

**Romans (26):  
Some matters regarding the believer's sanctification**

**Introduction:**

Last Lord's Day we began to examine a major new division of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. We have recently completed the previous division that began with Romans 1:16 and continued until 5:21. The theme of that first major division of the epistle is the believer's *justification* before God. We have set before us in the first 5 chapters of Romans the means by which God has provided for His people to be saved from the *penalty* of sin. Through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, the ungodly, guilty sinner at the instance of faith, receives full and eternal pardon of all his sin and at the same time God treats the believer thereafter as righteous, fully accepted by God, exonerated of all his guilt before God. But with Romans 6:1 through 8:15, the believer's *sanctification* is the major theme. We have set before us in these chapters the means by which God has provided for His people to be saved from the *power* of sin.

In our notes for the past two weeks I had attempted to explain the similarities as well as the distinctions between these two important aspects of our salvation--justification and sanctification. But because of limited time we have not reviewed these matters. But it is of such importance we will do so now.

We have seen that justification is the ground upon which the life of sanctification is built. The two are inseparable, but at the same time they must be distinguished from one another. What we mean by this is that one cannot be justified without also becoming sanctified.

It is extremely important for us to know how justification and sanctification relate to one another. Much significant error in professing Christendom, even serious heresy, is due to the failure to understand the distinctions as well as the common traits that justification and sanctification have with one another. And so, it is very important to understand how these two aspects of our salvation, our justification before God and our sanctification by God, are similar but also quite different from one another. Let us take a few minutes to describe these similarities and their differences.<sup>1</sup>

**1. In what ways are our justification and sanctification alike?**

(1) They are like one another in that they are both the result of the working of God. They have the same author. It is God who justifies, and it is God who sanctifies. With regard to the first, we read in **Romans 8:33** that God is its author: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *It is God that justifies*" (Rom. 8:33). We read in several places that God is also the author of the work of sanctification that He carries on within the soul. God said to Moses, "*I am the Lord that does sanctify you*" (Exo. 31:13; Lev. 20:8).

(2) They are like one another in that they originate of the free and sovereign work of God's grace. Justification is an act of God's free grace, and so is sanctification. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). They are both of grace--freely and sovereignly bestowed by God.

(3) They are alike in that they always are seen together in every person who is the object of God's grace. There has never been a person who was justified, but that he was also sanctified. There never has been the case that a man experienced God's inward work of sanctification, but that he was also justified before God. Paul described the Christians at Corinth, "Such were some of you (i.e. flagrant sinners), but you

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<sup>1</sup> This section has been delivered in the past. It is contained in #FBC453, which was delivered on December 9, 2007.

are washed, but you are *sanctified*, but you are *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

(4) They are like one another in that both of them are the fruit of the Word of God. God justifies sinners through their belief in the truth. Jesus said to His own, “Now you are clean through the Word that I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). God also sanctifies His people by the Word of Truth. He prayed to His Father, “Sanctify them by Your truth; Your Word is truth” (John 17: And also Ephesians 5:6 of Christ’s work in His church, “That He might sanctify and cleanse His Church, with the washing of water by the Word.”

(5) They are like one another in that both are necessary to eternal life. God has declared that no man will escape God’s condemnation on Judgment Day unless He is justified. He has also declared that no one will pass the scrutiny of God’s judgment unless he is sanctified. “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:6). Both justification and sanctification are essential aspects of salvation.

## 2. In what ways do justification and sanctification differ from one another?

We have seen that in some ways they are much alike, but in other ways they are quite distinct from one another.

(1) **Justification is an act of God about the *standing* of a man before God; but sanctification is the work of God concerning the *nature* of a man.** It has been said in this way: Justification is an act of God as a Judge about a delinquent, absolving him from a sentence of death; but sanctification is an act of God about us, as a physician, in curing us of a mortal disease.

