



# Is OBEDIENCE OPTIONAL?

*For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh [to indulge the sinful nature, NIV], but through love serve one another. -- Galatians 5:13*

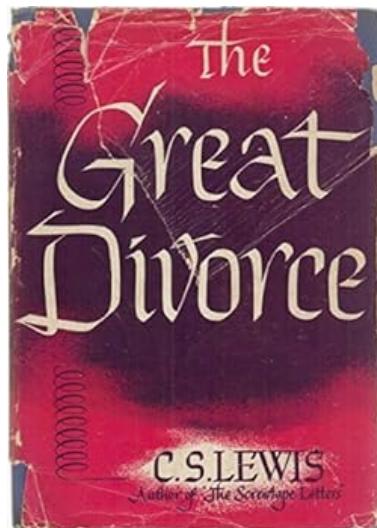
## Study 7a: BAPTIZED into CHRIST JESUS (6:1-9)

**6:1-2 "God forbid" what misunderstanding of grace?** (Gal. 5:14; Matthew 5:13-20,48)

This is not a completely hypothetical objection, for in fact there have always been people to insist that this is the logical corollary of Paul's teaching about justification by faith; and unfortunately, in every generation, people claiming to be justified by faith have behaved in such a way as to lend colour to this criticism. ... Rasputin taught and exemplified the doctrine of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance; he held that, as those who sin most require most forgiveness, a sinner who continues to sin with abandon enjoys, each time he repents, more of God's forgiving grace than any ordinary sinner. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *Romans*, (Tyndale) p.134

From this we clearly see what the words of the Apostle mean. All such statements as: 1. "We are dead to sin," 2. "We live unto God," etc., signify that we do not yield to our sinful passions and sin, even though sin continues in us. Nevertheless, sin remains in us until the end of our life, as we read in Galatians 5:17: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other." Therefore all apostles and saints confess that sin and the sinful passions remain in us till the body is turned into ashes, and a new (*glorified*) body is raised up which is free from passion and sin. -- **M. Luther**, *Romans*, p.84

**6:3-4 Of what is baptism a profound symbol?** (Mark 1:1-8; 1 Pet.1:3; 3:21)"Listen," he says; "do you not remember what happened when you were baptized?" From this and other references



to baptism in Paul's writings, it is certain that he did not regard baptism as an "optional extra" in the Christian life, and that he would not have contemplated the phenomenon of an "unbaptized believer". -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p.136

**6:5-9 In which other profound symbols do we participate in Christ?**

Paul then uses the analogy of the slave-market to illustrate his point. A slave is bound to obey his master. But there is a point beyond which his master has no authority over him -- and that point is death. When the slave is dead, his master can go on giving orders to the corpse until he is blue in the face, but the corpse will pay no attention. -- **F.F. Bruce**, *op.cit.*, p.140

Justification concerns our standing; Sanctification our state. The former affects our position; the latter our condition. The first deals with relationship; the second, with fellowship. And even though they are bestowed together, we must never confuse them. The one is the foundation of peace -- "Christ for us"; the other is the foundation of purity -- "Christ in us." The one deals with acceptance; the other with attainment. Sanctification admits of degrees, but is complete, perfect and eternal. "Justified from all things." Our Lord indicated this distinction between Justification and Sanctification when He said,

"He that hath been bathed (justification) needeth not save to wash the feet (sanctification)." -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Grace and Power* p.105,106

## Study 7b: DEAD to SIN, ALIVE to GOD (6:10-14)

**6:10-11 When only are we truly alive?** (Luke 15:24,32; Eph. 2:1,5; 4:17,18; Col. 3:3,5)

"In Christ Jesus": that great phrase, here first explicitly used in the connexion, includes all else in its embrace. Union with the slain and risen Christ, in faith, by the Spirit -- here is our inexhaustible secret, for peace with God, for life to God, now and in the eternal day. -- **H.C.G. Moule**, *Romans*, (Expositor's Bible) p.167

