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# Paul's Epistle to the Romans

LESSON XII : EXCURSUS — BAPTISM AND SANCTIFICATION IN ROMANS 6

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I ran into problems this week as I approached Romans chapter six. The chapter is best taken as a whole, but as I studied I kept coming across controversial subjects which would require too much class time to discuss. One option was to disregard these topics but I felt some of them too important to neglect. Therefore we will attempt to peruse the controversial topics this week, allowing us hopefully to look at Romans 6 in its entirety next week.

## WHAT IS BAPTISM IN vv. 3,4?

“Paul’s reference is to the Roman Christians’ water baptism as their outward initiation into Christian existence. *To be sure, a few scholars have denied any reference to water baptism here, arguing that ‘baptize’ means ‘immerse’ in a metaphorical sense, or that Paul refers to ‘baptism in the Spirit,’ or that he uses ‘baptize’ as a metaphor for incorporation into the body of Christ. But, without discounting the possibility of allusions to one or more of these ideas, a reference to water baptism is primary. By the date of Romans, ‘baptize’ had become almost a technical expression for the rite of Christian initiation by water, and this is surely the meaning the Roman Christians would have given the word.*” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 359]

## BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

**CON** — Speaking against baptism by immersion is one Presbyterian theologian, typical of his sect: “The difference between us and immersionists is only this: whether the entire immersion of the body in water is essential to valid baptism. For we admit any application of water, by an ordained ministry, in the name of the Trinity, to be valid baptism.” [Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, pg 764] Speaking directly to this passage in Romans 6 is Hodge: “It is not necessary to assume that there is any reference here to the immersion of the body in baptism, as though it were a burial. No such allusion can be supposed in the next verse, where we are said *to be planted* with him. The reference is not to the mode of baptism, but to its effect.” [Hodge, *Romans*]

**PRO** — Others see in these verses the mode of baptism. A. T. Robertson: “*In newness of life — The picture in baptism points two ways, backwards to Christ’s death and burial and to our death to sin, forwards to Christ’s resurrection from the dead and to our new life pledged by the coming out of the watery grave to walk on the other side of the baptismal grave. There is the further picture of our own resurrection from the grave. It is a tragedy that Paul’s majestic picture here has been so blurred by controversy that some refuse to see it.*” [Robertson, *Word Pictures*] Robert Haldane: “The death of Christ was the means by which sin was destroyed, and His burial the proof of the reality of His death. Christians are therefore represented as buried with Him by baptism into His death, in token that they really died with Him; and if buried with Him, it is not that they shall remain in the grave, but that, as Christ arose from the dead, they should also rise. Their baptism, then, is the figure of their complete deliverance from the guilt of sin, signifying that God places to their account the death of Christ as their own death: it is also a figure of their purification and resurrection for the service of God.” [Haldane, *Romans*]

**MIDDLE OF THE ROAD** — Others take a more moderate position. Adam Clarke: “*It is probable that the apostle here alludes to the mode of administering baptism by immersion, the whole body being put under the water, which seemed to say, the man is drowned, is dead; and, when he came up out of the water, he seemed to have a resurrection to life; the man is risen again; he is alive!* He was, therefore, supposed to throw off his old Gentile state as he threw off his clothes, and to assume a new character, as the baptized generally put on new or fresh garments. *I say it is probable that the apostle alludes to this mode of immersion; but it is not absolutely certain that he does so, as some do imagine; for, in the next verse, our being incorporated into Christ by baptism is also denoted by our being planted, or rather, grafted together in the likeness of his death; and Noah’s ark floating upon the water, and sprinkled by the rain from heaven, is a figure corresponding to baptism, 1 Peter 3:20, 21; but neither of these gives us the same idea of the outward form as burying. We must be careful, therefore, not to lay too much stress on such circumstances.* Drowning among the ancients was considered the most noble kind of death; some think that the apostle may allude to this. The grand point is, that this baptism represents our death to sin, and our obligation to walk in newness of life: without which, of what use can it or any other rite be?” [Adam Clarke, *Romans* ]