Imagine this scenario. You have a criminal that comes before a judge to be tried. He is charged with high treason. He is found to be guilty. He is worthy of death. But this same guilty man is also a diseased man. He has a disease of which he will not recover, but he will most certainly die. Not only does he need to escape from the condemnation of his guilt, but he needs healing of his deadly disease. Justification is God’s answer to his guilt; sanctification is God’s answer to his sinful condition from which he must be delivered. God acts toward the sinner in absolving him of his guilt; God works in that same man to cure him of his sinfulness. Both are necessary. Justification, therefore, is an act of God as a gracious Judge, but sanctification is a work of God as a merciful Physician. It has been pointed out that David joins them both together in Psalm 103:3, “(God) Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.”

(2) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that justification is an act of God’s grace *on account of the righteousness of another*, even Jesus, but sanctification is a work of God in which *he infuses righteousness into us*. The first, justification, speaks of imputation: God imputes or reckons the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be that of the believing sinner. This is God’s work *for* us. The second, sanctification, speaks of infusion, in which God works *in* us to make us holy.

(3) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that *our justification is complete, or perfect, but our sanctification is incomplete*. Justification occurred when the sinner first truly believed on Jesus Christ as his Savior. Justification is complete, knowing of no degrees. It is the same in every believer, new and old alike. The newest believer among us is as justified before God as the one among us who has believed longest. There is not degree of our justification. You are either justified or you are not. Our justification cannot be diminished or increased. It cannot be interrupted or it cannot cease to be. But sanctification is an imperfect, incomplete, changeable thing in every believer. One believer is more sanctified than another. It knows of many degrees between persons and even in the same person. A true believer may not become more justified than he is presently, but he can become much more sanctified than he is currently. A saint who has died and gone to be with the Lord is no more justified there than he was

when he was a believer here on earth. But then he will be completely sanctified, far above the condition in which he now finds himself.

(4) Justification and sanctification differ from one another in that *our justification involves no work of our own*, but is based solely upon the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf, *but our sanctification involves very much our work*. As God has commanded through Paul,

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling.

And yet, we know and confess that this work we do is in no way meritorious and in no way contributes to our justification. Justification involves our believing, trusting, resting in Jesus Christ *alone* for our righteousness. Our sanctification also involves our believing, trusting, resting in Jesus Christ, but it is as we go forth with all of our effort. We rest in Jesus Christ for our justification, but we work with all our might toward our full sanctification. The Scriptures liken it to striving, fighting, running, sowing, seeking, journeying, enduring, overcoming, and even exerting violence in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. There is no salvation for the believer unless you trust Jesus Christ alone for your justification. But there is no salvation for you if you refuse or fail to “*work out your own salvation* with fear and trembling.

Now, herein lays one of the great differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This is one of the major errors of Roman Catholicism that renders the “gospel” they preach as “another gospel” (cf. Gal. 1). It teaches that a sinner becomes justified before God after and because God has *infused* righteousness in him/her. The Bible (and historic Protestantism) states that the sinner becomes justified before God through faith alone, apart from works, because God *reckons* Christ’s righteousness to the believer. According to Rome, the “Christian” is not justified until he himself is *made* righteous; the Bible teaches that the believing sinner is regarded as righteous because of Christ alone. Rome teaches that justification is the result of a long process which God works in a believer through this life, on thereafter through purgatory, until he is finally and fully holy, then he becomes justified in God’s sight. This is terrible error that renders that one who believes this to still be condemned in his sins. Paul wrote, “I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Gal. 2:21). That principle is contrary to the teaching of Rome about justification, for they teach that there are laws by which, granted, with the help of God, you can gain righteousness for yourself and as a result of your effort, you will become justified before God some day in the far-off future.

But were Rome’s great error is to see sanctification as the basis of justification, *the great error of much of evangelicalism is that as long as you have you justification* (and that they claim comes through a one-time “decision”), *you can have salvation irrespective of sanctification*. Oh, yes, sanctification is taught as a good thing, a desirable thing, and there are many consequences for failing to live so as to be sanctified, but it is generally taught that it has nothing to do with salvation. As a result, relatively few evangelicals put forth the attention the Word of God places to live toward this great end, even the salvation of our souls. Understanding Romans 1:16-5:21 will correct the errant view of Roman Catholicism regarding justification. Understanding Romans 6:1-8:15 will correct the errant views of evangelicalism regarding sanctification.

