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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

The Roman Pilgrimage (Part 7)



Part 7/20

The Roman Pilgrimage
By Derek Prince

We are now commencing stage 8 of our pilgrimage which will deal with the first part of Romans 6. In the previous session we dealt with the second half of Romans 5 and a very elaborate complicated comparison between Adam and Jesus. I won't try to summarize that, it's too complicated. But we'll go on now to something that is a little more simple but very drastic and that is Romans 6. This is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. I've lived in this chapter for so long but there's still so much new. Every time I read it I find something new that I didn't know before.

Now the title for this stage of our journey is "God's Solution for the Old Man: Execution." God has no plan B for our old man. He doesn't send him to church or Sunday School. He doesn't teach him to memorize scripture. He has sentenced him to death and there's no reprieve, there's no alternative.

You see, we've already dealt with the forgiveness of our past sins, that was in Romans 3. That's very wonderful but it's not all that we need. Again, I will go back for a few moments to my own boyhood in the Anglican church to whom I owe many debts of gratitude but in the Anglican church in those days—it may be different today in the Episcopal church—but every Sunday morning 'round about 11:00 o'clock we said the general confession. I can remember these words, they'll never depart from me. "Pardon us miserable offenders," etc. Well, every time we said that I certainly acknowledged that I was an offender—I wasn't always too miserable about it—and my attitude was if religion can't do more than make me a miserable offender, I can be an offender without religion and not nearly so miserable. But, I always had this feeling maybe I got my sins forgiven. I was never quite sure. In fact, my attitude about religion at that time was its function was to make you feel guilty. I thought I'd achieved something tremendous if I could walk out of church feeling slightly guilty. I didn't know there was anything beyond that. But I just wondered did God really forgive my sins? The embarrassing thing was I walked out of that church knowing full well that next week I was going to go on committing the same sins. The question was: Do I please God by confessing sins that I'm going to go on committing or do I provoke him? I really never came to a clear answer to that question.

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But you see, here's the answer in Romans 6. It's one thing to have your past sins forgiven, that's tremendous. But it's not all because inside every one of us, without exception, every one of us descended from Adam, there dwells a rebel. And even if our past sins have been forgiven, that rebel inside us is going to go on committing the same kind of sins unless he's dealt with. It's a significant fact of history that Adam never begot any children until he was a rebel. And so where every descendant of Adam is born out of rebellion. Every one of us has a rebel. Sometimes he's very conspicuous, he can be seen in all our attitudes and actions. Sometimes he's very concealed, he can be very religious, very polite, very nice. But he's still at heart a total rebel. God will make no peace with that rebel, he has sentenced him to death.

The good news is here's the mercy of God. The execution took place more than 19 centuries ago when Jesus died on the cross. That's the way out, that's the solution.

But for a little while I want to look at what the Bible says about this Adamic nature in each one of us. It's called the old man or the modern translation says the old self. But I prefer to keep the word man because it traces us directly back to Adam, the first man. It's called a carnal nature, it's called the flesh, it's called the body, it's called the body of sin and it's called the body of the flesh. The Bible uses certain words in special technical ways. Almost any system of communication has certain technical words it uses like electronics has certain technical words. If you want to understand electronics—which I don't—you've got to learn the correct use of those technical words.

There are a few technical words in the Bible. Perhaps the most important one is the one we're talking about. The flesh, the body, the body of sin, the body of the flesh. It does not mean our physical body. Now in other places the flesh means the actual physical body. But in many places it doesn't mean that, it means the nature that we inherited with our body by descent from Adam. And only the context can show you which way to translate it.

Now again, this is true of countless words that we use in daily life. They have more than one meaning. For instance, with my British background, for me a bag is something made of paper or plastic that you carry in your hand. But my wife Ruth says when we arrive at an airport, "Did you collect the bags from the carousel?" Well, I had to learn what she meant, you see, because we never used the word bag of a suitcase. Why should we? So, that's just a simple example but when my wife says bag, I say, "Does she mean the thing that's made out of paper or plastic or does she mean the suitcase." Only the context tells me. That's a very simple example and there are countless cases in the English language. We get used to thinking in terms of the context.

So let me just quickly run over some of these places with you. For instance, the flesh. You'll find that used many times in Romans 7. Romans 7:5:

> "For while we were in the flesh..."

