

# *When in Romans Do as the Righteous Do*

*"You're Better Off Dead"*

6:1-2

There are three terms you should be somewhat familiar with as you read and study the Bible: justification, sanctification, and glorification. They describe the various stages of salvation from the moment you accept Jesus Christ until you see Him face-to-face.

"Salvation begins with the judicial act of justification, proceeds through the lifelong process of sanctification, and is completed when we meet Christ [through death or at the rapture] in an act of glorification" (Norman Geisler).

We've been studying justification, which is the act of God by which we are declared righteous based on the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. It is an instantaneous past act of God by which your record is cleared and you are guiltless before Him.

Sanctification is the continual process of God *making* us righteous until we are glorified. We are glorified when, after death or at the Rapture, we lay aside our current physical bodies.

Norman Geisler puts it like this: "Justification is the act by which God gets us out of sin (legally). Sanctification is the process by which God gets sin out of us (actually)."

Justification requires no work on our behalf. We are justified the moment we believe God apart from any works of righteousness. Since justification is by faith, it is not a process or a performance; it is a pronouncement. If it were a process, it would take place gradually, over a period of time, as you performed certain commandments or sacraments. Justification is the pronouncement of the Judge that you are "Not guilty" by virtue of His Son's work on the Cross. You are fully justified the moment you receive Jesus as your Savior by faith.

God's sanctifying work does require our cooperation. It takes place throughout your lifetime on the earth. It is a process. We must yield to His grace as He seeks to change us to be more and more like Jesus.

These next three chapters - Romans 6, 7 & 8 - describe for us *why* and *how* we who have been justified can cooperate with God in His work of sanctifying us.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

“What shall we say then?” What I get from this is, “What comes next?” God justifies me, then what?

Remember in chapter four Paul declared that God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5). This was a radical concept to Paul's hearers. Now if God justifies us by grace while we are ungodly, do we remain ungodly after we're saved so that His grace abounds all the more? In other words, what happens to ungodly sinners *after* we are justified?

You notice in these two verses “sin” is singular, not plural. “Sin” is a noun in this chapter. The noun form denotes the nature of sin whereas a verb form denotes the sinful acts that flow from it.

We're not talking about continuing to commit individual sins. We're not talking about life-dominating sins. We're talking about the sin nature we inherited from Adam.

Here is my understanding of what is being asked in verse one. Since we are justified by grace while we are ungodly, do we remain ungodly in order for grace to abound even more?

Romans 6:2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

“Certainly not” is a strong statement – like saying “God forbid!” Just because God saved us by grace as ungodly sinners it does not follow that we continue in sin in order to reveal His grace.

Instead we immediately discover as justified individuals that “we” have “died to sin.

When a person physically dies he is free from all his former responsibilities and relationships. He can't be late for work and be fired; his parking tickets go unpaid.

**You are just as free from sin as a dead man is from paying his parking tickets.**

You are not said to be *dying* to sin, as if it were being overcome a little at a time. No, there is a finality to it. Sin has no power over you because your sin nature is dead.

Since we have died to sin, then we should not “live any longer in it.” You have been set free once-for-all from the controlling power of sin.

Knowing and believing that you have died to sin is essential. If you are a Christian you can say “NO!” to sin.

There are no steps involved in becoming dead to sin. It's done; you're dead! It happened for you at the Cross. It's something you need to know and believe. Warren Wiersbe puts it like this: “Christian living depends on Christian learning.”

We still commit individual acts of sin. Why? **Because we are still in this body of flesh with its lusts and habits.**

As we go on in chapter six we will see that the way you apply this truth is by “reckoning” it to be true. By reckoning it to be true you defeat the flesh. But you begin by understanding the truth that you have died to sin and it no longer has any power over you.

Sadly, there are always going to be those who pervert the teaching about the grace of God in sanctification. In the early part of the twentieth century the Russian monk Gregory Rasputin taught and lived the idea of salvation through repeated experiences of sin and repentance. He believed that

because those who sin the most require the most forgiveness, a sinner who continues to sin with abandon enjoys more of God's grace (when he repents for the moment) than the ordinary sinner. Therefore, Rasputin lived in notorious sin and taught that this was the way to salvation.

