow everything up. It seems to be saying that, for one to truly believe this message, he or she must enter a magical place of morality where sin doesn't exist. It's easy to read, “how shall we still be living in it?” and translate it in one's mind to mean, “how can we still be sinning?” But how crazy is that? None of the truth of Romans chapter 6 (or any of Romans) makes sense *unless* we're still sinning. The truths we're exploring here can exist and shine only in the face of sin. How can we die to something that doesn't exist? No one tells a sinless person: “Die to sin.” But this is what Paul is telling us. It only proves that we're still sinning. It only proves the absurdity of the thought, “But what if I still sin?” So how *do* we die to something that still exists? Ah. That's the question to be answered. Along this line, let's consider Paul's next statement in verse 3:



Verse 3: “Or are you ignorant that whoever are baptized into Christ Jesus, are baptized into His death?”

This is a radical new thought and a “crazy” departure from law that will allay any worries about living a sinless life. No one can lead a sinless life. Paul is not asking us to do the impossible. What he is asking us to do is to grasp with our intellect the completely new way God looks at us. Paul is now introducing us to what will be the subject

of chapters 6-8, which is identification with Christ in His death, His entombment, and His resurrection, and the blessed results of it. Paul is preparing to say something really “out there” in verse six, that there is an old humanity, and a new humanity; there is an old self, and a new self; there is an old creation, and a new creation. We'll be getting to that. This will be the end of religion for you. It was for Paul.

Verse 4: “We, then, were entombed together with Him through baptism into death, that, even as Christ was roused from among the dead through the glory of the Father, thus we also should be walking in newness of life.”

Can dead people sin? The better question is: Can dead people *think* about sin? Can dead people be accused of sin? Can dead people make God mad? Can God condemn a dead person? Can He send a dead person to hell? You say, “But Martin, I'm still alive.” Exactly. That's why this is so radical. While you are alive, you are to think, sin-wise, like a dead person. Let's rush to verse 5 and the first part of verse 6:

“For if we have become planted together in the likeness of His death, nevertheless we shall be of the resurrection also, knowing this, that our old humanity was crucified together with Him, that the body of Sin may be nullified ...”

THE REASON BEHIND GOD'S NEW ATTITUDE

God could not look at the old humanity and say, “This doesn't bother Me.” Sin bothers Him. Sin hangs all over the old humanity. God cannot justify the old humanity. So what does He do about it?

For Israel, He sets up a law that purports to deal with sin by reforming the sinner, but which actually makes it worse (Romans 5:20). But it does show us how righteous He is, and how impossible it is for flesh and blood to please Him through law (Romans 8:3). This is good to know. In the meantime, God hasn't yet done anything about sin except to make it worse, to temporarily cover it every year, and to make us feel even more helpless.

This does nothing about the old humanity.



“Jesus’ head hit His chest, and that was the end of the old humanity.”

In these verses from Romans chapter 6, however, we finally see what God did, permanently, about sin. We finally appreciate—through the explanation of Paul and him alone—the radical measure God took against it. He took the sins of the entire human race and placed them on the shoulders of His Son. When Jesus died, the sins of humanity went down with Him. When Jesus rose from the dead, He left the sins in the tomb. The radical part of this is: “Our old humanity was crucified together with Him.” Even more radical, I guess, would be that, while alive and failing, you’re now supposed to think of yourself this way.

Israel never heard a truth like this. It never came to them. This is new truth. To announce it, God chose the worst sinner on earth (1 Timothy 1:15). How appropriate. Instead of trying to reform the sinner (this was the purported purpose of law), the sinner, through the new announcement, is put to death. Saul was, in a sense, put to death. It’s not like Saul of Tarsus was reformed. No. The Pharisee was metaphorically killed, entombed, and given a new name making him an apostle and slave of Christ. This is why God changed Paul’s name. He did it to accord with the new truth. The new truth is not the reform of the sinner, but the death of the sinner. The sinner died with Christ, and rose with Him.

To God then, the old humanity is dead and the new humanity lives.