The paragraph before us today is contained in **Romans 6:5-11**. There we read the following:

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For one who has died has been set free from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Verse 5** reads, “*For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.*” In Romans 6:4 Paul had reasoned that we who are believers were in union with the Lord Jesus Christ when He had died upon His cross. Verse 5 confirms the truth of verse 4. It follows that if we were in union with Him in His death, then our union with Him in His resurrection from the dead is equally true.

The word translated as “united” is a word that carries the idea of growing together. “No term could more adequately convey the intimacy of the union involved.”<sup>2</sup> We have grown together in Christ in both His death and His resurrection. What Paul was leading his readers to understand was that when Jesus was raised from the dead, He was raised to a new kind of life, even resurrection life. Paul is implying, therefore, that Christians are now alive through Christ into a new kind of life, one characterized by holiness. All we are as Christians, all the spiritual benefits that we enjoy, are due to our spiritual union with Jesus Christ, particularly in His death and resurrection.

In **verse 6** Paul tells us the spiritual reality that our union with Jesus Christ has brought to our spiritual state. “*We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*” Paul uses some terms in his discussion of the believer’s sanctification, which are very important for us to define rightly. The English Standard Version (ESV) has the term, “old self”, to describe what resulted from our union with Christ in His death. The King James Version translation reads, “Knowing this, that our *old man* is crucified with Him” What was Paul intending by this term?

Some, even many, have wrongly interpreted this term by saying that our “old man” means that our “sinful nature” was crucified, or put to death, through our union with Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> They taught that in order to become sanctified, win victory over sin, you had to accept in faith the truth that your sinful nature had actually died. And so, if you believe that this actually occurred, then through this “faith” the power of God would be given to you and you would be enabled by God’s grace to say “no” to temptation to sin. In effect the teaching is that if you can convince yourself through faith that your sinful nature has actually died, then the power of God would transform your life.

There has been considerable misunderstanding of this phrase [i.e. “our old self/man was crucified with Him”] w, which, with its counterpart “the new man,” occurs also in Ephesians 4:22-24 and Colossians 3:9-11 (cf. also Ephesians 2:15 and 4:13). Many popular discussions of Paul’s doctrine of the Christian life argue, or assume, that Paul distinguishes with these phrases between two parts or “natures” of a person. With this interpretation as the premise, it is then debated where the “old nature” is replaced with the “new nature” at conversion, or whether the “new nature” is added to the “old nature.” But the assumption that “old man” and “new man” refers to parts, or natures, of a person is incorrect. Rather, they designate the person as a whole, considered in relation to the corporate structure to which he or she belongs. “Old man” and “new man” are not, then, ontological, but relational or positional in orientation. They do not, at least in the first place, speak of a change of nature, but a change of relationship. “Our old man” is not our Adamic, or sin “nature that is judged and dethroned on the cross, and to which is added in the believer another “nature,” “the new man.” Rather, the “old man” is what we were “in Adam”—the “man” of the old age, who lives under the tyranny of sin and death. As J. R. W. Stott puts it, “what was crucified with Christ was not part of me called my old nature, but the whole of me as I was before I was converted.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1957), p. 218.

<sup>3</sup> For example, this was the teaching of J. Vernon McGee. “Coming to know this, that our old man (Adamic nature, our old self—old nature) was crucified with Him (Christ), that the body (Greek *soma*) meaning corpse) of sin might be paralyzed (cancelled, nullified), that henceforth we should not be a slave to sin.” J. Vernon McGee, *Reasoning Through Romans*, part 1 (Thru the Bible Books), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 373f.

This errant view of sanctification has been known as the *Keswick* view of sanctification. Although few are aware of its origin, it is a view about sanctification--receiving God's grace for living--which is probably held by most evangelicals. I held this view for years. The teaching has been around since about 1875. It began and was popularized in Bible conferences that were held annually at Keswick, England, from which it derived its name. The teaching is also sometimes referred to as "Victorious-life teaching." or "The Deeper Life" or "The Higher Christian Life." It is held by many but is popularized by some more than others: It is the view that is put forward by **Campus Crusade's** little tract, "*How to Live the Spirit-Filled Life.*" Its principle argument is as follows: based on Romans 6:1-14 it is argued that a "person can be a true Christian but with an unsundered life, but through a crisis of surrender the victorious life might begin for such a defeated Christian."<sup>5</sup> This theory of sanctification involves three essential points (also taken from above book):

1. A Christian can truly be justified but still under sin's dominion. What is needed is a second work of grace in which self is taken off the throne of one's heart and Christ is enthroned.

