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Class Notes

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Romans 6-7: Battling Indwelling Sin

I. Romans 6: United with Christ; Dead to Sin; Alive to God

A. Romans 6:1-4 Spiritual Union with Christ in His Death & Resurrection

Romans 6:1-4 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

At the moment of conversion, a Christian is spiritually united with Christ. We are baptized by the Spirit into Christ's body, and therefore 1) died with Christ and 2) were raised with Christ.

This spiritual union with Christ is the essential doctrine of sanctification and slaying temptation. In the sight of God, in Christ we died once for all to sin and to the law's condemning power; in the sight of God, in Christ we were raised by the Spirit to walk in newness of life.

Therefore, sanctification has both a negative side (death) and a positive side (life). Slaying temptation is part of the death side; walking in holiness is the essence of the life side.

B. Romans 6:5-14 Understanding and Living Out Union with Christ

1. Understanding our new standing in Christ

Romans 6:5-10 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ For we know that since

Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

If we are spiritually united with Christ, we are united BOTH in his death to sin and his resurrection to life. Paul asserts (vs. 6) that the “Old Man” (the person we were positionally in Adam) died the moment we became Christians. The effect of this is to gradually destroy (“render increasingly powerless”) the “BODY OF SIN”. That is the sinful tendencies we have built up in our present physical bodies – the bodily drives, desires, appetites, habits, thoughts... all the many ways we have trained ourselves to sin over the years. That “BODY OF SIN” can be “rendered increasingly powerless” through the overall strategy of saying “NO” to its evil desires... DEATH BY STARVATION is the strategy. The result of this is that we should no longer live like slaves to sin... because we are NOT slaves to sin.

2. Living out (all practical commands based on the doctrine)

Romans 6:11-14 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³ Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Thus in verse 11, Paul gives the first command of the entire Book of Romans... “CONSIDER YOURSELVES dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” You are to think of yourself that way. The thoughts precede the actions, always and forever! This is truly a battle for the mind!

You are then able to SLAY EVERY TEMPTATION by saying to them all, “I am dead to that sin!” No temptation ever comes to you with the authority to compel you to sin. It only comes with lies and deceit, implying you have no choice but to cave in. Verse 12 says comprehensively that no sin should ever REIGN in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts... EVERY TEMPTATION CAN BE SLAIN!

Practically, then, you are NOT to offer the parts of your body to sin to obey its lusts... the “parts of your body” are your actual body parts (all of them) but also your mind, your emotions, your ambitions, your desires... every part of your physical life on earth must NOT be offered to sin, but MUST BE offered to God... since through Christ he bought you with the price of Christ’s blood.

Paul says the parts of the body are “instruments” or “weapons”. The parts of your body must be offered to God generally and consistently, and then specifically and in detail:

“I am yours to command. Yours to use. My mind, my thoughts, my words, my appetites, my legs, my hands, my stomach, my sex life... every part of me is to be USED as a TOOL or WEAPON for God’s Kingdom.

Finally, sin shall not be your MASTER... to rule over you and dominate you.

Why? Because you are not “under law” but “under grace”.

C. Romans 6:15-19: Our Obedience Proves Who Our Master Is

Romans 6:15-19 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Paul speaks of us as not being “under law but under grace”. This has to do with two different states of life, two different kingdoms – Satan’s kingdom of sin and darkness, versus God’s kingdom of righteousness and light. Law means here the Law of God in its condemning power (Col. 2:13-14); also its use in society to restrain evildoers from doing the wickedness they yearn to do. We are free from all that and under a different compulsion – grace, the grace of God in the gospel of Christ.

How you live proves who your Master is. The basic assumption is that all humans SERVE A MASTER, one way or another. None of us can ever be free from all masters. We humans were designed and created to SERVE, we are slaves. The question is, which Master do we serve?

Romans 6:16: Paul gives two options: 1) slaves to sin which leads to death (eternal); 2) slaves to obedience which leads to righteousness.

Q: What does it mean to be a “slave to obedience?” Or to “obey obedience?”

Q: How does our own obedience lead to righteousness? Is this the same or different than the righteousness that is ours by faith in Christ? If the same, how is that not justification by works? If different, how is justification righteousness related to sanctification righteousness?

Romans 6:17: Amazing what Paul thanks God for here!! “Thank God you obeyed!” Obeyed what? The gospel! And they did so “wholeheartedly”.

Q: What is the significance of Paul thanking God for the obedience of the Romans?
What does that show about Paul's doctrine of the sovereignty of God in salvation?

Q: What is the significance of Paul speaking of "that form of teaching to which you were entrusted?" What does "entrusted" mean? How are Christians entrusted to a form of teaching?

I believe the gospel doctrine that Paul is unfolding here in Romans is a caretaker of our souls; it will feed us spiritual food, protect us from spiritual harm, give us spiritual guidance. In this way, this "form of teaching" is like a parent.