That doesn't mean while we're alive in this body, it means before we came to know the Lord and had an experience to change. Romans 7:18:

> "I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh..."

Verse 25:

> "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin."

In none of those places does it mean the physical body. It means the old Adamic nature.

And then take the word body. In Romans 8:10:

> "And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."

When Christ comes into us we do not actually die physically but the old body of sin, the old Adamic nature is sentenced to death. You see?

And then the body of sin in Romans 6:6.

> "Knowing this, that our old self [but I'm going to say old man] was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with..."

Well, when you're saved you don't cease to have a body. You know that perfectly well. But the body of sin is put out of action, it's rendered unable to function any longer. That's what we're dealing with.

And then in Colossians 2:11 it speaks about the body of the flesh. Just to make this clear because I think many people

read the Bible without a clear understanding of which it's talking about. Colossians 2:11:

> "And in him [that's Jesus] you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

Well, we don't lose our physical body by this experience but the body of the flesh, the old sinful, Adamic, rebellious nature is dealt with, it's put out of operation.

Now let's go back to the beginning of Romans 6 and once again Paul starts this chapter by imagining an objection that would be made. And to my way of thinking, he always has in mind a Jewish objector. I may be wrong but it seems to me these are just the typical objections that a Jew who pinned his faith to keeping the law of Moses would make. You see at the end of chapter 5 he says in verse 20:

> "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."

So the more sin emerged and manifested itself, the greater the grace of God. Now the objection he imagines is at the beginning of chapter 6. And bear in mind the chapter divisions were not there in the original text, they were put in by the translators. They're not sacrosanct.

> "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?"

Do you understand? That's based on chapter 5:20. He says where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. So, some objector says, "Okay. So if that's the way then the more we sin the more grace we get. So the way to keep in grace is to keep on sinning." That's the objection.

Now, Paul comes up with—what's the first phrase of verse 2? "Perish the thought!"—that's right.

> "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?"

Now the essence of what Paul is saying is if you talk that way, you have no comprehension of how the grace of God operates because the grace of God does not leave us alive in sin. When we enter into the grace of God, a dramatic experience takes place. We become dead to sin that we may live to righteousness in the grace of God. So what Paul is saying is it's a contradiction in terms to talk about living in sin in the grace of God. God doesn't give grace to people who live in sin.

The condition on which we receive God's grace is that we cease to live in sin. This is extremely important because according to my observation which is fallible, there are multitudes of Christians who talk about the grace of God but don't understand what it means to be in the grace of God. You cannot live in sin and be in the grace of God. They are two mutually exclusive alternatives. If you're in the grace of God you're not living in sin. If you're living in sin you're not in the grace of God. So you have to choose.

You see, I don't want to seem to have something against the people who call their church Grace whatever it is but I mean, my observation is so many people associated with such churches haven't begun to comprehend what's involved in the grace of God. Listen, grace is free but it is not cheap. There are vital, radical conditions attached to the grace of God. And if you don't meet those conditions, don't talk about being in the grace of God, you're deceiving yourself. Quite probably you're the only person who is deceived.

Now, Paul backs this up by an argument from the significance of Christian baptism. I would like to say that in my opinion, amongst most Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Baptists and so on, the importance and the significance of baptism is greatly underrated. It's much more important than most people who practice baptism imagine. I cannot find a case of anybody from Pentecost onwards who claimed salvation through faith in Jesus without being baptized. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Lots of people say they believed but they haven't been baptized. Well, that's between God and them, it's not my business but I say you're trespassing on the grace of God. There is no such thing in the New Testament.

Paul assumes that every Christian he's writing to has been baptized. Let me say this again. I believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I believe it's a tremendous life changing experience. But I believe baptism in water should be just as tremendous and just as life changing as the baptism in the Spirit. It's not a little ceremony that you go through to join a congregation. "Well, now you've got saved, three weeks from now we're having a baptismal service. Put down your name." You will not find any of the apostles saying that. When the Philippian jailer and his household got saved, they didn't wait till morning to get baptized, they were baptized in the middle of the night.

I've had the privilege of leading people to the Lord and they say what next? I say baptism. I've taken them out to the sea

and baptized them and they've driven home in soaking clothes. Baptism is an urgent matter. You read the New Testament for yourself and see if you can find any kind of door opened to a casual attitude to baptism. There isn't any. It's vital. It's crucial. And those who just go through a ceremony are missing the real blessing.