2. Through certain steps, a Christian may enter into this place of victorious Christian living.

(a) The believer must consciously reckon himself to be dead unto sin (Rom. 6). You have to *believe* this before you can *experience* it.

(b) The believer must consciously rely on Christ rather than himself to defeat temptation and sin and prompt righteousness.

(c) He must "believe" in Christ's resurrection power in order to spiritually receive this power.

3. A Christian must cease to exert all personal effort, and trust Christ alone to do work in him. Any effort to keep God's commands or any inclination of duty or responsibility to do so is to be avoided, for that is self-effort, and doomed to failure. Thus, *the Christian is to be passive*. If the Christian tries to resist directly the urges to sin, he will fail. Things like commands and practical instruction are counter-productive, for we do not have the ability to do the things God commands us; the life we lead must be by faith: It is He who lives His life through us." "Let go and let God." "Rest" in Him. "Let Him take over."

To show us how pervasive this kind of teaching is among evangelicals and why it is not biblical, I would like us to consider an extended description of the historical development of this teaching that **J. I. Packer** rehearsed in his book, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*. In this book he described the danger of being out of balance and out of step with what the Scriptures each regarding the power of the Holy Spirit.

The power of the Spirit in human lives, first taught with emphasis by seventeenth-century Puritans, became a matter of debate among Evangelicals in the eighteenth century, when John Wesley began to teach that the Spirit will root sin out of men's hearts entirely in his life. This was the "scriptural holiness" that Wesley believed God had raised up Methodism to spread. Non-Wesleyans recoiled, seeing the claim as unbiblical and delusive, and they constantly warned their constituencies against it. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the pendulum of reaction was thought to have swung too far; and many felt, rightly or wrongly, that anti perfectionist zeal had left Christians simply unaware that God has power to deliver from sinful practices, to energize a calmly triumphant righteousness, and to give piercing efficacy to preachers' utterances. Quite suddenly the theme of power in human lives caught as the topic for sermons, books, and informal discussion groups ("conversation meetings" as they were called) on both side of the Atlantic. What was said by Phoebe Palmer, Asa Mahan, Robert Pearsall Smith, and Hannah Whitehall Smith, Evan Hopkins, Andrew Murray, R. A. Torrey, Charles G. Trumbull, Robert C. Mcquilkin, F. B. Meyer, H. C. G. Moule, and others who spent their strength proclaiming the "secret" (their word) of power for believers was hailed as virtually a new

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<sup>5</sup> Henry Boardman, *The "Higher Life" Doctrine of Sanctification, Tried by the Word of God* (Sprinkle Publications, 1996, orig. 1877), p. ii.

revelation, which indeed the teachers themselves took it to be. A new evangelical movement was off and running.

The “secret” of what was sometimes called the Higher or Victorious Life has been most fully institutionalized in England’s annual Keswick Convention week. There to this day there operates, like a jazz band’s “head” arrangement, an agreed understanding that Monday’s theme is sin, Tuesday’s is Christ who saves from sin, Wednesday’s is consecration, Thursday’s is life in the Spirit, and Friday’s is empowered service by the sanctified, especially in missions. A Keswick periodical was launched in 1874, called *The Christian’s Pathway of Power*. After five years it changed its name to *The Life of Faith*, but this did not mean any change of character; faith is the pathway of power according to Keswick. Keswick’s influence has been worldwide. “Keswicks” crop up all over the English speaking world. “Keswick teaching has come to be regarded as one of the most potent spiritual forces in recent Church history.”<sup>6</sup> Preachers “of Keswick type,” specializing in convention addresses about power, have become a distinct evangelical ministerial species, alongside evangelists, Bible teachers, and speakers on prophetic subjects. Thus institutionalized and with its supporting constituency of those who appreciate Keswick ethos—equable, cheerful, controlled, fastidious, very congenial to the middle class—the Keswick message of power for sanctity and service is plainly here to stay for some time yet...

