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DELIVERED FROM SIN

Many people are confused about what being a Christian is all about. So many people think that avoiding sin and attending church is being Christian. Now while these are behaviors that we normally associate with Christians, these do not a Christian make. Others have heard the message that we can do nothing to save ourselves, that we are completely and totally dependent on what God did for us in Jesus Christ and they conclude that since we can do nothing to save ourselves that we can do anything whatsoever and we will still be saved. Though there are elements of truth in each viewpoint neither have the complete picture. Paul encountered such misunderstanding among first century Christians, also.

ROMANS 6:1-2 People had twisted the argument that since grace was so much more powerful than sin and that God's grace was unlimited and could exceed our sin and guilt, that perhaps we should sin even more so that there would be more grace. That seems to be a silly argument; however, there are silly people in the world. Paul's response to this argument was a shocking "God forbid!"

These people had apparently missed the point of what salvation was all about. To get a different picture on salvation we might consider how we relate to various governmental demands we might encounter.

Consider, for example, someone who lives in a state that has a state income taxes while we do not. The only legitimate way he can avoid paying taxes on his earned income is to earn so little as to be exempt from taxes or to move to another state. If the person moved out of that state, then the former state authorities would have no right to collect taxes from him. The authorities might notice that they had not received their tax payment. They might then send that person a notice demanding payment of taxes. The letter would go to the person's former address and the Post Office would forward the letter to their new address. The person could simply send a reply to the tax collectors stating he was no longer a resident and that would settle the issue.

In a similar way, when we become Christians, the demands of sin on our lives are no longer valid. When the devil makes a demand on our lives we take care of it by realizing that we no longer live in that "state." We have become citizens of a new "state" that is free from the demands of sin. Another way to illustrate this truth and one that is a more perfect picture of what has occurred is the death and resurrection of Jesus.

ROMANS 6:3-11 There is a popular song that speaks of living in "two different worlds." There really are two different worlds: one world is that of **sin and death** and the other is that of **righteousness and life**. As Christians we have moved from the realm of slavery to sin that results in death to the realm of freedom to choose righteousness that results in life. The former realm may have influence on us but not power over us. Paul's argument is that in Christ we have died to sin. You have known people who are enslaved to sinful things. They seemingly cannot avoid doing certain things. It may be infidelity in marriage, it may be deviant behavior, drug abuse, lying, stealing, gossiping or whatever. As Christians, we do not have to live our lives in such a way as this. Every descendant of Adam is a slave of sin. The only way out of this kind of slavery is by death. This is what being crucified with Christ and identifying with His death is all about. As we see ourselves in Christ and daily reckon ourselves dead **INDEED** to sin, then we free ourselves from the power that sin has over us.

If we look at the total picture, then we see that Jesus did not stay dead. Therefore, we must not stop with only reckoning ourselves dead to sin and taking us our cross on a daily basis, we must also go on and see ourselves as being alive as we identify with Jesus in His resurrection. The

sequence is that we die to sin and live to God. So many times, we try to hang on to the old life-styles and the worldly way of doing things and then try to fit in the new life on top of everything else. Trying to live in two different worlds causes confusion and frustration in the life of a Christian. We cannot have it both ways. We must go by the way of the cross in order to experience the resurrection.

Paul uses baptism to illustrate his point. Baptism is a dramatization or outward visible sign of an inner spiritual reality. There are (at least) two things illustrated in the baptism picture: Burial and Resurrection. It is fairly obvious that immersion in water is illustrative of the burial of Christ and our being buried with Him. It is also fairly obvious that coming up from the water is illustrative of Christ being raised from death.. There are two other things implied by the "burial and resurrection" of baptism. The burial implies we are dead. How are we dead? We are dead to the things of the world. We are dead to self. We are dead in that we identify with Jesus in His death. the resurrection implies we have a new life source and a new kind of life. Since this is true, then we should participate in a new way of living. As Paul stated it, we should walk in newness of life.

ROMANS 6:12-14 After we have reckoned ourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive unto God in Christ, then the practical outcome of that reality is that sin can no longer control our physical bodies. We do not have to follow the enticements and temptations that come our way -- in fact, we are specifically instructed to **not** let it happen.

We tend to forget we are engaged in a battle and we are not to surrender to the enemy. We are not to give up and yield any part of ourselves to the enemy. On the other hand, we are to completely and totally surrender to God.

This new way of living is possible because we are under grace and not under the law. Since we are dead to sin, then sin does not have dominion or power over us. We, as human beings cannot save ourselves, only God can do that and He has chosen the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son to be the way into this salvation. Just because we can do nothing to save ourselves does not give us a license to live just any way. The practical outworking of this salvation is that we are placed in a new realm or a new world of **righteousness** and **freedom** and **life**, rather than one of **sin** and **slavery** and **death**.

ROMANS 6:20-23 A person can be either a servant of righteousness or a servant of sin. We really don't have any other choices. Being a servant of righteousness has certain claims on our life and being a servant of sin has a different set of claims. If we are serving sin, then the claims of righteousness have no effect on us. For example, a person living in Virginia does not have to buy a Tennessee license tag for his automobile; however, he does have to pay income tax to Virginia.

Paul asked a question that each person needs to consider: If we live according to the way of the world and live a life of sin, then what is the outcome (fruit) of such a life? The only conclusion is that the outcome is death! The obvious next question is this: If we are delivered from sin and become servants of God, then what is the outcome (fruit) of that life? The result is holiness that ends in eternal life. This is the choice that every person must make: "Will I choose death or will I choose life." These two outcomes are decided by the choice of "Will I choose sin or will I choose righteousness." These are decided by the choice of "Will I choose the way of the world or will I choose Jesus." It's your life, and only you can make the choice.