I was in New Zealand a good many years ago and I taught on baptism to a congregation and a number of people who hadn't been baptized wanted to be baptized. So we gathered around somebody's swimming pool and we had a baptismal service. The power of God was so powerful that everybody standing on the edge of the pool went down under the power of God without anybody praying for them! There was a group of really fine wonderful Baptist brothers and sisters there and they looked at that and they said, "I wish we'd had that." See? They felt they'd been cheated. This is not an attack on Baptists because it's true of most Pentecostals. They haven't grasped the significance of baptism.

Now let's look at it in the light of what Paul says. Verse 3:

> "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?"

That's the point. And notice please you are baptized into Christ Jesus. You're not baptized into a Baptist church or a Pentecostal church or an African Inland Mission. God forbid! The only thing into which you are baptized is Jesus Christ himself and don't be content with anything less.

I say this because I was a missionary in Africa and there if you went from one church to another, if you were in the African Inland Mission and you went to the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, you had to be rebaptized to get in. To me, that is a horrible heresy.

> "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?"

What are you talking any longer? When you were baptized, that was death. That's what Paul is saying.

> "Therefore we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."

We've been buried with Christ in that watery grave that we might be resurrected as Jesus was resurrected. Not in his own strength but in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the glory of God that brought him out of the tomb. You see, when we are baptized in water, what we're saying is, "God, from this moment onwards I'm not going to live in my own strength. I've died. The power that's going to keep me going from this moment onwards is the supernatural power of your Holy Spirit. I'm going to walk in a supernatural walk of life."

Let's go on to verse 5 because I have to move quickly.

> "For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

When he speaks about being united with him in the likeness of his death, what is he speaking about? Being what? Baptized. So he says if we have been baptized we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. I say if you've not been baptized, you're taking a risk because the promise is to those who've been united with him, buried with him by baptism.

Verse 6, now here we are:

> "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin..."

We'll come to that in our next session. Let's look further into this mystery of identification which I've mentioned several times. You see, it's the key that opens up all the riches of the cross. We don't just contemplate Jesus on the cross, we say when he died, I died because he took my place. He was my representative. He was the last Adam. The total evil inheritance that was due to me and all the descendants of Adam came upon him.

Now if I want to be identified with him and go all the way with him, what do I have to do, what is the key step? "If we have been buried with him by baptism into his death." That's where we join the procession, if you see what I mean. That's the act of our will and obedience by which we declare our identification with him for the rest of the journey. When we're buried with him, then we've got the

right to enter into everything that followed his burial. He was made alive, he was resurrected—don't stop there. He was enthroned.

Many, many years ago for the first time, newly come to this nation—in fact, in l964—I visited Houston as the guest of the Full Gospel Businessmen and they accommodated me in the Rice Hotel in Houston. And I stepped into the elevator and I looked at all the buttons and there was 1, 2, 3 and so on. But there was one Mezzanine 3, 4, 5 and I think there were ten floors. But under the 1 was B. And it happened that there was an airline pilot in the elevator when I got in and he was kind of talkative and he was explaining to me this new type of button and he said, "This button is elevated by pressure, it's elevated by a field of activity." You know, an electrical field. "When your finger comes close to it it activates the button." I thought about that and then I looked at those buttons again and I said to myself, "Here we are on 1 and we want to go up but what is B?" And then the Holy Spirit said to me as clearly as anything, "B is basement, burial and baptism." I got the message. If you want to go up you've got to go down first. When you've been down to the basement, then you can decide what floor you want to go to, whatever floor you go to.

So I was telling this in a meeting in the Full Gospel Businessmen and Brother Sherman McCurty who was the president in those days came to me afterwards and I said, "You know, you just decide if you want to go to the 10th floor, you press 10 and that's where you go." He came to me afterwards and said, "Brother Prince, isn't it a tragedy that so many Christians just press M for Mezzanine and get off there?"

But you see the picture? The elevator is Jesus. We have to go down to B which is what? Basement, burial and baptism. And after that we're entitled to go anywhere the elevator takes us. It's in Christ. You see? That's the way up. It's identification. But the key is baptism as I understand it.

I make it my aim to just teach what the Bible says. That's very difficult. Very, very difficult. When I set my mind to do that I discovered I had all sorts of prejudices, all sorts of inherited ideas from my Christian background, many of which were not scriptural. People say, "I just teach the Bible." Brother, that's very difficult. I don't believe I've succeeded but I work at it. And when I look at what the Bible says I come up with these results.