There's a little bit of Rasputin in all of us! Nevertheless the reality of the Christian life is that you have died to sin and God is working to sanctify you.

Having been justified, God begins His work of sanctification and you are encouraged to cooperate with it.

Here is something interesting to note. Sanctification varies from individual to individual. As an illustration I'd set forth Abraham and his nephew Lot.

Abraham was Paul's prime example of justification by faith. We know that Abraham was saved and that he remained saved. In fact, the paradise section of Hades was named after him, called by Jesus "Abraham's Bosom."

Lot is a challenge for us. He, in fact, continued in sin. Given a choice by Uncle Abraham where to settle, Lot set his eyes toward Sodom and Gomorrah. He moved closer and closer to those wicked cities until he was living in them. The account in Genesis indicates he then became a city leader. Through it all he had no influence on the morals of his peers.

When the angels came to deliver Lot and his family before God destroyed those cities the men of the town sought to sexually assault them. Lot offered them his daughters to satisfy their lusts!

Lot argued with the angels. In the end Lot had to be dragged out of the city. His wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Then on consecutive nights, while hiding in a cave, Lot's two daughters got him drunk and slept with him.

I don't know about you but the first time I read Second Peter I was shocked when Peter referred to Lot as a saved man whose righteous soul was vexed as he lived out his life in the world (2Peter 2:7-8).

Both Abraham and Lot were justified, i.e., saved, and *remained so to the end*. **Yet their sanctification differed dramatically**, so much so that if Peter didn't tell you that Lot was saved you'd assume he either was not a believer or that he had forfeited his salvation.

We each cooperate with God in sanctification differently. You could see it as a spectrum with Abraham at one end and Lot at the other. Abraham was not without his falterings; Lot seemed to be without any faithfulness. Yet both were justified and remained so to the end.

You might be thinking, "Gene, what you are saying will encourage people to continue in sin." Well, that is what the Romans who were hearing Paul's letter were thinking! If I'm eliciting the same response that Paul did, then I must be saying the same thing Paul said.

I'm not trying to elicit that response. It's the response you get when you preach grace, abounding grace.

This discussion touches upon what is sometimes called the security of the believer, or eternal security, or the perseverance of the saints. Theologians have struggled with it and continue to do so.

Along with the discussion of the security of the believer, an important component of it, is the doctrine of assurance. The assurance of salvation is two-fold:

1. Is it possible to know absolutely and with confidence that one is saved?
2. Is it possible for one who believes themselves to be saved to know they will remain saved?

A key Scripture in any discussion of security and assurance would be Second Timothy 1:12 which reads (KJV), "for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

It would seem from that declaration that you can both know with certainty you are saved *and* that you can know with certainty you will remain saved.

Some of the confusion about the security and assurance of the believer can be cleared-up if we keep the stages of salvation separate in our thinking. Remember we pointed out that first you are justified, *then* you are being sanctified, until finally you are glorified.

**Security in your salvation is based upon justification.** When you accept Jesus Christ, you are declared righteous; you are justified and have a new position before God for eternity. It is an act of God in time - an instantaneous, one time act. Your only involvement is that you “believe” God.

Sanctification requires your cooperation and you see even in the Bible that some believers cooperate more than others.

Let me pose two questions for you to ponder:

1. Can a justified person become un-justified and then be re-justified?
2. Is there any indication in the New Testament that a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit can become un-indwelt and then re-indwelt?

The distinction I make, and it's certainly not a perfect one, is whether or not a person was **genuinely saved** in the first place. There are examples in Scripture of genuinely saved individuals who nevertheless sinned heinously. And there are examples of those who were never really “of us” even though they professed faith in Jesus Christ.

You can have assurance you are saved and will remain so in Jesus Christ.

We're not really talking to or about the unsaved or the severely backslidden in these verses. We're talking to and about the average believer who desires to walk with God in victory over sin. The person Paul is describing is justified and is now going to be sanctified.

We are declaring that you can walk with God in victory over sinning because your old sin nature is a dead corpse that you have no reason to yield to.

***The world and the devil are tempting a dead man!***

