

“Men Make New” *John Stott*

Excerpts from ‘Men Made New’ ~ Romans 6:

Unfolded in Romans 6 is our union with Christ; a state which leads to holiness. All Christians have been united to Christ in His death and resurrection. Further, if this is true, if we have died with Christ and risen with Christ, it is inconceivable that we should go living in sin.

In verses 1-14. It is our *union with Christ* which is unfolded; in verses 15-23 it our *slavery to God*. This is our position as Christians. It is not the literal impossibility of sin but the moral incongruity of it, which the apostle is emphasizing. We who have died to sin—how *could* we live in sin a moment longer? How and in what sense have we “died to sin?” What does it mean to have died to sin? How and when did it happen? A Christian is not merely a justified believer. He is someone who has entered into a vital personal union with Jesus Christ. Indeed, properly understood justification itself is not merely a legal pronouncement affecting our status without touching our life. There is no possibility of justification through Christ without union with Christ; the former depends on the latter.

Baptism into Christ is a baptism into his death and resurrection. Our baptism was a sort of funeral. A funeral yes, and a resurrection from the grave as well. Christ’s death was a death to sin and his resurrection was a resurrection to God. We must therefore find an explanation of this death to sin that is true both of Christ and of Christians. We are told that “he died to sin” and that “we died to sin.” So whatever this death to sin is, it has to be true of the Lord Jesus and of us.

So this death to sin, whatever it is, is common to every Christian. But are all baptized believers dead to sin in the sense of being inwardly unresponsive to it? Do they find that they have become insensible to it so that it lies quiescent within them and that they can consider it so? No. On the contrary, scripture, historical biographies and our own experience, combine to deny these ideas. Far from being dead in the sense of being quiescent, our fallen and corrupt nature is alive and kicking. So much so that we are exhorted to not obey its lusts; and so much so that we are given the Holy Spirit for the precise purpose of subduing and controlling it. And what would be the purpose of that if it were already dead?

Christ did not die to sin (in the sense of becoming unresponsive to it) because he never was thus alive to it that he needed to die to it. We have not died to sin in this sense either, because we are still alive to it. Indeed we are told to mortify it, and how can you kill what is already dead?

What is Paul's real meaning of "death to sin?" Death is thought of and spoken of in Scripture not so much in physical terms as in moral and legal terms; not as a state of lying motionless like a corpse but as the grim but just penalty for sin. We have died to sin in the sense that in Christ we have borne its penalty. Consequently our old life has finished; a new life has begun.

Of course Christ's sin-bearing sacrifice was altogether unique, and we cannot share in its offering. But we can and so share in its benefits by being in Christ; not only that Christ died for us but that we also died in Christ.

Verse 6:

It speaks of our death in three parts:

1. Our **old self** was crucified with him
2. In order that the **body of sin** might be **brought to nothing**
3. So that that we would no longer be **enslaved to sin**

Old self ~ This is not our old nature but denotes our old unregenerate life; the man we once were. Not my lower self, but my former self. So what was crucified with Christ was not a part of me called my "Old Nature," but the whole of me as I was before I was converted. My old self is my pre-conversion life, my unregenerate self.

Brought to nothing means not to become extinct, but to be defeated; not to be annihilated, but to be deprived of power. God's will is that the dominion sin should be broken.

Putting all three together, we were crucified with Christ in order that our sinful self might be deprived of its power in order that we should no longer be enslaved to sin.

Verse 7 ~ He who has died has been justified from his sin (not freed as some translations have it) The Greek word rightly translated "justified" occurs 15 times in Romans and 25 times in the New Testament and it always means "justified." Since we have died to sin and live to God, we must "consider" it so (verse 11).

If Christ's deal was a death to sin (which it was) and if His resurrection was a resurrection to God (which it was) and if we have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection (which we have) then we ourselves have died to sin and risen to God; and we must consider it so.

Considering is not making believe. We are simply called to consider this—not to pretend, but to realize it as a fact. Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, of me before my conversions. Volume two is the story of the new man, the new self, of me after I was made a new creation in Christ. Volume one of my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die.