## BAPTISMAL REGENERATION

Baptismal regeneration is the teaching that one is “*regenerated*” (born again) through the saving powers of water baptism. “*The figure of baptism was very early mistaken for a reality, and accordingly some of the fathers speak of the baptized person as truly born again in the water. They supposed him to go into the water with all his sins upon him, and to come out of it without them. This indeed is the case with baptism figuratively. But the carnal mind soon turned the figure into a reality.* It appears to the impatience of man too tedious and ineffectual a way to wait on God’s method of converting sinners by His Holy Spirit through the truth, and therefore they have effected this much more extensively by the performance of external rites. When, according to many, the rite is observed, it cannot be doubted that the truth denoted by it has been accomplished. The same disposition has been the origin of Transubstantiation. The bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper are figuratively the body and blood of Christ; but they have been turned into the real body, blood, soul, and divinity of the Lord, and the external rite has become salvation.” [Haldane, *Romans*] “*Paul does not design to teach that the sacrament of baptism, from any inherent virtue in the rite, or from any supernatural power in him who administers it, or from any uniformly attending Divine influence, always secures the*

**regeneration of the soul. This is contrary both to Scripture and experience. No fact is more obvious than that thousands of the baptized are unregenerate.** It cannot be, therefore, that the apostle intends to say, that all who are baptized are thereby savingly united to Christ. It is not of the efficacy of baptism as an external rite, that he assumes his readers are well informed: it is of the import and design of that sacrament, and the nature of the union with Christ, of which baptism is the sign and the seal. It is the constant usage of Scripture to address professors as believers, to predicate of them as professors what is true of them only as believers. This is also the usage of common life. We address a company of professing Christians as true Christians; we call them brethren in Christ; we speak of them as beloved of the Lord, partakers of the heavenly calling, and heirs of eternal life. **Baptism was the appointed mode of professing faith in Christ, of avowing allegiance to him as the Son of God, and acquiescence in his gospel. Those, therefore, who were baptized, are assumed to believe what they professed, and to be what they declared themselves to be.** They are consequently addressed as believers, as having embraced the gospel, as having put on Christ, and as being, in virtue of their baptism as an act of faith, the children of God.” [Hodge, Romans]

**“CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT ...”** — One pastor has been quoted as stating the three most important things of any verse are “*context, context and context.*” As we consider Paul’s statement in Romans 6:3,4 we can see that pastor was correct. The greatest argument against Romans 6:1-7 teaching baptismal regeneration is the context in which we find the verses. To prove that, let’s see what we’ve learned so far from the book of Romans.

**ROMANS IN A NUTSHELL** — Romans is widely considered the most logical and well-constructed book in the New Testament. Paul had a specific goal in mind when he wrote Romans and without question followed that purpose through to the end of the letter. With that understanding, let’s look at Paul’s train-of-thought leading up to our controversial verses:

- In Romans chapter one Paul shows the heathen world is lost without Christ: “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*” (Romans 1:22,23)
- In chapter two he addresses the Jewish religious world to show they too are lost without Christ: “*Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*” (Romans 2:21,22)
- He brings his thoughts on sin to a conclusion in chapter three: “*... for there is no difference [between the heathen or the religious]: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:22b,23)
- Paul’s purpose in doing this was to show that all mankind, Jew or Gentile, religious or pagan, is under the condemnation of sin. Therefore anyone’s only hope is through faith in the finished work of Christ: “*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*” (Romans 3:21-25a, 28) So the only hope for anyone is faith in the sacrificial death of Christ on the behalf of sinful man. All mankind: boy or girl, man or woman, Jew or Gentile ... there is no difference!
- Paul then continues his discussion on salvation in chapter four, teaching all our sins are imputed (credited) to Christ’s account and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account when we trust Jesus as Savior: “*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*” (Romans 4:7,8)
- Chapter five continues the salvation teaching by comparing Jesus with Adam, that as Adam represented all mankind in the garden when he fell, so did Christ represent all those who would one day belong to Him: “*For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*” (Romans 5:17)

So we see in Romans chapters one through three Paul shows all mankind to be sinners, then continues in Romans chapters three through five to show how sinful men may be saved from the penalty of their sins. This salvation is clearly by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

**SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE** — Since the theme of Romans chapters three through five is salvation, it is instructive to see what Paul says about this salvation. Note how many times in these chapters Paul speaks of faith:

“*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...*” (Romans 3:22a)

“*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...*” (Romans 3:25a)

“*the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus...*” (Romans 3:26b)

“therefore we conclude that a man is justified **by faith** without the deeds of the law....” (Romans 3:28)

“seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision **by faith**, and uncircumcision **through faith**....” (Romans 3:30)

“Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness....” (Romans 4:3b)

“but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, his **faith** is counted for righteousness....” (Romans 4:5)

“for we say that **faith** was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness....” (Romans 4:9b)

“righteousness of **the faith** which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them **that believe**....” (Romans 4:11b)

“who also walk in the steps of **that faith** of our father Abraham....” (Romans 4:12b)

“through the righteousness of **faith**....” (Romans 4:13c)

“therefore it is **of faith**, that it might be by grace....” (Romans 4:16)

“but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we **believe** on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead....” (Romans 4:24)

“therefore being justified **by faith**....” (Romans 5:1a)

“by whom also we have access **by faith** into this grace wherein we stand....” (Romans 5:2a)

**Not once is baptism mentioned throughout these chapters speaking directly of salvation!** Yet, having declared a person is saved through faith in Christ, Paul begins to teach on sanctification and only then when speaking of sanctification does he use baptism as an illustration.

Therefore considering the context, here is an interesting question for those who believe Romans 6:1-7 teaches that baptism saves: *If baptism is required for salvation, why was it not mentioned even one time in the previous chapters?* If Paul intended Romans 6:1-7 to teach that baptism is required for salvation, the burden of proof is upon those who teach baptismal regeneration.

**BAPTIZED UNTO CHRIST** — There are parallels between Romans 6:1-7 with 1 Corinthians 10:2 when the Jews were “baptized unto Moses” as they crossed the Red Sea: “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:1,2). The same Greek wording is used here to state believers are “baptized unto Christ’s death.” Therefore understanding Paul’s meaning in first Corinthians chapter ten will help us better understand his statements in Romans chapter six.

While Paul may have been drawing parallels to the Israelites’ experience and our modern baptism, the Israelites were obviously not baptized in the sense of going forward in a church setting and being immersed in a pool of water. In fact just the opposite is true; Scripture makes it plain the Hebrews left walking on dry ground (Exodus 14:16). What was Paul’s purpose therefore in referencing baptism in pictorial fashion?

The Jewish slaves recently rescued from Egypt were said to be “baptized unto Moses” as they passed through the Red Sea. This *baptism* was one of identification, uniting the Jews to their leader Moses. Simon Kistemaker makes this observation concerning Paul’s language:

“For the Israelites, being ‘baptized into Moses’ signified that they were members of the covenant which God had made with his people (Exod. 24:4b-8). Moses served as mediator of that first covenant, which became obsolete, but Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6; 9:15).... The experiences of being ‘under the cloud’ and ‘passing through the sea’ both related to the *identification* of the children of Israel as a people now separated from Egypt, and under God’s protection.... As the passage through the Red Sea symbolized an end to Israel’s slavery and its beginning as a new nation, so baptism for the Christian means a separation from sin and consecration to God.” [Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*; pg. 323; italics his]

Relating this then back to Romans 6:1-7, what did Paul mean when he spoke of the believer being baptized *into* or *unto* Jesus Christ? Just as the passage through the water and the cloud identified the nation of Israel with their leader Moses, so does baptism identify the believer with their leader Jesus Christ. This is what Paul means in Romans 6:1-7, not that somehow there are mystical powers in the baptismal waters to place the believer into the kingdom of God. Allow me to quote several authorities on this very thing:

“The metaphor of baptism is clearly used in a relational sense elsewhere, as in the case of the Israelites baptized into Moses by reason of the crossing of the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:2). ***They became united to him as never before, recognizing his leadership and their dependence on him. Union with Christ means union with him in his death.... Paul uses baptism to illustrate this vital union with Christ in his death (v. 4), though baptism does not accomplish it.*** Apparently, he pictures burial with Christ, however momentarily, in the submergence of the body under the baptismal waters. The importance of burial is that it attests the reality of death (1 Cor 15:3,4). It expresses with finality the end of the old life governed by relationship with Adam. It also expresses the impossibility of a new life apart from divine action. The God

who raised Jesus Christ from the dead has likewise imparted life to those who are his.” [Harrison, *Romans*; bold / italic emphasis mine]

“βαπτίζειν εἰς (baptizein eis) always means *to baptize in reference to*. When it is said that the Hebrews were baptized *unto* Moses, 1 Corinthians 10:2; or when the apostle asks the Corinthians, ‘Were ye baptized unto the name of Paul?’ 1 Corinthians 1:13; or when we are said to be baptized unto Christ, the meaning is, they were baptized in reference to Moses, Paul, or Christ; i.e., to be brought into union with them, as their disciples, or worshipers, as the case may be.” [Hodge, *Romans*; pg. 193; italics his]