Yet pleasure in today’s power talk cannot be unmixed. For experience shows that when the power theme is made central to our thinking about the Spirit and is not anchored in a deeper view of the Spirit’s ministry with a different center, unhappy disfigurements soon creep in. What sort of disfigurements? Well, take the following for starters. Pietistic concentration of interest on the felt ups and downs of the soul as it seeks power over this and then tends to produce an egoistic, introverted cast of mind that becomes indifferent to community concerns and social needs. The Spirit’s work tends to be spoken of man centeredly, as if God’s power is something made available for us to switch on and *use* (a frequent, telltale Keswick word) by a technique of thought and will for which *consecration and faith* is the approved name. Also, the idea gets around that God’s power works in us automatically so far as we let it do so, so that in effect we regulate it by the degree of our consecration and faith at any one time. Another notion popping up is that inner passivity, waiting for God’s power to carry us along, is a required state of the heart (“let go and let God,” as the too popular slogan has it). Then, too, in evangelizing, it is almost conventional in certain circles to offer “power for living” to the spiritual needy as a resource that, apparently, they will be privileged to harness and control once they have committed themselves to Christ.

But all this sounds more like an adaption of yoga than like biblical Christianity. To start with, it blurs the distinction between manipulating divine power at one’s will (which is magic, exemplified by Simon Magus [Acts 8:18-24]) and experiencing it as one obeys God’s will (which is religion, exemplified by Paul [2 Corinthians 12:9, 10]). Furthermore, it is not realistic. Evangelists’ talk regularly implies that, once we become Christians, God’s power in us will immediately cancel out defects of character and make our whole lives plain sailing. This however is so unbiblical as to be positively dishonest. Certainly sometimes God works wonders of sudden deliverance from this or that weakness at conversion, just as at he sometimes does at other times; but every Christian’s life is a constant fight against the pressures and pulls of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and his battle for Christ likeness (that is, habits of wisdom, devotion, love, and righteousness) is as grueling as it is unending. To suggest otherwise when evangelizing is a kind of confidence trick. Again Keswick talk regularly encourages us to expect at once too much and not enough—full freedom from the down drag of sin on a moment-by-moment basis (too much), yet without any progressive loosening of the grip of sin on our hearts at motivational level (not enough). This is bad theology, and is psychologically and unspiritually unreal into the bargain.<sup>7</sup>

J. I. Packer himself had held this Keswick view of sanctification when he was a younger man. He attributes reading a book on sanctification which showed him his error and directed him to biblical truth.

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Barabas, *So Great Salvation* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1952), p. v.

<sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Intervarsity Press, 1984), pp. 24-27.

This was the classic work on the biblical teaching of sanctification. It is the book entitled *Holiness*, written by **J. C. Ryle**, originally published in 1877. He wrote the book to counter and correct the Keswick teaching of sanctification that was becoming popularized at that time. It remains one of the best books available that sets forth the Bible's teaching about the believer's sanctification. Ryle began to address the problem by posing a series of questions to the reader that, if pondered in the light of Scripture, would show the Keswick view of sanctification to be in error. Here are the questions that Ryle posed:

(1) I ask, in the first place, whether it is wise to speak of faith as the one thing needful, and the only thing required, as many seem to do now-a-days in handling the doctrine of sanctification? - Is it wise to proclaim in so bald, naked, and unqualified a way as many do, that the holiness of converted people is by faith only, and not at all by personal exertion? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

(2) I ask, in the second place, whether it is wise to make so little as some appear to do, comparatively, of the many practical exhortations to holiness in daily life which are to be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the latter part of most of St. Paul's epistles? Is it according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

(3) I ask, in the third place, whether it is wise to use vague language about perfection, and to press on Christians a standard of holiness, as attainable in this world for which there is no warrant to be shown either in Scripture or experience? I doubt it.

(4) In the fourth place, is it wise to assert so positively and violently, as many do, that the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans does not describe the experience of the advanced saint, but the experience of the unregenerate man, or of the weak and un-established believer? I doubt it.