Emancipation from Sin

We were slaves to sin; we are now set free from that bondage and are now slaves of God and Christ.

Consider the greatness of this one assertion:

Romans 6:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

NOTE: it is repeated in slightly different form in verse 22:

Romans 6:22 you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God

Yet... we ARE slaves still! That is what Jesus meant by this call:

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus does in fact lay his yoke on our necks... actually he commands us willingly to bow our necks under his yoke. But if we do, we will find it easy and his burden light.

Romans 6:19: The Process of Sanctification... Gradual Transformation by Habitual Obedience to a Master

Romans 6:19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

This is an absolutely essential verse for us understanding progressive sanctification. After apologizing for using the slavery analogy ("I put this in human terms because you need such simple analogies to understand what I am saying..."), Paul gives the fundamental command that results in sanctification.

He uses an analogy: JUST AS... SO ALSO

He compares your old life in sin with your new life in Christ

He uses a principle from the old life and applies it to the new life

The principle is one of 1) Presentation of the members of the body to a master resulting in 2) EVER-GROWING character/lifestyle as a result

Romans 6:19 is the clearest “progressive sanctification” verse in the Bible... “ever-increasing wickedness” compared with “holiness” (or by the analogy he’s using here, “ever-increasing righteousness”)

Ever-increasing righteousness IS sanctification, the process of being made holy

It happens by HABITUAL PRESENTATION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY to our new Master, God/Christ/righteousness)

D. Romans 6:20-23: The Infinite Superiority of the Benefits

Romans 6:20-23 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul reasons with us based on the analogy he’s made... our old pattern of presenting our members to our old master SIN vs. our similar new pattern of presenting our members to our new master God/Christ/righteousness

At that time, goodness never intruded on that old lifestyle... you were FREE from the control of righteousness; it made no demands on you that you heeded in the least! So now, you should return the favor! Don’t heed sin and wickedness, because the outcome, the benefit, the harvest of all that was DEATH...

He argues from the fruit... the return on investment; what “benefit” or fruit or harvest or return on investment did you get from all that slavery... nothing good ever came from it!!

Like the warning against adultery:

Proverbs 5:11-14 At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. ¹² You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! ¹³ I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. ¹⁴ I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly."

Sin LIES to us about its “benefits”:

Hebrews 3:12-13 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires

But the benefit you get for this new slavery is EVER-INCREASING RIGHTEOUSNESS (called “holiness”) resulting in eternal life in heaven.

What benefits (fruit) comes from sanctification? Much in every way!!

John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Romans 7:4 So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Colossians 1:6 All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

Then the famous final verse:

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

II. Romans 7: The Bitter Struggle with Sin

A. Romans 7:1-6 Dead to the Law, Fruitful for God

Romans 7:1-6 Do you not know, brothers-- for I am speaking to men who know the law-- that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. ⁶ But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

1. The Marriage Analogy, Part I: Death Releases Us

- a. Paul's basic point: a covenant is binding only as long as we live; once we die, the covenant is no longer binding
- b. Illustration: the marriage covenant... "Till death do you part"
- c. We cannot break the authority of the Old Covenant over us while we live
- d. But through our spiritual union with Christ, we died once for all to the binding nature of the Old Covenant, the "Law"

2. The Marriage Analogy, Part 2: A New Marriage with New Fruit

- a. Marriage also is a picture of fruitfulness; a healthy marriage results in "fruit" i.e. children
- b. Our spiritual union with Christ is like a new marriage... the old one is done, the new one has begun
- c. The old marriage (the Law) could never bear good fruit for God, because of our "flesh"... our sin nature
- d. But through spiritual union with Christ, we have been set free from the old "marriage" so that we can now bear fruit for God in the "new way of the Spirit"

3. The limitations of the law on an unregenerate person

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Hebrews 7:18-19 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.

4. The law could only stand outside of you and command you to do certain things and not to do other things; but it was weak and powerless to make it happen...
5. Analogy: picture a man drowning in a lake; the Law stands on the shore and shouts instructions to him telling him how to swim; Christ dives in and rescues him, then works inside his mind and body making him an excellent swimmer afterward. [Actually, to some degree, the Law commands the man to swim and then condemns him to death if he fails.]

B. Romans 7:7-12: The Holy, Perfect, Spiritual Law Actually Kills Us

Romans 7:7-12 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. ⁹ Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. ¹⁰ I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. ¹¹ For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. ¹² So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

1. Paul (it could be charged) has been very negative toward the Law in this epistle... I could give multiple examples, but take my word for it
2. So here, Paul has to vindicate the Law of God. Since the Law has such a devastating effect on us as unregenerate persons, he has to defend that it is in itself a good thing
3. He also says the Law plays a key role in the unregenerate person's life teaching him what sin is... defining it, diagnosing it
4. The example: COVETING; the Law taught him what it was, why it was evil
5. BUT not only did it not have the power to make him obey, it actually PRODUCED in him the very thing it FORBIDS!!