I think of another silly story which I think I'm going to tell. During the period before World War II, German was forbidden by the treaty of Versailles to rearm. They were not allowed to build armament factories. But when Hitler came to power he quickly started to rearm Germany secretly. So they had all sorts of factories which apparently were building baby carriages but were really building quite different things. So there was one man working in this factory for building baby carriages in one department and his wife became pregnant. So he decided that he'd get all his mates in different areas of the factory, each one to steal a part and bring them to him and out of them he would build a baby carriage. Well, one of his mates met him walking down the street looking rather baffled and frustrated and he said, "What's the matter?" He said, "I put the parts together twice and each time they make a machine gun." For me, that's what the Bible is. When you put the parts together they make what God intended them to make. You can't make a baby carriage out of machine guns.

So here's the truth. Let's look for a moment in Colossians 2 just to emphasize this. Colossians 2:11. Well, it's all in him. If we start in verse 10:

> "In him [Jesus] you've been made complete, and he is the head over all rule and authority; [and you're there with him over all rule and authority] and in him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ."

See? That's not removing your physical body but that's getting rid of that old Adamic rebel that has dominated us for so long.

Then verse 12:

> "Having been buried with him in baptism..."

That's the key point of uniting with Jesus.

Let me tell you something. In countries which are not Christian, people don't really mind very much if you say I'm a believer in Jesus. But you go out and get baptized and the whole world explodes. Who makes it explode? Satan, because he knows that's the point at which you've got out of his grasp. You've passed through the waters.

Let's just read this and we must close.

> "Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him

> through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."

Now going back to Romans 6, Paul is saying don't you remember you were baptized? Don't you know what that meant? You were buried with him and you've finished the old life. So you can't talk about living any longer in sin when you've been baptized. Do you see the application? That's the end for this time.

(end session one)

Session 2

In our previous session we commenced stage 8 of this pilgrimage which is at the beginning of Romans 6 and we looked at Paul's answer to the suggestion that we might go on living in sin in order that grace might abound. Paul disposed of that suggested objection by saying that it's impossible to live in sin and be in the grace of God because in order to be in the grace of God we have to be identified with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection. And when we are identified with him in his death, that's the end of sin. We have died to sin so it's illogical from then on to talk about living in sin.

The objection of this imaginary objector is based on a misunderstanding of what it is to be in the grace of God. To be in the grace of God you have to be identified with Jesus, you have to pass with him through death into resurrection. The death is a death to sin. From then on it is unscriptural and illogical to talk about living in sin.

So we looked for some time at God's dealings with what is called the old man, the flesh, the body, the body of sin, the body of the flesh. All those are different phrases used to describe not our physical body but the old Adamic nature which we have inherited from Adam. Every one of us has in side us by nature a rebel. Even the sweetest little baby, that cute little daughter of yours that's just two years old. Inside there's a rebel.

I've noticed that with children, especially girls, and I've helped to raise nine so I have a little experience, about the age of two something surfaces. I see I've pressed the right button there! For instance, you say, "Come here, honey." And she looks you right in the eyes and turns around and walks the other direction. She didn't reason that out, it's just an early manifestation of that rebel. She may be genuinely a cute, tender, loving little child but she has the same problem as the ornery, nasty, misbehaved little boy. Each of them has a rebel inside. But the boy's rebel shows and the girl's rebel doesn't show except in unguarded moments.

How many of you have an unguarded moment when the rebel suddenly popped out?

I want to dwell a little further on this subject because I find that in many cases where the gospel is preached, salvation is presented as an escape from sin and forgiveness and new life but in many cases nothing is done with the rebel. He's left to hide under a veneer of religion and religious language. We're told in this language there are 40 or 50 million people who claim to be born again. I'll tell you, if there really were 40 or 50 million born again Christians in this nation, it would be a totally different nation from what it is. They've got the language, and they may be quite sincere.

I heard a well known personality in the acting world, whose name would be known to every one of you, years ago give her testimony. She said, "As a girl I received Jesus as savior but it was many years later before I confessed him as Lord." I sat there and I thought that doesn't make sense because Paul says in Romans 10:10, if you want to be saved you have to confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. There is no salvation that stops short of acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus. It's a false salvation.