I received my deserts in my substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun.

We have to keep saying to ourselves, Volume one has closed. I am now living in volume two. It is inconceivable that I should reopen volume one. It is not impossible, but it is inconceivable. Paul does not state the impossibility of sin in the Christian, but the utter incongruity of it.

So the secret of holy living is in the mind. It is in knowing (verse 6) that our old self was crucified with Christ. It is in knowing (verse 3) that baptism into Christ is baptism into His death and resurrection. It is in "considering" (verse 11), intellectually realizing that in Christ we have died to sin and we live to God. We are to know these things, to meditate on them, to realize that they are true.

Verses 12-14 ~ Do not let sin be your king. Do not yield (or do not go on yielding) your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. That is, do not let sin rule in you; and do not let sin use you (your members) in furthering its unrighteous purposes. Do not let sin be your king or your lord. Instead, yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life. Do not let sin be your king; let God be your king to rule over you. Do not let sin be your lord to use you in its service; let God be your lord to use you in his service.

Because we are alive from the dead, sin shall not be our lord. Sin no longer has any business to be our lord. Neither sin nor the law has any more claims upon us. We have been rescued from their tyranny. We have changed sides. Our status is new. Through self-surrender, through yielding ourselves, we are slaves to God and therefore committed to obedience. If we are enslaved to God (which we are) then we are committed to obedience. It is inconceivable that we should willfully persist in sin, presuming upon the grace of God. The very thought is intolerable. Yes I do know these things, and by the grace of God I shall live accordingly.

Excerpts from "Men Made New" ~ Romans 7:1-8:4

By way of introduction it may help us to find our way through this difficult chapter if we think of the three possible attitudes to the law.

- 1. The legalist** is a man in bondage to the law. He imagines that his relationship to God depends on his obedience to it
- 2. The antinomian** (sometimes called the libertine) goes to the other extreme. He rejects the law altogether and even blames it for most of man's moral and spiritual problems
- 3. The Law-abiding believer** preserves the balance. He recognizes the weakness of the law (Romans 8:3) yet delights in the law as an expression of the will of God. And seeks by the power of the indwelling Spirit to obey it.

The legalist fears the law and is in bondage to it; the antinomian hates the law and repudiates it; the law-abiding believer loves the law and obeys it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Christian bondage is not to the law or to the letter of the law, but to Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. The cause of our sin and death is not God's law, but our flesh, our sinful nature. The Holy Spirit enables me to do what I cannot do by myself, even as a Christian. And that is Paul's message for the law-abiding believer.

To the legalist, who is in bondage to the law, Paul emphasizes the death of Christ as the means by which we have been delivered from that bondage. To the antinomian who blames the law, he emphasizes the flesh as being the prime cause of the Law's failure, and of our consequent sin and death. To the law-abiding believer, who loves the law and longs to obey it, he emphasizes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as the God-appointed means by which alone the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us.

Emancipation from the law does not mean that we are now free to do as we please; far from it. Freedom from the law spells not license but another kind of bondage. Verse 6 of chapter 7, we are slaves. We are indeed free from the law—but free to serve, not to sin. Why do we serve? Not because the law is our master and we have to, but because Christ is our husband and we want to. Not because of obedience to the law leads to salvation, but because salvation leads to obedience to the law. The law says, Do this and live. The gospel says, you live, so do this. The motive has changed.

We are still slaves. The Christian life is still bondage of a kind; but the Master we serve is Christ, not the law. And the power by which we serve is the Spirit, not the letter. The Christian life is serving the risen Christ in the power of His indwelling Spirit. Paul is telling us in chapter 7 that the law does not create sin. The law reveals sin, provokes sin and condemns sin. These three are the devastating results of sin. We cannot blame the law for this, but blame sin.

Paul thus exonerates the law. The villain is *sin*; indwelling sin, the flesh, which is aroused by the law. It is thus indwelling sin, our flesh or fallen nature, which explains the inability of the law (obedience) to save us. The law cannot save us, for the simple reason that we cannot keep it; and we cannot keep it because of indwelling sin.

