

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Shall We Continue In Sin?

by Dan Trygg

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? ...Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God."

Romans 6:1,2,11-13

The subject of today's study is a watershed issue. Your response to what Paul says in this passage will reveal whether you are really serious about your faith, or if you are just being religious. **Are you just "playing church", or do you want to truly be a real disciple of Jesus?** There is much that goes on in the name of Jesus that does not even closely resemble what He intended. There are many people who name His name with fondness, or even "worship", ...but whose lives drag it through the mud of their hypocrisy. Jesus came to *destroy* the works of the devil, but some of us want to "*dance with the devil*". **God sent Jesus to purchase a people for Himself, ...but we want to claim God for ourselves. We want Him at our beck and call, ...expecting Him to overlook the fact that we disregard Him, and His interests, by pursuing the fulfillment of our own lusts.** The Bible says that we are to "...abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:11,12). Sadly, many Christians want the "best of both worlds". They want their "*fire insurance*", but they want to "*play with fire*". They want to appear *reputable*, but they also want to do *disreputable* things. They believe that if they *devote a "little time with Jesus"* it will somehow make up for all the time, money and attention they devote to things that they *know* are really *not* acceptable to Jesus. They don't usually stop and think about these contradictions in their lives. They are just going along with the crowd. They want to *fit in*, and be comfortable, ...even though God's word says to "*come out from their midst and be separate*" (II Cor. 6:17), and "bad company corrupts good morals" (I Cor. 15:34).

As we have been working through Romans, we have seen how Paul established that *all people are guilty of suppressing the truth*. **We tend to not want to acknowledge God, or give thanks to Him. Instead, we tend to turn away from the truth about God, and choose instead to focus on fulfilling our sensual lusts.** The inability of sensual pleasure to *really* fulfill our emptiness *drives people to more and more extreme activities* to attempt to satisfy their inner void. Those of us who are slightly more morally grounded might be horrified at what others do, but we, too are guilty of suppressing the truth that is "inconvenient" for us. We are quick to judge *others*, because it makes *us* look better, but *our* disregard for the truth is no different. Paul then expanded the point to include those who thought of themselves as knowing God and His revealed truth. To them, he said, "You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴ For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' just as it is written" (2:23,24). They were not living up to the truth that they knew, either. **Thus, everyone was guilty. All had sinned, and lack the glory of God. No one could brag on his own merits. No one would be good enough by their own righteousness to be accepted by God.**

Into this bleak scenario, Paul begins to describe the hope which God provided. **Since our righteousness was so inadequate, God revealed another way for us to be accepted by Him.** Instead of standing in our own merit, God has made known to us the good news of a righteousness which can both *pay all our past debts*, cover all our mistakes, fulfill the just requirements of God's law, and *deliver us from the wrath of God against sin*. God made this possible by sending Jesus to be the redemption price to free us from bondage to sin, and the satisfactory sacrifice to more than sufficiently pay for any debts due to sin, ...past, present or future. **This is God's very own righteousness, offered as a gift to all those who will accept it by faith in Him.** More than just covering our sins, however, this righteousness *establishes peace and reconciliation with God*, and opens a door of relationship with Him through His grace (5:1,2). This deliverance goes much farther, however. Just as in Adam we all became sinners by nature, in a similar way God somehow *united us with Christ* so that *we might become righteous by nature*. Just as through Adam's sin death entered the world, and death spread throughout the planet and has reigned over humankind ever since, in a similar way **God has released an overcoming, healing, resurrecting, recreating power through Jesus which will transform us and will reign in and through us**, and eventually will recreate the entire creation to be in conformity with His righteous glory. Jesus' victory over death was the turning point for all of this. Our first experience of this is

the spiritual rebirth that is wrought in us when we believe in Jesus. God's Spirit comes to dwell in us, and we once again *have a hope of being filled with the glory of God*. He will transform and fill us from the inside-out, and will radiate from our lives the beauty of His own character, ...a character we were created to display and express. *This will fill the emptiness, the God-shaped hole in our souls, which nothing else seems to be able to satisfy.* **Wherever sin reached before, God's grace is more than sufficient to overflowing reach to bring forgiveness, healing, and life.**

