

# KEENER THOUGHTS

MAY, 2011

## SHORT BIBLE PHRASES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE # 6 IN SERIES

### HOW SHALL WE WHO ARE DEAD TO SIN LIVE ANY LONGER THEREIN?

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. **How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?** Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*  
(Rom. 6:1-6)

**T**he above highlighted twelve word question encloses a five word statement. That statement is, **We are dead to sin.** The first person, plural pronoun **we**, supposes the inclusion of Paul, and states that the group, (believers) in which he includes himself, is dead to sin. That within itself is an absolutely marvelous statement. It, at the very least, says that, in some sense we are not sensitive to sin, we are not involved in sin, and are not affected by it. I, and I expect you, are forced to involuntarily ask, How can this be? We walk in the flesh (2 Co. 10:3) and do that of which we do not approve, because sin lives in us, and in our flesh lives no good thing.( Rom. 7:17-18)

How then can Paul declare that we **are dead to sin**? Do we never covet? Are we never selfish, or proud, or unthankful? Do we never speak in anger or falsehood? Do we love God as we should, and our neighbor as ourselves? Can any of us say, as did the foolish, rich young ruler, "All these have I kept from my youth up?" Can any of us reasonably say, I have not sinned this month, or this week, or even today? In what sense can it then be said, of me or you, you are dead to sin? It is because you are a new creature! This is not by virtue of conversion, but by virtue of regeneration. By nature, we were dead in trespasses and sin, children of wrath, even as those who are yet dead. We died in Adam, and the proof of that is that we have all sinned. As Adam's race, we do not become who we are by sinning, but we sin because of who we are. Thus, it is not our conduct that must be changed it is our identity, yea, our very person and nature. Only by being made a new creature in Christ, a new creature, who is not under the law, can we be dead to sin. It is no longer the law, which ministers death, who is our master. It is Christ who ministers life, in whom, and under whose leadership, and by whose Spirit, we live. That is one thing it means to be under grace, and thus dead to sin.

Another thing it means is that God will not impute sin to us. Rom. 4:8 says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." We are not under law but under grace, and God, in grace, imputes righteousness without works, and righteousness in spite of sin. This can be done, and is only done, because He has imputed all our sins, past present and future, to Christ, and His perfect righteousness to us. It is in this sense that we are dead to sin, dead to the law, and alive to Christ, in a sense, being, even now, resurrected from the dead.

Now remains the question "**How shall we live any longer therein?**" This is not a rhetorical question, as we might recklessly suppose. A rhetorical question, is a question that supposes an obvious answer. For instance, I might say, "*How can I tell what will happen tomorrow?*" This is framed as a question, but it is actually intended to make a statement, that is: "*I can't tell what will*

*happen tomorrow.*" I do not believe this question, "How shall we live any longer therein?" is

a denial that a believer can live sinfully. I expect it is more like and interrogatory exclamation. I have often gone to God confessing sin, pleading forgiveness, and simultaneously asking myself this question, "*How could I have done that against my savior who so loved me and gave Himself for me?*" That was not a denial of my sin, and certainly not a denying the possibility of my having committed it, but rather a confession thereof. It was a denial of the logic of it, and of any excuse for it. Paul is saying that continuing to live in sin is ridiculous and inexcusable. It is like a person who has been in bondage to a wicked slave owner, and who has been marvelously set free, going back and voluntarily working for him on a part time basis, while receiving no wages, but enduring abuse, loss and contradiction of his character. It makes no sense. How shall one who has been brought to the realization of the wages of sin, and their well-deserved state of death, then having been delivered by the substitutionary death of Christ continue to live in sin. Good sense says to flee death and embrace life.

The lead in question in verse one, "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*" introduces a very important argument. Admitting that God's abounding grace does tolerate, if that is the right word, our ignorance and habitual behavior of continuing, at varying levels, in our sin. But it states that such behavior makes no sense. When the slaves were freed after the civil war, many of them begged to remain with their owners. Many of them were loved, though not as equals, by their owners, and they loved their owners. They were somewhat like part of the family. Obviously they did not like the idea of being slaves, any more than a workhorse likes pulling a plow, but they did like the security of food and shelter, which was provided for them, and to which they were accustomed, and they had no idea how to start a new life on their own. Frequently, new born Christians are faced with the same journey without map into the Christian life. Their friends, associates, and often family around them, are living in sin, and the natural inclination for the infant Christian, is to walk the familiar path of yesterday, which is the only one he knows. He desperately needs a church, a pastor, and Christian friends to patiently point him in the right direction. But above all He has the Spirit of Christ within him, and the word of God for a roadmap. May we help him to identify that Spirit, and exhort him to follow God's word. Let us confess that grace abounds, but nevertheless, know and teach that sin robs and wounds, and has no right of position in the Christian's life.

--FLK