(5) In the fifth place, is it wise to use the language which is often used in the present day about the doctrine of "Christ in us"? I doubt it.

Is not this doctrine often exalted to a position which it does not occupy in Scripture? I am afraid that it is. That the true believer is one with Christ and Christ in him, no careful reader of the New Testament will think of denying for a moment. There is, no doubt, a mystical union between Christ and the believer. With Him we died, with Him we were buried, with Him we rose again, with Him we sit in heavenly places. We have five plain texts where we are distinctly taught that Christ is "in us." (Rom. viii. 10; Gal. ii. 20; iv. 19; Eph. iii. 17; Col. iii. 11.) But we must be careful that we understand what we mean by the expression. That "Christ dwells in our hearts by faith," and carries on His inward work by His Spirit, is clear and plain. But if we mean to say that beside, and over, and above this there is some mysterious indwelling of Christ in a believer, we must be careful what we are about. Unless we take care, we shall find ourselves ignoring the work of the Holy Ghost. We shall be forgetting that in the Divine economy of man's salvation election is the special work of God the Father - atonement, mediation, and intercession, the special work of God the Son - and sanctification, the special work of God the Holy Ghost. We shall be forgetting that our Lord said, when He went away, that He would send us another Comforter, who should "abide with us" for ever, and, as it were, take His place. (John xiv. 16.) In short, under the idea that we are honouring Christ, we shall find that we are dishonouring His special and peculiar gift - the Holy Ghost. Christ, no doubt, as God, is everywhere - in our hearts, in heaven, in the place where two or three are met together in His name.

But we really must remember that Christ, as our risen Head and High Priest, is specially at God's right hand interceding for us until He comes the second time; and that Christ carries on His work in the hearts of His people by the special work of His Spirit, whom He promised to send when He left the world. (John xv. 26.) A comparison of the ninth and tenth verses of the eighth chapter of Romans seems to me to show this plainly. It convinces me that "Christ in us" means Christ in us "by His Spirit." Above all, the words of St. John are most distinct and express: "Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us." (1 John iii. 24.)

In saying all this, I hope no one will misunderstand me. I do not say that the expression, "Christ in us" is unscriptural. But I do say that I see great danger of giving an extravagant and unscriptural importance to the idea contained in the expression; and I do fear that many use it now-a-days without exactly knowing what they mean, and unwittingly, perhaps, dishonour the mighty work of the Holy

Ghost. If any readers think that I am needlessly scrupulous about the point, I recommend to their notice a curious book by Samuel Rutherford (author of the well-known letters), called "The Spiritual Antichrist." They will there see that two centuries ago the wildest heresies arose out of an extravagant teaching of this very doctrine of the "indwelling of Christ" in believers. They will find that Saltmarsh, and Dell, and Towne, and other false teachers, against whom good Samuel Rutherford contended, began with strange notions of "Christ in us," and then proceeded to build on the doctrine antinomianism, and fanaticism of the worst description and vilest tendency. They maintained that the separate, personal life of the believer was so completely gone, that it was Christ living in him who repented, and believed, and acted! The root of this huge error was a forced and unscriptural interpretation of such texts as "I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.) And the natural result of it was that many of the unhappy followers of this school came to the comfortable conclusion that believers were not responsible, whatever they might do! Believers, forsooth, were dead and buried; and only Christ lived in them, and undertook everything for them! The ultimate consequence was, that some thought they might sit still in a carnal security, their personal accountableness being entirely gone, and might commit any kind of sin without fear! Let us never forget that truth, distorted and exaggerated, can become the mother of the most dangerous heresies. When we speak of "Christ being in us," let us take care to explain what we mean. I fear some neglect this in the present day.

(6) In the sixth place, is it wise to draw such a deep, wide, and distinct line of separation between conversion and consecration [in other words, between justification and sanctification so as to sever them from one another--Lars], or the higher life, so called, as many do draw in the present day? Is this according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

(7) In the seventh and last place, is it wise to teach believers that they ought not to think so much of fighting and struggling against sin, but ought rather to "yield themselves to God" and be passive in the hands of Christ? Is this according to the proportion of God's Word? I doubt it.