But when Paul says that the Christian is "free from sin," he is speaking about something entirely different. To him sin is not basically separate moral missteps; but sin is a power under whose

bondage man lives. It is to set forth this character of sin as a hostile power that we capitalize the word. In this way we may be helped to escape a moralistic view of sin which seems to be hard to root out. That the Christian is "free from sin" means to Paul that by Christ sin is cast down from its throne. His thought is not at all that we in ourselves come to mastery over sin, so that it is less and less evident in us as we gradually grow toward sinlessness. Freedom from sin is rather a fruit of the work of Christ; it is by Him that sin is cast down and vanquished. He who believes in Christ no longer lives under the dominion of sin. He has found another Lord, to whom he stands in obedience. -- **A. Nygren**, *Commentary on Romans*, p.242

## 6:12-14 *What is the appropriate present for One who has everything, who can only give?* (Rom. 12:1)

The word *yield* is found five times in this section (verses 13, 16 and 19), and means "to place at one's disposal, to present, to offer as a

sacrifice." -- **W.W. Wiersbe, Be Right, p.67**

He who fears death more than Christ and loves life more than Christ, does not yet possess Christ by faith. -- **M. Luther, op.cit., p.88**

### Study 7c: SAVED to SLAVE (6:15-23)

*Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.*

Matthew 11:28,29 [see Jeremiah 6:14-16]

*In every thing I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."* -- Acts 20:35

## 6:15-20 *There are only 2 kinds of human beings. How many divine categories?* (John 8:31-36)

That that is not merely a concocted thought can be seen from many a case in church history. We could think particularly of the position of Gnosticism on this matter. A Gnostic, as a "spiritual" man, is "free from sin" permanently. Sin no longer has any part in him; in the inner man he is clean and undefiled. So sin has ceased to be a danger for him. He no longer has to take it seriously. Henceforth it can do no more than put its spots on the outward man; but is is not the outward that is of ultimate importance. "For as gold which is cast into the dirt does not lose its beauty, but maintains its own nature, because the dirt cannot injure it, so they suffer no harm and do not lose their spiritual nature, by any acts at all which they do. Therefore even the most perfect among them do, without fear, everything that is forbidden" (Irenaeus, *Contra haeres I*, chap. 2). In that way the Gnostics can draw libertinism out of their sinlessness. -- **A. Nygren, op.cit., p.251**

If I choose deliberately to place myself under the control of grace, by surrendering to Christ and entering into union with Him, grace will necessarily and inevitably work in me and through me. It is as if a man chooses to put himself in front of a large fire, when it is no longer within his choice whether he will feel warm. The law of nature works independently of him from the moment and so far as he places himself under its sway. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas, op.cit., p.24**



**Bernard Ramm**

## 6:21-23 *What is the delusion of the unbeliever?* (John 8:33)

God has taken the Christian out of servitude to sin, and brought him under the molding influence of "the righteousness of God"; and for this the apostle expresses his gratitude to God. This is the "obedience to the faith" about which Paul spoke earlier (1:5). -- **A. Nygren, op.cit., p.257**

In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis makes a very telling point about the seriousness of sin. The greatest thing about human beings is that they are made in the image of God. This Lewis equates with our humanity. The greatest human achievement is then to fulfill, perfect, or realize our full humanity. Therefore, the supreme meaning of heaven is that there we fully achieve our full humanity. In this context Lewis interprets hell. If heaven is the fullest possible realization of our humanity, then the worst possible thing that can happen to us is to lose our humanity. And so hell is a grubby little English industrial town where people sit behind closed doors and shaded windows as their humanity shrinks to a vanishing point. He ironically pictures Napoleon who even in hell has built himself a vast estate. The irony is that Napoleon will gradually diminish until he is but a shade, a nothing, a vanishing point lost in his vast estate. This leads to another observation about the seriousness of sin. We sin not only against God but against our own humanity. When we sin we become less than human; we diminish our humanity. -- **Bernard Ramm, Offence to Reason: The Theology of Sin p.95,96**

## Righteousness Revealed -- and its Seven Great Subthemes

It should be studied with special reference to its great theme, as stated in ch. i. 16,17. In these two verses there are seven terms which go through the entire Epistle and affect every part of it: God, Gospel, Power, Salvation, Righteousness, Faith, Life. So that the theme of Romans is man's reinstatement in righteousness by the provision found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation is provided and made possible for sinful man by a righteousness which is not his own. Like the warp and woof of a piece of cloth, these great thoughts are the very substance of the Epistle. **W.H. Griffith Thomas op.cit. p.19**