Now you see how God has dealt with sin. He considers it gone. He saw all the sins going away into the tomb with His Son. To Him, the old humanity with all its failures was tied to the back of Christ. When Christ expired, so did the old humanity. Jesus’ head hit His chest, and that was the end of the old humanity. God’s mind was settled then. God breathed a sigh of relief. The troublesome thing was gone, and He was still righteous. In three days, He would raise His Son. The hard part was over. He was still righteous because He dealt with sin. It’s not like He ignored it. No sane person could ever accuse Him of ignoring it. How could He be accused of that when His Son suffered so much on the cross against sin? Six hours on the cross He suffered, not to mention the pain and humiliation endured beforehand: the scourge, the thorns, the mocking. Each stroke of the scourge contributed to take away sin. Each slap contributed to take away sin. Each prick of the thorny crown killed the old humanity a little bit more. When He died, Jesus Christ had destroyed the old humanity in its entirety. He said: “It is finished.” When Jesus Christ said that, God’s mind concerning sin was completely eased. I can almost see Him slumping backward in his throne with relief. (I speak as a man.) The old humanity was over. God had dealt with it, without cutting corners. No more temporary “passing over of the penalties” (Romans 3:25). Jesus Christ had tasted death for all. Now only the good stuff was ahead: raise Christ in three days; give Him greater honors than He ever had before; never fume about sin anymore; smile at everyone even though they still sin. God can see all things as new now. He can then call Paul and, through his pen, implore us folks of the 21st century to adopt the same attitude that He now has.

BEYOND REFORMATION

2 Corinthians 5:14-17—

For the love of Christ is constraining us, judging this, that, if One died for the sake of all, consequently all died. And He died for the sake of all that those who are living should by no means still be living to themselves, but to the One dying and being roused for their sakes. So that we, from now on, are acquainted with no one according to flesh. Yet even if we have known Christ according to flesh, nevertheless now we know Him so no longer. So that, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: the primitive passed by. Lo! there has come new!



This is not reformation. Reformation is for Israel. When a criminal is given the death sentence, has he been reformed? No. He's been given up on. He is past reform; just kill the guy. That's it exactly. This is us. This is the new humanity. The old humanity is beyond reform: just kill it. This is precisely what happened. This is such good news. It means that trying doesn't matter anymore. Hello? You died. Let's see you make a corpse behave itself. Ah, but you're still living. "But Martin, I'm still alive." Yes, I know. But you are now to think in a new way: "*knowing this*, that our old humanity was crucified together with Him." You are to know this. It is something you must tell yourself. You have to walk by faith here, not perception (2 Corinthians 5:7). Now you must live knowing this, that your old humanity was crucified with Christ and the life you now live is no longer spent in an endless succession of losing battles to rid yourself of sin, but instead in worshipping the One dying and being roused for your sake, Who announces your justification. This is what "walking in newness of life" (verse 4) means. "But Martin, I still sin." That's not the point. I know you still sin. Paul knows it too. This is why at the end of verse six of Romans 6 he writes: "That the body of sin may be nullified." Here's verse six again in its entirety again:

"... knowing this, that our old humanity was crucified together with Him, that the body of Sin may be nullified ..."

It says right here that the body of sin is not yet nullified. You stopping sinning is future. In other words, your body still sins. Obviously. In the midst of your sin, however, you're supposed to think of yourself as a new creation. This is one of those times where God calls what is not as though it were (Romans 4:18). It's true to God, so we are to reckon it as true to us. The future abolition of sin is just as sure as the future resurrection of the body (Romans 6:5). Our bodies have yet to be resurrected, and we have yet to be relieved of the practices of sin. (This should go without saying.) This is why we walk by faith, not by perception. God has done something stupendous and bold that allows us to live in anticipatory joy of what has in His mind been accomplished: the new creation. In other words, you are to "be reckoning yourselves to be dead, indeed, to Sin, yet living to God in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 6:11).

You are now to be just as relieved as God at the solving of this problem. This is how you now walk in newness of life.



THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

If this new creation were an accomplished fact concerning your flesh, Paul would not say, “be reckoning.” To reckon is to think. If you *are* it, you wouldn’t have to think it for it to be so. If Paul says to think it, then the thought must exist in opposition to what you see. In verse 13, Paul tells you that you are to “present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead.” The key words here are “as if.” These two little words tell us that our resurrection from among the dead is not true yet in actual experience. It’s signed and sealed, but not yet delivered. We’re to concentrate on the signing and sealing, though: God did it. Christ did it. They are both cel-

ebrating the new humanity. Now they want us to celebrate it even while we’re slogging through life failing at every turn. God looks at you and sees a new humanity, so now you are to think and walk in accord with that new truth.

Who are you going to believe, God or the mirror?

Now you see what Paul means when he says, “We who died to sin, how shall we be living in it?” In the sin department, we are dead people. What you see in the mirror is the old humanity. Paul says it has been crucified. As I have already said, dead people don’t worry about sin. Dead people can’t offend God. Dead people can’t be reformed. That’s how you’re to think. In the sin department, you’re dead. Reckoning yourself according to sin is past. This is why Paul says, “how shall we be living in it?” It’s like you looking at your dead uncle in the casket and talking to him. It’s like asking him if he wants a cup of tea. Paul would look over your shoulder and say, “What are you doing? This man is dead. Why are you still offering him tea? Why are you still living in a world where your uncle is alive?”