It is a simple fact that the expression "yield yourselves" is only to be found in one place in the New Testament, as a duty urged upon believers. That place is in the sixth chapter of Romans, and there within six verses the expression occurs five times. (See Rom. vi. 13-19.) But even there the word will not bear the sense of "placing ourselves passively in the hands of another." Any Greek student can tell us that the sense is rather that of actively "presenting" ourselves for use, employment, and service. (See Rom. xii. 1.) The expression therefore stands alone. But, on the other hand, it would not be difficult to point out at least twenty-five or thirty distinct passages in the Epistles where believers are plainly taught to use active personal exertion, and are addressed as responsible for doing energetically what Christ would have them do, and are not told to "yield themselves" up as passive agents and sit still, but to arise and work. A holy violence, a conflict, a warfare, a fight, a soldier's life, a wrestling, are spoken of as characteristic of the true Christian. The account of "the armour of God" in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, one might think, settles the question. Again, it would be easy to show that the doctrine of sanctification without personal exertion, by simply "yielding ourselves to God," is precisely the doctrine of the antinomian fanatics in the seventeenth century (to whom I have referred already, described in Rutherford's *Spiritual Antichrist*), and that the tendency of it is evil in the extreme. Again, it would be easy to show that the doctrine is utterly subversive of the whole teaching of such tried and approved books as *Pilgrim's Progress*, and that if we receive it we cannot do better than put Bunyan's old book in the fire! If Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress* simply yielded himself to God, and never fought, or struggled, or wrestled, I have read the famous allegory in vain. But the plain truth is, that men will persist in confounding two things that differ - that is, justification and sanctification. In justification the word to be addressed to man is believe - only believe; in sanctification the word must be "watch, pray, and fight." What God has divided let us not mingle and confuse.<sup>8</sup>

Ryle's method of introducing his subject is very effective. By asking these questions and explaining their implications, he was able to erode the presumptive and uncritical belief of his readers. He set them to

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<sup>8</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Holiness* (Charles Nolan Publishers, 2001, orig. 1877), pp. xvii-xxviii.

thinking and thereby doubting whether their position was true to all of Scripture. Essentially he moved the reader by his book's introduction to become teachable regarding the matter of the believer's sanctification.

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Let us return to our text of Romans 6:6. Again, it reads, ***“We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”*** Paul was telling his readers that their life as it had been before conversion came to an end. **“Our old man’ is the old self or ego, the unregenerate man in his entirety in contrast with the new man as the regenerate man in his entirety.”**<sup>9</sup> Because of the believer's union with Jesus Christ in His death, his former self as an unbelieving sinner had died. The reason that God caused this union of the believer's former life to have died with Christ was to make it possible for his “body of sin” as a believer to be delivered from the power of sin. “the body of sin” is a reference to the physical body. The physical body with its senses is the vehicle through which sin is manifested. That old man, that person you were before you were converted, had once controlled your body of sin. But because your old man was crucified with Christ, then the new man that God made you to be may lead your body hereafter not to be a slave of sin. Paul personified sin, setting it forth as a cruel master. We may experience deliverance from the power of sin because of our union with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.

**Verse 7** is a summary statement, which declares the truth of verse 6. ***“For one who has died has been set free from sin.”*** A dead man is no longer subject to a former master. The one who died with Christ, his old man has died with respect to sin. Because of this truth, we should have confidence that we will live in righteousness before Christ. This is the meaning of **verse 8**: ***“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.”***

**Verses 9 through 11** shows how our knowledge of our union with Jesus Christ should give us faith and confidence and should lead us to live for Christ.

***9“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”***

Because of this historic truth and reality of Jesus' death and resurrection, and due to our understanding of our union with Him in His experience, we are to identify ourselves with Him, and live accordingly. Paul is not saying that we are now continually dying and being raised. He is saying the one decisive historical event of Jesus dying and rising, and we with Him, shapes our existence and our understanding of our identity as Christians.

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**“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,<sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”** (Heb. 13:20f)

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<sup>9</sup> Murray, *Romans*, p. 219.