



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
www.anchoredminot.com



The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 6 Verses 12-23

Christians will always struggle in this life under the sun. Pastors and churches that do not recognize the real struggle of a Christian are not rooted in reality and certainly not rooted in the Bible. Martin Luther comments on this saying,

“Sin in us after baptism is in its nature truly sin; but according to substance and not in its quantity, quality, or actions. . . . The motion of anger and of evil desire is exactly the same in the godly and the godless, the same before grace and after grace; but in grace, it can do nothing, while outside of grace it gets the upper hand.”

You see, for the Christian, there will always be a struggle between “what is” and “what should be.” That is to say; we Christians will have this sinful nature around our necks until the day we die. We will always sin in thought, word, and deed. This ongoing struggle with sin is “what is.” However, we do not belong to sin, death, and the devil. We have a different/new Lord. We are baptized into Jesus’

death and resurrection. Therefore, we are alive to Jesus – not sin. We are freed from King sin. Indeed, King sin is not our master; King Jesus is our master. And as our master, Jesus never promotes sin. This is the reality of “what should be.”

In verse 16, Paul is pointing out that there is no middle ground between ‘what is’ and ‘what should be.’ There is no such thing as harmony between sin and Jesus. Therefore, as Christians, we are freed unto Jesus (paradoxically this freedom is actually slavery to Jesus). And with Jesus, we never have an excuse to sin.

What this means for the Christian is that there is an ongoing tension between ‘what is’ and ‘what should be.’ We Christians will never have peace with our sinful nature but will always have ‘civil war’ within. The Christian will always fight against the sinful nature (what is), knowing that he/she is under grace.

With all of that stated, there is a peculiar belief in Christianity that gets this wrong though. For example,

there are many well-meaning Christians who attribute 'lawlessness,' or we could say 'the license to sin belief' to the preaching of the Gospel. Somewhere in our thinking we rationalize that if the Gospel is presented as "too free, too unconditional or that Jesus fulfills the law for us" that the result will be lax morality, loose living, and lawlessness. It is as if we believe that the freeing message of the Gospel actually produces, encourages and grants people a license to sin. Because of this rationalization we find ourselves strapping, holding and attaching restrictions to the Gospel so that we might prevent or limit lawlessness. In other words, the Gospel is placed into bondage due to our rationalization and reaction to lawlessness.

In Galatians 2:17, Paul says, *"If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!"* In this verse the Apostle Paul shows us that it is not a fair conclusion to link lawlessness to the freeing message of the Gospel. To put it in another way, the proper effect of the Gospel of Jesus (i.e. justification by faith alone) does not grant a license to sin nor lead us to lawlessness. The Gospel is not and cannot be held responsible for lawlessness. For if lawlessness did come about by the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, then that would make Jesus Christ a promoter, supporter, and distributor of sin and rebellion! In other words, Paul is declaring, "God Forbid this rationalization!"

To the point; if lawlessness and a license to sin exist, these perverted freedoms can be traced back to something else other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ, namely our sinful nature (i.e., our old Adam exploiting the gospel).

In summary, we have a change in Lordship. As a result, we are now in conflict with sin, death, and the devil. With Jesus, our Lord, we are in conflict with 'what is.' That is why we daily confess our sins because our sins are not our master. That is why daily we need to be reminded of Jesus because Jesus 'is' our master. God be praised that we have a new Lord; the Lord help us as we 'war' with sin, death, and the devil in this life under the sun.

Questions:

- 1) Can a Christian have two Lords?
- 2) How does this view of a Christian – having a civil war within – differ from other church denominations?
- 3) How does the present power and benefits of 'baptism' comfort us in our daily battles?



