

It Is Written

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ARE WE KILLING THE "OLD MAN?"

By Robert F. Turner

The Roman letter has at least five propositions, affirmed and proven by the apostle Paul. (1) Man stands justly condemned for his sins; (2) Grace, not law, is the remedy; (3) This grace is expressed in the crucified Christ; (4) It is available on the condition of obedient faith in Christ; and (5) It is for all, Jew and Gentile alike. Although argued through the first eleven chapters, and referred to thereafter, these propositions have already been discussed, and a summation is drawn in the first five chapters. This means that chapter six, "What shall we say then?" introduces a question that either was actually propounded, or was thought to be possible in the light of the foregoing arguments. Note the question carefully, for the comments that follow are in answer to that question. "Shall we continue to sin, that grace may abound?" The question is from and for people who have been baptized into Christ, and this too must be remembered as we read further.

Paul's immediate answer is "God forbid," literally, "may it not be." And when he adds, "We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?" he is still countering the same people in answer to the same question. He is not saying, "We who have been forgiven...." That would be to say we who have received the first benefits of grace -- a part of the question. He is saying, "We who have determined, who have purposed, never to sin again." The death of sin is in the intent of the saint and precedes the burial soon to be mentioned. When he says we are baptized into His death, this "death" includes crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, as he shows (Romans 6:3-5). He is saying that when we are baptized into the death of Christ, we must participate in the whole thing -- the death to sin, the burial (by which guilt of past sins are forgiven, cleansed), and the resurrection to a new life. We must not "continue in sin" cannot continue in sin and be consistent with the total figure of Christ's death.

He adds strength to his argument in Romans 6:6, "...our old man was crucified with him." We have crucified, put to death, the "old man," our former way of life. Since death preceded burial, in the actual death of Christ and in the figure, this crucifixion is the rejection of the old way of life that must take place before we are buried and forgiven of past sins. It refers to genuine repentance, a turning of our back on the way we once lived. Crucifixion was a painful death, and its use here suggests a change in life that requires drastic action, a trauma that only strong-hearted resolve can accomplish. We make a grievous mistake when we suggest "all he would have to do is be baptized" -- as if anyone could be crucified as a sort of casual thing. No, brethren. When we teach the truth about baptism, we do more than say it is a burial or simply mouth the words, "for the remission of sins." We are asking our neighbor to make a drastic change of allegiance, to crucify the flesh.

Perhaps we can see the rejection of some sins as a crucifixion. Drug addicts go through literal torture in trying to throw the habit. Some who have tried to stop smoking have known hard days. Alcohol is not easily given up. But we err in thinking it is easy to overcome a temper or to throw off the desire for power or money. Covetousness is idolatry and hard to kill. And perhaps the hardest of all is pride or selfishness. Truly putting them to death can be the tortuous crucifixion Paul has in mind. Paul does not suggest that this "death" means it is no longer possible to sin or even to be a slave to sin. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body...neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness" (vv. 12-13). He is urging us to reconsider our intent and purpose of heart as we enter the waters of baptism. With our backs turned on sin, dead unto sin, we were ready to be forgiven and then arise to a new life. He asks us to recall our early resolve, like asking a troubled couple to remember their wedding vows.

Romans is not the only place figurative language makes this point. In Colossians 2:11, Paul reminds saints of Christ "in whom ye were also circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (emphasis mine, rt). Compare this with Romans 6:6: "that the body of sin might be done away." Circumcision is figurative here, as crucifixion is in Romans and means a painful cutting off of the past life. It is here coupled with baptism. Or consider 1 Peter 4:1ff, where the process is

called "suffering." "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh (literally, *rt*), arm ye yourselves also with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." The footnotes put "unto" sin rather than "from" sin, and obviously, this does not refer to Christ, who had no sin. The "he" is one of "ye" who "no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (v. 2f).

Back in Romans, we crucify the old man in genuine repentance, and then we are buried in baptism "for the remission of sins" or removal of the guilt of our past life. But this is not all, there is a very positive side. Christ's death (the whole picture) also included His resurrection. He was made king following the resurrection; He became our High Priest following the resurrection; He became our Advocate following the resurrection. Paul puts it plainly: "For the death that he died, he died unto sin once for all: but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God." And Paul says, "Even so reckon (consider, *rt*) ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 11-12). Paul's argument would not be complete without the positive side. It is not enough simply to turn our back on sin, though very important; we must also "live unto God" a positive life of service. And, how can such a one entertain the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" God forbid, indeed!

When I consider the marvelous lesson of Romans 6 and then look at many brethren who claim to have been "baptized into His death," I get the distinct feeling we are emphasizing the burial and practically ignoring the preceding death and the following resurrection. No wonder some folks say we are water salvationists. Brethren, these things ought not to be. Let us do all within our power to bury people who have crucified the past and who are determined to "arise to walk in newness of life."

Can Satan Read My Mind?

By Mark Posey

Question: Can Satan read my mind and know what I'm thinking? Is this how he tempts me with specific things that are only unique to me?

Answer: There is no scripture that indicates that Satan can read our minds and know what we are thinking. Why?

First, Satan is a created being, originally a powerful angel (Ezekiel 28:13, 14). He aspired to be like God (Isaiah 14:13-14), but he is not God's equal in any way. Only God is Omnipresent [all present] Omniscient [all knowing], Omnipotent [all powerful], and Omnibenevolent [all loving]. Therefore, only God has complete and continual knowledge of our minds' activities (Psalms 139).

Second, everywhere in the Bible that angels or demons interact with people or God, information must be exchanged through communication (Cf. Job 1:6-12; Matthew 4:1-11). If Satan could have read Jesus' mind, he would have altered his doomed strategy in the temptations he devised (Matthew 4:1-11). Instead, the devil tried different temptations, and each time Jesus resisted him verbally, using the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

What Satan can affect are one's thought processes. His main strategy is attacking our minds through false teaching. He is a liar and a deceiver (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; 20:3, 7-10). He lies about God and attacked His Word (Genesis 3:4-5; Luke 8:12). He disguises himself as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:13-15), blinds the minds of unbelievers (II Corinthians 4:3-4) and darkens their understanding (Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:17-19).

Satan has observed human behavior since the beginning of creation and, as a result, has a thorough working knowledge. However, Christ triumphed over Satan (Hebrews 2:14), and we have the responsibility to resist him by submitting to God. When we do, Satan will flee (Colossians 3:15; James 4:7). The key to resisting the Devil is to have a strong faith in the Lord (I Peter 5:6-11).