Charles Finney in his writings had a lot to say about false conversions. I suggest if you've never read it you might find it profitable to do so. I have to say frankly I think there's a great deal of false conversions in the so-called Protestant, Charismatic, Episcopal world today.

I was in the nation of Ghana, which is a beautiful nation and a lovely people. I had two coworkers with me apart from my wife. One was a Palestinian Arab who had met the Lord here in the United States. The other was a young man born in Morocco, a Muslim by birth, who had miraculously encountered Jesus while he was hitchhiking through Europe. So on the Sunday morning when we weren't having the meetings of our conference Ruth and I stayed home and rested. But this young former Muslim Arab, wonderfully converted and one of the sweetest spirits I've met, went and preached in a Pentecostal church. When he came back I said, "What did you preach on?" He said, "I preached on not working." I said, "What did you mean by that?" He said, "I preached on the fact that you cannot work to get saved, you're saved by grace without works." He said, "At the end of the meeting I asked if there was anybody who wanted to be saved who had been relying on works and had not experienced grace." He says, "To my astonishment the entire church stood up." So he said, "I thought there was a mistake and I went back and explained to them very carefully what I was trying to say and said now how many

of you believe that you need to trust in grace?" The whole church stood up again. I'm not saying that all those people were not saved. I think a lot of them were not. They had a form of religion, they'd got a label.

You see, salvation is a lot more than changing labels. You sit there in the seat and you've got "sinner" pinned on the back of your jacket. Then you go forward and say a little prayer and you come back and somebody pins "saved" on the back of your jacket. But there's a lot more to it than that. You see, you've got to deal with this rebel and he's a very slippery character. He's very cunning, he has a lot of ways of evading execution.

I want to share a personal experience of mine which made this very vivid to me. In the early l950s I was pastoring a small congregation in London, England and we used to conduct street meetings three times every week in a place in the center of London called Speaker's Corner Marble Arch. If you go there today it's not at all like what it was in those days. Well, one night I had a dream and in this dream I saw a typical street meeting with a ring of people standing around and a man in the center of the ring preaching. I looked and listened and the man, I said what he was saying was good, I've got no criticism of what he's saying. But, I don't like the way he looks. The only way I could describe him was he looked crooked, he looked as though he had a hunched back and a club foot. I couldn't understand how he could be like that and yet saying the right things.

Well, I woke up in the morning, didn't understand the dream and forgot about it. But about two weeks later I had precisely the same dream. So this time I thought to myself, "God must be trying to speak to me." So, I said, "God..." and I related the scene and what I'd seen and my impressions. I said, "God, that man in the middle of the ring there, what he was saying was good but there was something very crooked about him. Who is the man?" I got the same answer that Nathan gave to David, "Thou art the man."

Well, that was a shock. But I realized for the first time that God was pinpointing the rebel, the old man, in me. And I turned to Romans 6 and I saw that the remedy was execution but that the mercy of God was the execution had taken place 19 centuries ago when Jesus died on the cross. Our old man was crucified with him. That's a historical fact. Whether we believe it or not doesn't change the fact but our believing it and acting on it will change us.

It was getting near the Easter season and somehow I had in my mind continually a picture of the hill of Golgotha with three crosses on it. But the middle cross was taller than the other two crosses. And I understood that that was the cross on which Jesus was going to be crucified. So the Holy Spirit said to me, "For whom was that middle cross made?" Then it was as if he said, "Be careful before you answer." So I paused and I thought and I said, "It was made for Barabbas." He said that's right. You see, it was. It was there waiting for Barabbas. Then the Holy Spirit said to me, "But Jesus took the place of Barabbas." I said that's so. Then he said to me, "But I thought Jesus took your place." So I said yes. Then he said, "You must be Barabbas." I never argue with people but this was a revelation to me. I am Barabbas, I'm the criminal, I'm the person for whom the cross was made. It's made to my measure, it fits me exactly, I should have been on it. But at the last moment an unexpected switch took place and Jesus took the place of Barabbas. That's God's vivid way of demonstrating that the rebel, the old man, was crucified in Jesus.

What we have to do is believe it. I've got to give you another picture which is from the prophet Isaiah. I'm grateful to the lady who lent me her New International Version. I want to read this because it is, I think, a little clearer. In Isaiah 1 God indicts Israel for their many sins but the root problem of Israel was rebellion. This is how he describes it in Isaiah 1:5–6:

> "Why should you be beaten any more? Why do you persist in rebellion?"

