

Eighth New Testament Summary Romans Part 2

Perhaps the three best back-to-back-to-back chapters in the Bible on the subject of the Christian life are Romans 6, 7 and 8. These are marvelous chapters, absolutely wondrous! It is essential to understand that after St. Paul teaches how it is we are saved (chapters 3-5 and the doctrine of justification), that he gives an absolute tour de force on sanctification (how we live as Christians) in chapters 6-8. I want you to learn this simple outline: Chapter 6: We have died to sin; Chapter 7: We have died to the law; Chapter 8: We have died to condemnation and death. This divine counsel and wisdom is invaluable!

Next, it is important to understand what we mean by these chapter headings. Romans 6: We have died to sin: This does not mean that we no longer sin. By virtue of our sinful nature, we sin daily. However, because we are joined/united to Christ in and through Holy Baptism (Romans 6:3-5), we were also united to Jesus Christ in His death and burial. Grasp this vital concept: this means that our sin was put upon Jesus. He died with OUR sin on Him; and He was buried with OUR sin buried with Him! That is why in the eyes of God, our sin (our violation of God's law and sin-sick condition) is erased/gone/canceled/blotted out/obliterated/buried, etc. Believing in what God has done means that while we still experience the struggle with sin that sin has LOST ITS POWER TO DOMINATE US, since we have died with Christ in His death and burial with our sin on Him. Our sin has suffered death and burial (a funeral). As a result of this, sin is no longer our MASTER. This leads us to a crucial distinction: There is a difference between sinning in weakness (by virtue of our still having a sinful nature), and sinning as a matter of being dominated by or mastered by sin. In the former sense, the Holy Spirit still has the dominance in our life and we hate sin, we battle against it, and we confess that it was put on Christ; while in the latter sense, sin is our Master, we approve of sin, go along with sin, plan on doing it more and are motivated by it and love it. The difference is this: The Christian commits the sin that he/she hates, but is led by the Holy Spirit to live against sin; the unbeliever loves sin and strives to hold to it, cuddle it, perpetuate it; and is led by their selfish desire. The Christian lives for God while battling sin; the unbeliever lives for sin while battling God. Both the Christian and unbeliever are loved by God, forgiven by God, given the Lord Christ, but one (by the Holy Spirit) lives in faith and the other lives in unbelief. Therefore one knows the benefit of Christ, and the other misses the benefit of Christ. Romans 6 describes this situation. This is a key verse: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey their passions." (verse 12) What is our motivation for living in this word? Verse 14 ends with the words, "you are not under law but under grace." /// Romans 7: You have died to the Law: this does not mean that you become an antinomian who thinks that God's Law is no longer applicable. It means rather that you have died to the condemnation of the Law. The Law of God is good and holy as St. Paul teaches, but it's "job" so to speak to make sin known, realized (so that it may be confessed to God; in fact St. Paul gives the biblical purpose for the Law in Romans 3:20). When the Law of God is put up against our lives, our sin is plainly evident and we realize that we are perpetually sinning. In the midst of this struggle, St. Paul says, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." (vs. 15) However, this leads St. Paul to this realization: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (vss. 24-25a) That is, St. Paul leads us to understand that even while the Law reveals our sin, it cannot condemn us, for one reason and one reason only: Jesus Christ our

Lord! Therefore we have died to the condemnation of the Law! Which leads us seamlessly into Romans chapter 8: We have died to condemnation; we have died to death!

Romans 8: But how do we know that we have died to this condemnation? The answer is connected to one of the most powerful and comforting teachings in Scripture: You see not only have you been forgiven by Christ, but Christ has given you the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit lives within you (you may read John 14 to get an even clearer picture of this truth). While we sin much and daily, we also note that the Spirit leads us to put to death the deeds of the body (vs. 13). That is, while born-again Christians (John 3) experience the daily battle with sin, he or she ALSO experiences a life that is marked by change. For example, the Holy Spirit now intercedes for us (vs. 27); we are confident that God leads everything to work out for our good (vs. 28); and we are also confident that NOTHING will separate us from the love of Christ (vs. 39). These are signs and proofs that we have the Holy Spirit in our life. Don't let the fact that you still struggle with sin dissuade your confidence. In fact, Martin Luther said, "The godlier the man, the more doth he feel the battle." That is, don't succumb to the false idea that the more you grow in faith, the less you will struggle. No! In fact, the opposite is true, the more you grow in faith, the more aware you are of sin and thus, the more you "feel" it or realize the confrontation with it. However, this realization leads you to feel passionate about returning to Jesus and remaining in Jesus every, single day. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. That is, you have entered into the way of true life...you are dead to death! Now you are filled with Christ, you are therefore in the way of life! In Christ, Dr. Espinosa