6. Sin used the command to learn what coveting was, and then made coveting spring up within him
7. **Sin is then revealed as energetic, clever, devious, relentless, powerful, deceptive**
8. If sin could use something as good as the Law, which Paul calls “holy, righteous, and good” to produce sin in him and then kill him, how evil must sin be?!!

C. Romans 7:13-25 The Bitter Struggle with Sin

Romans 7:13-25 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. ¹⁴ We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

1. This is an indispensable passage for the ongoing battle Christians have with sin. Simply put, the Apostle Paul is speaking as a converted man who has been set free from sin, yet he says in some sense he still acts like a slave to sin... the very thing he hates, he does; and the very thing he yearns to do, he doesn't. Why? INSANITY! "I do not understand what I do!" And WARFARE! A "law" is at work in Paul's body, waging war against his mind and seemingly compelling him to act directly the opposite way that his mind wants him to. Only Christ can finally set him free from his "body of death." And he will... someday! In the meantime... there is this ongoing battle which will endure while we live in this world.
2. This is so powerful because, if a man as great as the Apostle Paul (the greatest Christian that has ever lived in 2000 years of church history) had this level of battle, how could we possibly expect anything less? Based on this, we should

have full expectation of utter and relentless and bitter warfare everyday of our lives for the rest of our lives!

3. So... Romans 6 gives us the pure doctrine: you are free from every sin and never need to sin again, the rest of your lives – every temptation can and should lie dead at your feet. Romans 7 gives us the practical reality: sin is so woven through every fiber of our being – our mortal bodies with their mortal brains and long-standing habits – we are often going to fail to live out the truths of Romans 6.
4. Now this take on Romans 7 is controversial!! Because Romans 6 tells us again and again we have been set free from sin – sin is not your master if you are a Christian – when Paul says in Romans 7:14 “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin” – it seems like Paul is taking on a role for the sake of argument in Romans 7 and is speaking as an as yet unconverted man in the process of conversion. Long and bitter theological wranglings have occurred about Romans 7
5. For me... the SILVER BULLET on this whole thing is his use of the phrase “no longer”, which Paul uses twice in reference to his relationship with sin:

Romans 7:17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

Romans 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

If someone says, “I no longer live in Alaska”, what two things does that tell you about the person’s history of dwelling places? Can someone who has never lived in Alaska make that statement? Can someone who presently lives in Alaska make that statement? So the words “no longer” imply what about Paul’s relationship with sin?

So, Paul MUST BE speaking as a Christian in Romans 7:13-25!

How do these verses relate to that decisive change in Paul’s relationship with sin:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

6. The education on the true nature of sin
 - a. Paul has defended the Law in Romans 7:7-12 as “holy, righteous and good” but says that it produced sin and death in him

- b. The reason for this was to TEACH US just how wicked and diabolical sin really is... that sin might be recognized as sin, and that sin might be exposed as UTTERLY SINFUL (KJV "exceeding sinful"; ESV "sinful beyond measure")

Romans 7:13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

- c. The whole plan of God here in redemptive history is in part to give us what we demanded at the Tree: the "knowledge of good AND EVIL"
- d. So part of redemption was to expose sin for what it really is... "the law was added that the trespass might increase"; "that sin might become utterly sinful"
- e. Why? So that in heaven, when we are done being redeemed, we will have the full education in how truly wicked evil really is... and we will hate it as he does and never do it again

7. The INSANITY of sin

Romans 7:15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Q: How does this show the insanity of sin? How would understanding that all sin by Christians is a display of insanity... irrationality... disease... help us to battle it?

Q: If sin is unhealth in our minds and hearts, how does this verse help us:

Luke 5:31-32 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

How is genuine repentance on a given day an evidence of Christ's ongoing healing work in a Christian?

Note: Many passages connect sin with insanity:

[the Prodigal Son, far from his father's home, starving, feeding pigs] ***Luke 15:17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!'***

[Nebuchadnezzar's repentance] ***Daniel 4:34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most***

High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

8. The double-minded nature of the unglorified Christian; and the incessant internal battle... never wholehearted in anything we do

Galatians 5:17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

We never sin wholeheartedly... or serve God wholeheartedly. Why? Because we are deeply divided within ourselves! No chapter makes that so clear as Romans 7!

9. The anguished cry for deliverance

Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Q: What does this cry teach us about our battle with temptation?

10. The hopeful resolution of the anguish

Romans 7:25 Thanks be to God-- through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Q: Why does Paul insert thankfulness exactly at that moment after the anguished cry? How will God through Jesus Christ our Lord rescue us from this body of death?

11. The last statement on present reality

Romans 7:25 So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Q: Why does Paul end this chapter this way? How does the focus on the mind help us battle sin?

Q: Since Paul says so much about the mind, what role does Bible intake, including classes like this one, and sermons, and our daily quiet times play in slaying temptation?