See what the problem was? Rebellion.

> "Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness; only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged."

God showed me that's how I deal with rebellion. That's the end of rebellion. And then I saw that's a very vivid picture of Jesus as he hung on the cross. He exactly fulfilled that prophecy. Let me read the words again.

> "Your whole head is injured..."

By countless different ways. Thorns pressed in the scalp, blows on the face, the beard plucked out.

> "...your whole heart afflicted..."

He died of a broken heart.

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> "From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness; only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged."

That's the most exact picture you can give in so few words of the appearance of Jesus on the cross. What is God telling us through the prophet? That the rebel was punished in Jesus. Jesus bore the punishment of the rebel because the sin of Israel, its root problem in the midst of all its religion was rebellion.

Then we get in Isaiah 52:13 this vivid disfiguring of Jesus as the sacrifice. Verses 13–14:

> "See my servant, he will act wisely. He will be raised and lifted up, and highly exalted."

And Paul quotes that in Philippians 2 where he says "God also has highly exalted him." He's referring to that verse. And then it goes on:

> "Just as there were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond any man, and his form marred beyond human likeness."

See, we have so many pretty pictures of Jesus on the cross with maybe a little blood trickling out of his hands or a wound on his side. That doesn't even begin to present the reality. You consider all that he'd been through to that point. There wasn't a sound place on his body. Why? It had to be. It was the outworking of rebellion. That's where you and I should have been. But in the infinite mercy of God, a switch took place. Jesus took the place of Barabbas and he took your place and he took my place.

Then if you go on in Isaiah 53 which is the great picture of the suffering servant. But really, the introduction is in Isaiah 52:13 and following. You get to verse 6 which is the central verse of the entire second section of Isaiah. I can't go into the mathematics of this but mathematically, Isaiah 53:6 is the exact center of the closing 27 chapters of Isaiah. You know Isaiah is divided up like the books of the Bible. 39 chapters and then 27 chapters. The 27 chapters really are the prophetic gospel. If you go through it—I don't have time to do it now—you go through it, Isaiah 53:6 is the middle verse of the middle chapter, the middle passage. It's the key to everything and it says:

> "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..."

What's that in one word? Rebellion. What's the common sin of all humanity? Rebellion, that's right.

> "And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

That word iniquity in Hebrew, avon means rebellion and the punishment for rebellion and all the evil consequences of rebellion. On the cross, Jesus as our substitute, the last Adam, became the rebel with our rebellion and endured all the evil consequences of rebellion.

This is a favorite theme of mine, it's not appropriate but let me just tell you the key. An exchange took place and this is the door to God's treasure house if you can grasp this. What happened on the cross was Jesus became identified with our rebellion and so this is the exchange. All the evil due to our rebellion came upon Jesus that all the good due to his perfect obedience might be offered to us. And whatever way you look at that exchange, it was total. He was punished that we might be forgiven. He was wounded that we might be healed. He took our sin that we might have his righteousness. He died our death that we might share his life. He was made a curse that we might receive the blessing. He endured our poverty that we might share his abundance. He bore our shame that we might have his glory. He endured our rejection that we might have his acceptance. I cannot dwell on that but if you can just see the picture of the rebel there on the cross and understand you're the rebel, but Jesus took your place. Not only did he bear your rebellion, he bore all the evil consequences of your rebellion that you might enter into all the blessings of his perfect obedience. And you know what that is? It's grace. You can't earn it, you didn't deserve it, you had no claim upon it. There's only one way to receive it which is by faith, that's right. You just have to believe.

It's interesting that when Isaiah presents this picture of the suffering servant in chapter 53, he begins with a warning against unbelief. "Who has believed our report?" The great barrier to receiving the benefits of Christ's atonement is unbelief. Let's renounce it, each one of us. Let's say, "God, I want to believe. I believe in all that Jesus did for me. I may not understand it but I do believe it God. Amen." That'll change you by just saying those words.

Sometimes in meetings I surprise people because I say right at the beginning the first thing we're going to do is renounce the spirit of unbelief in this meeting. They look at

me and say you? I say, "Yes, me." Every one of us has a continual battle with unbelief. Let's face it.

