

Shall We Continue in Sin?

By Bryan Gibson

The full question is found in Romans 6:1: “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” Here’s Paul’s answer, and there’s nothing wishy-washy about it. “Certainly not!” or “God forbid!”—depending on which translation you use. The Holy Spirit, through whom Paul is writing, could have left it at that, but he goes on to provide at least four different proofs for his answer, all of them centering around the significance of our baptism. Here are four reasons why Christians cannot continue in sin.

#1: We cannot continue in sin, because “we died with Christ” (Romans 6:8), and in so doing “died to sin” (Romans 6:2). Prior to be buried with Christ in baptism, we crucified (put to death) the old man, with all his sinful ways (Romans 6:6). What He’s talking about here is genuine repentance, and it should have preceded our baptism, if we truly “obeyed from the heart” (Romans 6:17). “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin” (Romans 6:11)—it’s hard to be dead to sin and practice it at the same time.

#2: We cannot continue in sin, because we were raised with Christ—raised to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). Here the scene shifts to what happens *after* the burial—the resurrection to a new life. We quoted the first half of this earlier; now let’s complete the thought: “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:11). Every aspect is crucial—the death, the burial (where sins are forgiven), and the resurrection. There’s no way we can continue in sin if we understand the significance of each.

#3: We cannot continue in sin, because when we obeyed the gospel, we changed masters. We were set free from sin, our former master (Romans 6:6-7), and thank God for that (Romans 6:17). We presented ourselves to God in obedience, and so now we belong to Him—“slaves of God” (Romans 6:22), or “slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:18). Anyone interested in going back to the old master? Wouldn’t make much sense, would it?

#4: We cannot continue in sin, because its fruits are bitter, and its end is eternal death. Look at the difference in the rewards given by the two masters: “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:21-23). Sounds like only one of these masters really has our best interests at heart.