We see how the Christian believer first delights in the law in his mind, and then fulfills its righteousness by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

As for the last part of Romans 7 about the conflict, we believe the speaker is a mature, believing Christian; a believer who has been given a clear and a proper view both of his own sinful flesh and of God's holy law. Anyone who acknowledges the spiritually of God's law and his own natural carnality is a Christian of some maturity.

An honest and humble acknowledgement of the hopeless evil of our flesh, even after the new birth, is the first step to holiness. To speak quite plainly, some of us are not leading holy lives for the simple reason that we have too high an opinion of ourselves. No man ever cries aloud for deliverance who has not seen his own wretchedness. In other words, the only way to arrive at faith in the power of the Holy Spirit is along the road of self-despair.

This then is what I know (because the Holy Spirit has shown it to me) about myself: that the flesh still dwells in me, that no good dwells in it, and that, even as a Christian, if I am left to myself it brings me into captivity. This is the conflict of a Christian man, who knows the will of God, loves it, wants it, yearns to do it, but who finds that still by *himself* he cannot do it. All along what Paul is seeking to do is expose the no-goodness of our flesh to convince us that only the Holy Spirit can deliver us.

There are two separate laws that are in opposition to each other. Verse 23 names them as the *law of the mind* and *the law of sin*. The law of the mind is that I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self. The law of sin is a power in my members that Paul describes as being at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to itself. This is the philosophy of Christian experience.

Our experience is that the good we want we do not, while the evil we hate we do; the philosophy behind it is two laws in conflict. This conflict is a real bitter, unremitting battle in every Christian's experience: His mind simply delighting in God's law and longing to do it, but his flesh hostile to it and refusing to submit to it (as in 8:7).

In this conflict we utter two apparently contradictory cries, wretched man that I am and Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The first is a cry of despair, the second a cry of triumph.

The double servitude to which the Christian is liable; with the mind—with all my heart and soul, we might say—I serve the law of God, but with my flesh—until, and unless, it is subdued by the Spirit—I serve the law of sin. But no man can serve two masters simultaneously, and whether I serve the law of God or the law of sin depends on whether my mind or my flesh is in control. So the question now is. How can the mind gain ascendancy over the flesh? That brings us to the beginning of chapter 8 and to the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The conflict at the end of Romans 7 is between my mind and my flesh. The conflict at the beginning of Romans 8 is between the Holy Spirit and the flesh, the Holy Spirit coming to my rescue, allying Himself with my mind, the renewed mind He has given me, and subduing my flesh.

Through the death of His incarnate Son God justifies us; through the power of His indwelling Spirit He sanctifies us. Chapter 8 verse 4, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

This verse is of very great importance for our understanding of the Christian doctrine of holiness. It teaches us at least three major truths:

1. That holiness is the purpose of Christ's incarnation and death
2. That holiness consists in the righteousness, the just requirement of the law
3. That holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit

For the requirement of the law is fulfilled in us *only* when we walk according to the Spirit. We have seen that nearly the whole of Romans 7 is devoted to the theme that we cannot keep the law because of the flesh. Therefore the only way to fulfill the law is to walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit, by His power and under His control.

We are set free from the law as a way of acceptance, but obliged to keep it as a way of holiness. It is as a ground of justification that the law no longer binds us (for our acceptance we are not under law but under grace). But as a standard of conduct the law is still binding, and we seek to fulfill it as we walk according to the Spirit.

Excerpts from "Men Made New" ~ Romans 8:5-39:

1. The ministry of the Holy Spirit (verses 5-27)

The Christian life, the life of a justified believer is seen as being essentially life in the Spirit, that is to say, a life which is animated, sustained, directed and enriches by the Holy Spirit. The ministry of the Spirit in this chapter is portrayed in four areas:

- A. In relationship to our flesh or fallen nature
- B. In relationship to our sonship
- C. In our relationship to our final inheritance
- D. In relationship to our prayers

He subdues our flesh, he witnesses to our sonship, he guarantees our inheritance and he helps our weakness in prayer.