We must go back to Romans 6. You see what infinite riches are opened up in this 6th chapter. I don't want to harp on the point but I want to say to you if we don't practice baptism the way the New Testament practiced it, all this truth is concealed because it's baptism that is the vivid external acting out of our identification with him.

When I was training teachers in East Africa we used to tell them this, it's just approximate. Remember, children remember 40 percent of what they hear, 60 percent of what they hear and see, 80 percent of what they hear, see and do. So God being the great teacher, when it comes to this great central truth says, "I don't want you just to hear it, I want you to hear it, see it and do it." And every time when you're baptized and new believers are added to the church and they're baptized, this glorious truth of our identification with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection is enacted before us. I think one of Satan's primary objectives has been to remove this pageant from the church so that we might lose the glorious truth that it represents.

Let's go back to the words of Paul. We'll go from verse 6 of Romans 6.

> "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him..."

Remember, that's true whether you knew it or didn't know it, whether you believe it or not. It's true. But your knowing it and believing it is what's going to make a difference in your life. You see, first of all, Paul says in verse 6 "knowing." And then he says in verse 11 "consider" or I prefer the old version, "reckon." First of all you have to know, then you have to reckon. But if you don't know, you can't reckon.

At the beginning of these sessions that scripture was quoted, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." That's exactly where it is. The people don't know so they can't reckon. If you know, then it's your responsibility to reckon. But I suppose, in a sense, it's the responsibility of the ministry in the church to see that you know. Pastors, teachers, evangelists, whoever. All of us are responsible to see that God's people know this because if they don't know it they can't reckon it and if they don't reckon it they can't experience it.

Going on, verse 6:

> "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with..."

But I prefer to say "rendered ineffective, put out of action."

> "...that we should no longer be slaves to sin..."

You see, you can have your past sins forgiven and still continue to be a slave to sin. The old man hasn't been dealt with.

> "...for he who has died is freed from sin..."

I don't know why they say freed because in the margin it says justified, and that's the correct statement. When you die, you're justified from sin. Do you know why? Because when the law has put you to death that's the last thing it can do to you. After that, the law has no more claims on you. You've passed out of the territory of the law. So when we are dead with Jesus we're justified. There's no more claim against us. We've paid the final penalty in him.

Let's stick to that word justified. First of all, it's such a glorious word and secondly, it's what Paul says. He that has died is justified, acquitted from sin, he's paid the final penalty, there's nothing more that the law can demand of him.

Verse 8:

> "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him..."

Notice there's an "if." Just earlier he said "if we've been buried we'll be resurrected." But if we haven't been buried we have no right to be resurrected. If we have died we believe that we shall also live with him.

> "...knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again [praise God]; death no longer is master over him. For the death that he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life that he lives, he lives to God."

And bear in mind we're identified. We die a death to sin once for all and after that the life that we live, we live to God. That's the transition.

And so Paul ends up:

> "Even so..."

In other words, just exactly as it happens to Jesus.

> "...consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

I've asked people many, many times take a moment to consider what's meant by the phrase "dead to sin." I always picture some terrible man who does all the things that religious people don't do. He swears, he drinks whiskey, he smokes cigars, he watches pornography on television. He's just a beast, a bad man. His wife is a believer and his children are believers and he gives them a miserable time. He swears at them, gets angry with them. And one Sunday evening they tiptoe out to the local gospel hall and leave him sitting in his chair smoking his cigar, swilling his whiskey and watching something that he shouldn't be watching on television.

They have a wonderful meeting that night, they get really high in the Spirit and they come back and they're still singing choruses as they get in. Suddenly they remember he's going to curse them. They stop dead and nothing happens. They tiptoe into the room. He's sitting in the chair, the smoke is curling up from his cigar but he's not smoking it. The whiskey is untouched on the table. He's not interested in television. Do you know what happened? He had a heart attack, he died. He died to sin. You see? See what it means. Sin has no more power over him, sin has no more attraction for him and sin produces no more reaction from him. That's what it is to be dead to sin.

Isn't it? I mean, there's no disputing that. A dead man doesn't lose his temper, doesn't drink whiskey, doesn't swear, doesn't do all sorts of other things. He doesn't gossip.

So you and I, because of what Jesus has done, we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. That means sin has no more power over us, sin has no more attraction for us, sin produces no more reaction from us.

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Sermon

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