

## 4. Imperatives of Sanctification in Romans pt1

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The ultimate and final triumph of the sinner-saint is assured by the leading of the Holy Spirit, and that is why we ought to pursue our obligation to the Holy Spirit. However, obedience or disobedience to the commands of our King in our daily walk leads to *good or bad practical consequences* for us on our journey. So, today I want to address the matter of core duties specific to sanctification that are given to us in the book of Romans. Notably, you can read many chapters in Romans without uncovering a command. A good exercise is to read from chapter 1 through to 16 marking every imperative. You will find just a few in 1-11 (even 1.16 is not an imperative); then you will find large clusters in 12-16. What does this tell us about first things first? What are the three imperatives of sanctification in Romans 6.11-13? **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** <sup>12</sup>**Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.** <sup>13</sup>**Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.** (cf. righteousness in 16, 18, and then in 19 leading to sanctification!)

### I. Consider your union with Christ

Rom 6.11: **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

One of the central ways to do battle with sin in your life is to ponder, reflect upon, *study, and absorb the things that God has done in Christ for you back at the cross*. Consider yourself dead to sin but alive to God *in Christ Jesus*. Consider that you have this death and new life by union with Christ *in His death*. Note that His death secured the death of death. On the cross, He secured your resurrection from spiritual death and your resurrection from physical death. It was accomplished. All that was obtained by our Great High Priest will be realized eventually at His appointed time. On the cross He secured your release from slavery to sin. Now, knowing Him and living before Him in the obedience of faith, you have the victory that overcomes the world. This is why "faith is the victory." Granted, in the war with sin, there are ups and downs. You have set backs when you fight unprepared. But unquestionably and irresistibly, though you lose battles along the way, *you will win the war*. Why? Because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. You will win because Christ has secured the victory for you in His own life, death and resurrection. He has regarded my helpless estate and shed His own blood for my soul!

This is something you are to know, Paul says, "Know, reckon, count it so." This is doctrinal recognition. How important right doctrine is! And this text emphasizes right doctrine about the death of Christ as our substitute. There is much in these chapters and in Scripture for us to know. We are to mark it down, and declare it so. This is faith resting in *what God has done in Christ* and *what He says is the case in our death with Christ*.

As I read it, knowing these things is the first duty of a spiritual warrior (Rom 8.13) that Paul gives in his opening six chapters. Learning all about and feeding on this portion of the bread of life is essential preparation of your feet with the gospel so you can stand firm (feet shod, Eph 6.15: **and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace**). This is foundational like protecting the feet in battle. If your feet are knocked out from under you then you lie there to be trampled on with many afflictions. Lay hold of this good news-reckon it so. Then you are ready to fight.

Application begins with knowing these things and marking them down as true for you by the blessings of God in the power of His grace.

So here are *some things to ponder and know* as you consider your union with Christ and the freedom from sin and death that He has secured for you.

1) First, look back to His death and life and count it the same for you ( "so" and thus "the 2 same way" of v. 11 directs us back to v. 10).

2) Second, rest in the *power* of God: your new life is due to the action of God in all the glory of His attributes. Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are under the power of the grace of the Almighty, the power that raised Jesus from the dead! (Rom. 6:14; in v. 4 we are told that *our new life* is brought about by the glory of God that operated in raising Jesus from the dead, a profound and remarkable fact; cf. the validity of comparing our spiritual resurrection with the resurrection of Lazarus).

3) Third, consider the substitutionary death of Christ. We are to know we were crucified *with Him* back there at Calvary to be freed from sin by His power (6:6-7). Look at Christ and your death *with Him* (6:8). Notice that Paul is not saying that the death of Christ was something general and nonspecific. It is not that Christ simply made some good medicine for sin generally and for people generally. Paul's entire gospel rests on the fact that when Jesus died He truly took the place of the sinners for whom He died. He truly endured their eternal punishment. He truly satisfied the wrath of God against them. Therefore on the cross He secured their release from sin, from its condemnation and its bondage (1 Pet. 2:24, He himself *bore our sins* in his body *on the tree*, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness). The fruit of His work is our new life in righteousness. Particular, efficacious, redemption is a sanctifying truth. Hence, it is as important to our sanctification as it is to our comfort.

#### Application

Thus Paul says, "We know" specific things about Christ and His death and His new life (6:9-10). So *now consider that it is the same for you* (6:11). Rest in the word of God: I am freed from sin's mastery-I am free from my sinful self! I am dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Thank God for deliverance (7:24-25). You are set free by the Spirit (8:1-2). Say to yourself, "He will see me through to glory. Nothing depends on me. *The victory is sure because it does not depend on me one wit* but totally on the Lord."

You may ask, "How am I motivated, given this teaching?" How do I avoid passivity? The motivation is not "work so you will secure the victory for yourself, as if the pastor's job is to frighten you into working. It is quite the reverse. It is not that we make it so by believing it; instead, it is because it is so that we are to believe it because we have the Spirit and not a spirit of fear. Your work does not secure the victory. *Knowing the victory is sure and determined by the power of grace encourages you to work*. In the midst of the struggles and difficulties, it is most encouraging to know that you *will* win the battle by the grace and power of God. Consider the football team going into the game with the thought, "We are losers!" Heads down, hearts deflated, they will be trampled.

In contrast, Christian, the victory is yours. Count it so. Paul says, consider these truths and mark out these doctrines. Consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God (freed from slavery, from death, and from condemnation) because of your union with Christ in His death and His resurrection by the glory of God, the Father.

Victory is a fact because it is the work of God, and this leads us to the use of means that God has appointed for us *to live out this victory*. We have a duty to the Spirit to work out the victory that He is working within. Ultimate success is not a cooperative venture in which God does His part and we do our part. There is success through doing our part because God works in us without failure leading us across the battlefield of sin to victory on the other side (Rom 8.12-14).