Lest someone read too much into our statements of the Jews being *united* unto Moses and believers being *identified* with Christ in their baptism, let it be remembered the Jews were already God’s people prior to their Red Sea experience. What was the Old Testament covenant seal? It was circumcision, given to Abraham after he had already become a believer (Genesis 15:6; 17:10-14). Referring specifically then to the Red Sea experience, we see that before the Passover could be taken one of the Lord’s stipulations was the partakers must be circumcised (Exodus 12:43-48). That this was done is clear from Joshua 5:5a: “*Now all the people that came out were circumcised...*”. Therefore the Jews were set apart and united with the Lord prior to their “*baptism*” in the Red Sea.

Applying the picture used here by Paul to our baptismal regeneration question, anyone being baptized must already belong to Christ through faith. Baptism only illustrates outwardly what has taken place inwardly.

**WE ONLY BURY DEAD PEOPLE** — Since baptism pictures what has happened to the believer spiritually, it is important we look at what is actually being portrayed.

One of the purposes of baptism is to illustrate the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is accepted by all theologians that immerse and is a prominent point in Romans 6:1-7. What is being pictured therefore are these truths:

- the person stands in the baptismal pool (*portraying Christ on the cross, dying for sins*)
- the person is immersed into the waters of the baptismal pool (*portraying Christ being buried*)
- the person is brought forth from the waters of the baptismal pool (*portraying Christ’s resurrection*)

While setting forth the gospel in pictorial fashion, the same things are also being testified as having happened spiritually to the believer. In symbolic fashion baptism is also making this statement: “*I profess to have died to my sins with them being nailed to the cross, my sins are buried with Christ and I have risen to new life in Christ.*” Let’s look at baptism in that sense:

- the person stands in the baptismal pool (*portraying that person dying to the world, the flesh and the devil in Christ*)
- the person is immersed into the waters of the baptismal pool (*portraying our sins being buried with Christ*)
- the person is brought forth from the waters of the baptismal pool (*portraying the believer as being raised to a newness of life, joining in the resurrection of Christ*)

But what does baptismal regeneration portray? For one to accept baptismal regeneration, this is the symbol:

- the person stands in the baptismal pool alive to sin and in his sins
- the person is immersed into the waters of the baptismal pool while still in his sins, at which time the person dies in the baptismal waters
- the person is brought forth from the waters of the baptismal pool, raised to new life

It can be seen therefore those teaching baptismal regeneration are destroying the scriptural picture represented in baptism. *In essence what baptism portrays to those accepting baptismal regeneration is that we are not saved by the death of Christ but we are rather saved by His burial!* The entire picture of baptism is destroyed. While not trying to be silly, it should be pointed out we do not bury people to kill them, we bury people because they are already dead!

One accepting baptismal regeneration might reject this as a minor point. If so, let’s ask ourselves several questions: how does Paul present baptism in Romans chapter six? And if Paul was not teaching baptism portrays the death, burial and resurrection of both Christ and the believer, what was he saying here? And if baptismal regeneration is true, why would Paul use baptism as an illustration in Romans chapter six in the manner he did? These are not minor questions and require adequate answers by those accepting baptismal regeneration.

The very act of baptism pictures the one being baptized as already dead to sin prior to baptism. Any other teaching perverts the meaning of baptism.

## **JUSTIFICATION VS. SANCTIFICATION**

**PAUL’S QUESTION IN v. 1 PROVES THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION** — “*Before considering the Apostle’s treatment of this question it is essential to observe that the very fact of such a question being possible shows with unmistakable clearness the true meaning of the Apostle’s Doctrine of Justification. It must mean ‘to regard as righteous,’ and not ‘to make*



*righteous*; or else the question now put would be utterly pointless. If Justification means to make a person good, then no license to sin could have been inferred from it; but since God by His grace ‘justifies the ungodly’ (ch. iii. 24), the question is important and demands an answer; and the answer does not in the least modify the freeness of the Apostle’s teaching on Grace, but shows a profound depth of his teaching on Justification as involved in union with Christ.” [Griffith-Thomas, *Romans*, pg 165]

**JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION COMPARED** — “Paul has shown how God’s gracious act in Christ, when appropriated by faith, puts people into a new relationship with God and assures them that they will be saved from wrath in the last day. What has this to do with life in this present age? Anything? Everything, Paul asserts in Rom 6. Christ’s death ‘on our behalf’ (cf. 5:6-8) frees us not only from the penalty of sin but from the power of sin also. Justification — acquittal from the guilt of sin — and sanctification — deliverance from ‘sinning’ — must never be confused, but neither can they be separated. The Westminster Larger Catechism puts it like this: Question: ‘Wherein do justification and sanctification differ?’ Answer: ‘Although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputeth the righteousness of Christ; in sanctification his Spirit infuseth grace, and enableth to the exercise thereof; in the former, sin is pardoned; in the other, it is subdued.’ Subduing the power of sin is the topic of Rom 6. Paul hints at this theme by using the word ‘sin’ in the singular throughout the chapter. As in 5:12-21 (and cf. 3:9), Paul pictures sin as a power or master that exercises unbreakable control over all who are ‘in Adam.’ Sin’s tyranny is broken, however, for the person who is ‘in Christ.’ Rom 6 is thus permeated with the imagery of slavery, mastery, and freedom: those crucified with Christ should no longer ‘serve’ sin (v. 6), should not let sin ‘rule’ them because they have been ‘set free’ from sin and been ‘enslaved’ to God, or to righteousness (vv. 17-22): sin no longer ‘rules over’ the believer (v. 14a).” [Moo, *Romans*, pg 350] ***“The real connection between justification and Christian holiness, as conceived by St. Paul, appears to us to be this: justification by faith is the means, and sanctification the end. The more precisely we distinguish these two divine gifts, the better we apprehend the real bond which unites them. God is the only good; the creature, therefore, cannot do good except in Him. Consequently, to put man into a condition to sanctify himself, it is necessary to begin by reconciling him to God, and replacing him in Him. For this purpose, the wall which separates him from God, the divine condemnation which is due to him as a sinner, must be broken down. This obstacle once removed by justification, and reconciliation accomplished, the heart of man opens without reserve to the divine favor which is restored to him; and, on the other hand, the communication of it from above, interrupted by the state of condemnation, resumes its course. The Holy Spirit, whom God could not bestow on a being at war with him, comes to seal on his heart the new relation established on justification, and to do the work of a real and free inward sanctification. Such was the end which God had in view from the first; for holiness is salvation in its very essence. Justification is to be regarded as the strait gate, through which we enter on the narrow way of sanctification, which leads to glory.”*** [Godet, *Romans*, pg 233f]

**LIVING IN SIN (v. 2)** — Although this is even debated, I agree whole-heartedly with Douglas Moo: ***“Living in sin’ is best taken as describing a ‘lifestyle’ of sin — a habitual practice of sin, such that one’s life could be said to be characterized by that sin rather than by the righteousness God requires. Such habitual sin, ‘remaining in sin’ (v. 1), ‘living in sin’ (v. 2), is not possible, as a constant situation, for the one who has truly experienced the transfer out from under the domain, or tyranny, of sin. Sin’s power is broken for the believer, and this must be evident in practice (see also Jas. 2:14-26; and perhaps 1 John 3:6, 9). Yet the nature of Christian existence is such that the believer can, at times, live in a way that is inconsistent with the reality of what God has made him in Christ. It is not sin, but the believer, who has ‘died,’ and therefore sin, as Wesley puts it, ‘remains’ even though it does not ‘reign.’ Therefore, while ‘living in sin’ is incompatible with Christian existence and impossible for the Christian as a constant condition, it remains a real threat. It is this threat that Paul warns us about in v. 2.”*** [Moo, *Romans*, pg 358]