A. The spirit subdues our flesh (5-13)

The justification of the law can be fulfilled in us believers only if we walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit; following his promptings and yielding to his control. Our walk depends on our mind, our conduct on our outlook. It is our thoughts, ultimately, which govern our behavior. To set the mind upon the flesh or the Spirit means to occupy ourselves with the things of the flesh or Spirit. It is a question of our preoccupations, the ambitions which compel us and the

interests which engross us; how we spend our time, money and energy; what we give ourselves up to. That is what we set our minds on.

To set the mind on the flesh, Paul says, is death. Not it will be, but it is –now –death, because it leads to sin and so to separation from God, which is death. But to set the mind on the Spirit is life...now—because it leads to holiness and so to continuing fellowship with God. Here then are two categories of people (those who are in the flesh, and those who are in the Spirit) who have two mentalities or outlooks. What we are governs how we think; how we think governs how we behave; and how we behave governs our relation to God—death or life.

This idea of being “Debtors,” (verse 12) to the Holy Spirit is an interesting and compelling one. It indicates that we have an obligation to holiness. It is an obligation to be what we are, to live up to our Christian status and privilege, and to do nothing which contradicts it. In particular, if we *live* in the Spirit, we have an obligation to *walk* according to the Spirit.

More specifically, if we are to be honorable and to discharge our debt, we shall be involved in two processes; mortification and aspiration.

1. Mortification. Putting to death by the power of the Spirit the deeds of the body means a ruthless rejection of all practices we know to be wrong; a daily repentance, turning from all known sins of habit, practice, association or thought; a plucking out of the eye, a cutting off of the hand or foot, if temptation comes to us through what we see or do or where we go. The only attitude to adopt toward the flesh is to kill it.

2. Aspiration. Setting our mind on the things of the Spirit is a whole-hearted giving of ourselves in thought and energy and ambition. It will include diligent use of the “means of grace.” Such as prayer, Bible reading, fellowship, worship, the Lord’s supper, and so on. All this is involved in setting our mind upon the things of the Spirit.

There is no true life without the death called mortification, and there is no true life without the discipline of aspiration.

B. The Spirit witnesses to our sonship (verses 14-17)

C. The Spirit guarantees our inheritance (verses 18-25)

D. The Spirit helps our weakness in prayer (verses 26,27)

These then are the four gracious activities of the Holy Spirit. He subdues our flesh, He witnesses to our sonship, He guarantees our inheritance, and he helps our weakness in prayer.

2. The invincible purpose of God (verses 28-39)

This brings us to the conclusion and the climax.

Paul's great Spirit-directed mind now sweeps over the whole counsel of God, from eternity that is past to an eternity that is yet to come, from the divine foreknowledge and predestination to the divine love from which absolutely nothing whatsoever is able to separate us.

There are five undeniable affirmations (Verses 28-30)

Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

God foreknew and He predestined. God's electing choice formed in His mind before He willed it. His decision preceded His decree.

Five unanswerable questions:

1. If God is for us, who is against us?
2. He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?
3. Who will bring any charge against God's elect?
4. Who is to condemn?
5. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Paul reaches his climax in verses 38 & 39. He begins, I am sure...this is my fixed, unshakable conviction, he says that neither crises of death or the calamities of life, nor superhuman agencies, good or bad (angels, principalities, powers), nor time (whether present or future), nor space (whether height or depth), nor anything else in all creation will be able, however hard it may try, to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord—the love of God historically displayed in the death and resurrection of Christ; the love of God poured into our hearts by the Spirit of Christ. In that conviction of the Love of God, through all the pains and perplexities of human experience, may we too both live and die!

To begin with, we have peace with God. Next we have been united with Christ. Then also, we are freed from the dreadful tyranny of the law. At the same time, we have the Holy Spirit Himself dwelling within us.