The only way to deal with sin is to ignore it. This and this alone will improve your walk. It’s a paradox. It’s perhaps the greatest paradox in Scripture. Therefore, Paul’s “living in sin” (as in “how shall we be living in it?”) has nothing to do with how much or how little you sin. To Paul, “living in sin” means that you are still obsessed with your flesh, your failures, and how you’re performing for God. You’re still stupidly talking to a corpse. You’re still offering a dead man tea. Romans 6:6-7—

“... for us by no means to be still slaving for Sin, for one who dies has been justified from Sin.”

Paul is still flustered by our inability to get this. This is why he keeps writing about the same thing with different words and why I am doing the same. I can hear Paul saying, “Please, people. The old humanity has been crucified. Why are you still living in it? Expecting things from it? Censoring it? Slaving for it? Dreading it? Crying over it? God killed and entombed it. You’re dead in Christ; you have been crucified with Christ; now God has declared you to be righteous. This is justification. Why, then, are you living in the past?”

WICKED WITCH OF THE FLESH

It’s hard not to think the old way, that letting go of your self-expectations and morality programs will only cause you to sin more. Should you finally “get crazy” one

day and give up the struggle, you would soon realize that grace, not law, curbs the flesh. Grace at least gives flesh half a chance; law gives it no chance. Law is a proven failure. By design, law always makes things worse. You may take advantage of grace at first, but let it play out. Don't panic. At least you're starting now on the right foot.

Whether you attempt to curb the flesh or indulge it,



“Sin panics: ‘Who dares to ignore me? Who dares not to feel guilty about me?’ All Sin’s power now resides in the lie.”

the attention is the same to the flesh. Flesh loves attention. To celebrities, there is no such thing as bad publicity. To the flesh, there is no such thing as bad attention. Whether one attempts to fix it or indulge it, attention empowers the flesh. Flesh loves religion as much as hedonism. To the flesh, religion *is* hedonism. Religion is hedonism dressed in a choir robe. What is religion but a backhanded form of pleasure-seeking? Instead of the deep self-pleasure of indulgence, there is the deep self-pleasure of self-reform. Religion pampers the flesh by making the flesh think it's

controlling itself. Now it can condemn and kill other sinners. This is the business of religion. It is why religious people are some of the most selfish, hateful, agitated and mean people on earth.

The opposite of all this is starving the flesh and starving sin. I don't mean by this that we embark on anti-sin programs, but that we quit worrying about the flesh and stop trying to fix it. This truly angers sin. Sin doesn't know how to act in the face of such a radical maneuver. It shocks it. This rarely happens to it. Sin rarely gets ignored. “Who in the world is doing this to me?” Sin asks. “Who dares to ignore me? Who dares not to feel guilty about me?” Sin panics. Watch what now happens: Sin starts melting like the Wicked Witch of the West. The soldiers who were guarding the witch now sing over her demise. She was all a front; a show. All of her power was in the broomstick. All of her power was in threatening. All of Sin's power now resides in the threat, the lie: “Hey. I'm still here. I can condemn you.” No, it can't. It's a lie. Stop “living in it.”

TEA-TIME IS OVER

Sin hates the truth of the new creation. It hates the truth that it has been crucified with Christ. When you starve your old humanity of the attention it craves and preach to it the new humanity, flesh will slowly die of starvation. You'll have to quit all religion in order to pull this off; religion will discourage every new revelation concerning sin; religion will tell you, “ignoring the flesh will never work”; religion will prop up the old humanity—like propping up a corpse in the pew—and say, “Serve it tea!” Truly, this is slavery to sin.

You won't be completely perfect in this life, but you'll now be building on the right foundation of trusting God's declarations. We starve the flesh, not by trying to fix it, but by ignoring it and focusing on the grace of God in Christ. This is the revolution of Paul. It is the revolution of grace. It is the unknown revolution of Romans.

Join the revolution by reckoning your old humanity to have been crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). Then, present yourselves to God as if alive from among the dead (Romans 6:13). All the while, forget sin. You can't forget something that no longer exists, so stop looking for sin not to exist. When sin stops existing, none of this truth can apply. We're still looking at this truth, therefore it's not God's time for sin to disappear, but for this truth to change us. It's the time for faith in the *face* of sin.

Let's dance. —MZ