I believe Moo does his best to strike a balance between the Christian life in theory and the Christian life in practice. I would like to add this comment alongside Moo: ***while not trying to provide an excuse, the fact of Christian growth must be taken into account in the above equation.*** What I mean by that is a new believer, coming out of a background of American paganism, will not have the same God-knowledge as one brought up in a Christian home. Therefore what some might consider *“inconsistent lifestyles”* (and in reality, that may be an adequate description) might be a matter of ignorance in the new believer and something which will become a matter of conviction as the Lord reveals His word to that believer. This is even substantiated by scripture: in the James passage quoted by Moo, James gives two historical examples of those whose lives were examples of being justified by faith and that faith producing works. Those two examples were Abraham, the father of the faithful, and Rahab, a pagan harlot. As we consider those two side-by-side, we might go away in awe of Abraham while getting the impression that Rahab may not have even been a true believer. But James held her up as an example of faithfulness. Why? In her own ignorant and pagan way, she showed by her actions, as meager as they might have been, that she had true saving faith (which is James’ point: true saving faith will show itself by works). We might have choked over Rahab’s lifestyle but from that meager beginning, her life undoubtedly continued to change. If we could have seen her decades later, I am sure the hand of God would have been much more evident in her life. No, she was not an Abraham nor could she have ever gone through such a trial as Abraham experienced with Isaac. But she had true saving faith and it showed itself to be genuine. And James holds her up as an example for us all. ***So while we think of the impossibility of a true believer living in habitual sin, we must keep in mind that growth is involved in even know what is sin in our lives. “No man can apply to Christ to be delivered from sin, in order that he may live in it. Deliverance from sin, as offered by Christ, and as accepted by the believer, is not mere deliverance from its penalty, but from its power. We turn from sin to God when we receive Christ as a Savior.*** It is, therefore, as the apostle argues, a contradiction in terms, to say that gratuitous justification is a license to sin, as much as to say that death is life, or that dying to a thing is living in it.” [Hodge,

**DOES THE TEACHING OF GRACE LEAD TO SIN?** — “The most common, the most plausible, and yet the most unfounded objection to the doctrine of justification by faith, is, that it allows men to live in sin that grace may abound. This objection arises from ignorance of the doctrine in question, and of the nature and means of sanctification. It is so preposterous in the eyes of an enlightened believer, that Paul deals with it rather by exclamations at its absurdity, than with logical arguments. The main idea of this section is, that such is the nature of the believer’s union with Christ, that his living in sin is not merely an inconsistency, but a contradiction in terms, as much so as to speak of a live dead man, or a good bad one. Union with Christ, being the only source of holiness, cannot be the source of sin.” [Hodge, *Romans*]

**JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION IN RELATION TO REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE** — Without taking a lot of time, it should be pointed out that this understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification is the foundation for several church doctrines, two of such doctrines being “**regenerate church membership**” and “**church discipline**.” These two teachings go hand-in-glove.

*By regenerate church membership we mean that only those who have professed faith in Christ as taught in the scriptures and had given evidence of that profession by a changed lifestyle are eligible for membership within a Baptist church.* Of course anyone is free to attend the public services, even if he or she is not a believer in Christ. But all decisions regarding the life of the church is limited to eligible church members in good standing only (by eligible, I note there is an age restriction on the voting privileges within a church). This doctrine is based upon our understanding of justification and sanctification: those truly saved will exhibit the mind of Christ and a submission to his policies. We can see in our culture the effects of those churches who deny such a teaching (rejection of critical doctrines: inspiration of the scriptures, eternal punishment, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, homosexual pastors, etc.).

In conjunction with the aforementioned doctrine is church discipline. *If only those who profess faith in Christ and evidence such a profession by their lifestyle is eligible for membership within a Baptist church, then one who ultimately turns away from such a profession must be removed from membership of the church.* Without going into detail, I want to mention the balance to be maintained in all areas of church discipline. First, *it is for the good of the church that such discipline is enacted.* This discipline must be done with humility and prayer, understanding we are all sinners and it is only by the grace of God that any of us do not fall away from the truth. Self-righteous condemnation is not proper church discipline. But in humility, love and prayer, church discipline must take place for the sake of others within the body. Over time, if those who reject the counsel of God are allowed to remain, eventually there will be sufficient numbers to radically alter the character of the church. Again, this we see in our culture today. *Secondly, it is for the good of the church member that such discipline is enacted.* This is often forgotten. As a parent who does not discipline their children are not loving their children scripturally, a church who withholds church discipline is not loving the Christian in a scriptural fashion. Love does not mean, “Let me do whatever I please.” Love establishes limits and admonishes when correction is due. Therefore, to allow a Christian to continue in sin without genuine repentance is actually doing harm to that Christian. Proper church discipline, done hesitantly, in humility, prayer and genuine love and concern for the object of church discipline, is only for their good to bring them back around to a proper lifestyle which pleases God.