

The State of the Sanctified

By W. E. Green

Romans 6:23 gives us a glimpse into the state of the believer whose life is wholly dedicated to God. We read, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

There are three outstanding questions asked in the sixth chapter of Romans. These questions are:

- (i) "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (v 1).
- (ii) "Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" (v 15). This might be rendered, shall we practise sin because grace abounds?
- (iii) "What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" (v 21).

These three questions might well be considered along with the 22nd verse which gives us an insight into the life of the spiritual minded believer. The first clause of the text suggests that there is a place of attainment where the believer may be delivered from sin and live in the present age of time being conscious of FREEDOM FROM SIN. The question is asked by the apostle, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" This question is clearly answered in verse 4 by a declaration that we died unto sin when we were buried with Christ by baptism into death. And, just as truly as Christ was raised from the dead, so we also should "walk in newness of life." This statement is reinforced by the preceding question in verse 2, which is asked, not to raise an issue for theological discussion but, to declare a fact, that it is impossible to live in sin if we are dead to sin.

In verse 6, the author of Romans reinforces his argument by referring to the inner cause of outward transgression. Paul says, "Knowing this, OUR OLD MAN IS CRUCIFIED with Him (Christ) THAT the body of SIN MIGHT BE DESTROYED (and) HENCEFORTH we should NOT SERVE SIN". "The old man" referred to here is a metaphor used by the apostle to picture the body of sin which controls the life of the individual who does not possess the fullness of Christ. Dr. Adam Clarke reminds us at this point that all seeds are composed of two parts, the germ which contains the rudiments of the future life, and the lobes or body of the seed. When the seed is planted in the earth, the body of the seed perishes that the seed might live. May I ask, how is the seed of the gospel which Christ has planted in our lives to germinate and come to full effect and usefulness? The answer is, "by the destruction of the body of sin. Again Dr. Clark states, "Our old man, our wicked and corrupt and fleshly self is to be crucified; to be as truly slain as Christ was crucified; that our souls may . . . raise from a life of sin to a life of righteousness."

Romans 6:12 further exhorts us not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies. Who then is to rule our lives? The scripture says, "he that is dead is freed from sin" (Dead to sin). But in verse 4 we are reminded to walk in newness of life. This life is abundant life. It is a vitalizing life. It is a well governed and well disciplined life. It is a life in which Christ Jesus rules supremely. Since Jesus is to reign in the life of the believer, the apostle is able to say in verse 14, "sin shall not have dominion

over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." It is true that both the law and grace require obedience of us. However, the law provides no power to enable us to obey. Grace, on the other hand, not only delivers us from the pollution of sin, it provides us with a positive infilling by the Holy Spirit which enables us to fulfill the law of obedience. This is not a cross but a privilege. It is not a trial but an experiential blessing. Commissioner Brengle said of this experience, "While ye walk in humble obedience and childlike faith, trusting in the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from all sin, the comforter will abide with you, and the low-water mark of your experience will be perfect peace. I will not dare to say what the high-water mark may be! Like Paul, you may get caught up to the third heaven at times, and hear unspeakable words which it is not possible to utter."

Consider with me the purpose of being delivered from sin. Romans 6:13 gives us the purpose, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, AND your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." This thought leads us to the second clause of the text in verse 22, which reveals the positive function of those who are delivered from sin. This function is fulfilled as we become SERVANTS OF GOD.

The apostle Paul enjoines us, in Romans 6:22, to yield ourselves to the service of God. Let us now ask the second great question of this chapter. While we are engaged in this service of God, are we to practise sin because grace abounds? (v15). This question is answered by referring to the "thou shalt not" of God by the declaration, "God forbid". In this same chapter the writer refers to the power of the human will. Notice the words of verse 16: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey . . ." Obedience is a requisite for service. It was obedience for which Paul thanked God in verse 16. "God be thanked . . . you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you". Again Dr. Clarke refers us to a mould of doctrine or teaching into which we were cast. The mould suggests that the finished object will bear some resemblance of the design its maker had in mind when the mould was set. The design God has in mind when moulding our lives is holiness. This design can only be realized as we place ourselves in the hands of our maker and pray with the poet:

"Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me."

Only as we are moulded under the preaching of the word and the operation of the Holy Spirit, are we capable of receiving the stamp of purity. It was this stamp of purity which qualified the disciples for service. The writer to the Romans is careful to note that we are not merely to hold to a particular doctrine, but the doctrine of Jesus Christ is to hold us up and mould our lives and fashion them for service.

Notice further that it is not until we are free from sin that we are fully qualified for service. "Being made free from sin ye become servants of righteousness." Here the

The Blessed Life

There is a Christian life, which in comparison with that experienced by the majority of Christians, is as summer to winter, or as the mature fruitfulness of a golden autumn to the struggling of a cold and late spring. It is such a life as Caleb might have lived in Hebron, the city of Fellowship; or the Apostle John was living, when he wrote his epistles. It may be fitly termed the blessed life.

And the blessedness of the blessed life lies in this: that we trust the Lord to do in us and for us what we could not do; and we find that He does not belie His word, but that, according to our faith, so it is done to us. The weary spirit which has vainly sought to realize its ideal by its own strivings and efforts, now gives itself over to the strong and tender hands of the Lord Jesus; and He accepts the task, and at once begins to work in it to will and to do of His own good pleasure, delivering it from the tyranny of besetting sin, and fulfilling in it His own perfect ideal.

This blessed life should be the normal life of every Christian, in work and rest, in the building-up of the inner life, and in the working-out of the life-plan. It is God's thought not for a few, but for all His children. The youngest and weakest may lay claim to it, equally with the strongest and oldest. We should step into it at the moment of conversion; without wandering with blistered feet for forty years in the desert; or lying, for thirty-eight years, with disappointed hopes, in the porch of the House of Mercy.

But since many long ago passed the moment of conversion, without entering the blessed life, it may be well to show clearly what the first step must be to take within its golden circle. Better take it late than never. The first step into the blessed life is contained in the one word, 'Consecration'; and is enforced by the significant exhortation of the Apostle (Romans 6:13).

It is not enough to give our time, or energy, or money. Many will gladly give anything, rather than themselves. But none of these will be accounted as a sufficient substitute by Him, who gave, not His possessions, but His very Self for us. As the Lord Jesus was all for us, He asks that we should be all for Him—body, soul, and spirit, our reasonable service and gift.

That consecration is the stepping-stone to blessedness is clearly established in the experience of God's children. For instance, Frances Ridley Havergal has left us this record: "It was on Advent Sunday, December, 1873, that I first saw clearly the blessedness of true consecration. I saw it as a flash of electric light, and what you see you can never unsee. There
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apostle is referring to the slavery of sin. This was a condition in which we had no choice but to obey. We served sin because we were in bondage to sin. But being made free from sin, we become love slaves of Jesus Christ. This is a service for those delivered from sin, as indicated in verse 18. This is a glorious service, in the interests of God's kingdom. It is a service which does not permit sin to hinder spiritual exercise. This service gladdens the heart of the servant; brings joy to the multitudes and ends in eternal life. Is it any wonder the apostle says in verse 19, ". . . even so NOW yield your members servants to righteousness unto true holiness"?

(To Be Continued)