This brings us to Romans 6, where Paul deals with the anticipated objection, **"What then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?"** Some people think that *since God's grace is abundant, that they can go on sinning, and God's salvation is there to cover their mistakes*. "It's OK," they say, "God knows our weaknesses, and His grace is here to cover our faults." Paul is *horrified* at this suggestion! "May it never be!" **The person who thinks it is OK to continue in sin does not understand what the purpose of God's great salvation is all about!** Paul says, "How shall we who *died to sin* still live in it?" God put us into Jesus so that we might die with Him to all our past life, our past choices, our previous relationships and commitments, even our past identity, so that we could be raised with Him to a totally new life and identity *in Christ*. As Paul states it in II Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." We are not the same person we were before we believed in Jesus. He has made us new. Paul says, "...our old self was crucified with Him, *in order that* our body of sin might be made ineffective, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." Do you see that phrase, "in order that"? That indicates a purpose clause. That means that **God's very purpose for putting us into Jesus' death was to free us from sin. If that is so, then how can we justify continuing in sin? Wouldn't this be disregarding God and His purpose? Wouldn't this be nullifying and scorning the sacrifice that Jesus made for you? How can we so wantonly disrespect Jesus by willingly and callously continuing to choose sin over obedience to God?**

In fact, if we really understand what salvation in Christ is all about, we are not even our own person, anymore. We belong to God. He purchased us for Himself. Therefore our purpose in life should be to honor and glorify Him (I Cor. 6:19,20). It is like we were on death row, condemned to death for our sin. God came by and said, "If you want, I will purchase your life out of this place, but you must come and serve me as your King." We didn't *deserve* to be set free from that place. In fact, we *deserved* to be there. God graciously took pity on us and offered to give us a different future. He gave us life and hope. But the arrangements were clear. He called us out of our hopeless prison *to serve Him*. When we accepted Jesus as Lord, that is what it meant. He is the Master; we are His servants. He is the Leader; we are the followers. He is in charge; we are here to serve Him. Now, God is not compelling us to come with Him. It is a free choice. His offer is a gracious offer, and we are free to accept it or stay in our mess. It is up to us. God does not want us to continue our mess in His house, however. **Once we become His, He expects us to put aside all that old stuff, and get in line with the way He does things. He expects us to no longer live as we used to live. He expects us to learn to live as members of His household.**

This illustration gives some context for the verses, **"Even so consider yourselves to be *dead to sin*, but *alive to God in Christ Jesus*."**¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,¹³ and **do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"** (Rom. 6:12-14). **It is quite clear that God wants us to make a break from our sinful habits. There is no excuse for sin.** Jesus came to take away sins, and no one abiding in Him sins (I Jn. 3:5,6).

Now, the victory in our experience does not necessarily happen overnight. There may be some areas of sin that we have difficulty overcoming. **Nevertheless, we are not to excuse any sin, ...not ever.** There *is* victory in Jesus (I Jn. 5:4,5). He *will* set us free, if we continue to follow Him (Jn. 8:31-36). He exhorts us to "put aside the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light." We are to "walk through life properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts" (Rom. 13:12-14). What this passage tells us is that **we are to make a choice to put aside the old sinful ways. We have a new focus. We have a job to do. We have a fight to fight.** As long as we are entangled in our old sinful behaviors, we are not much of a threat to the kingdom of darkness. We must clear our heads to see what is at stake, here. This is important. **It is not just about you!** There are other lives involved. **You have no idea what God would do with you, if you would just quit playing with sin and get serious about doing the will of God.** The apostle is very clear, "make *no* provision, *no* plan, *no* forethought, *no* thinking-ahead" for the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. **We can't make an end of sin, if we keep planning how we will do it, or if we keep setting aside time and resources to fulfill our lusts.**

Stop it! Live for Jesus!