

# Abiding Fruit



*John 15:16*

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## **Evangelical Mortification Romans 6:12**

It is a duty incumbent upon every Christian all the days of their lives to mortify the flesh. Either we kill sin or sin will kill us as the Puritans liked to say. Paul instructs us to not let sin reign in our bodies to make you obey its passions. In verse 13, he tells us that we must not present the members of our bodies to sin so as to be the instruments of sin, but rather to present our bodies to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and we are to yield our members as instruments for righteousness.

Mortification consists primarily in this act of presenting oneself to God. Romans 6:11 is the culmination in a list of reasons that Paul gives as to why we should “consider ourselves dead to sin.” The Christian has no right to think that because we have received the grace of God lavished upon us, that therefore we can continue to sin simply because we are already forgiven and God will forgive us in the future. Grace is therefore not a license to sin. This does not mean that the believer will not sin. Paul is arguing over the approach and attitude toward sin. Since we are forgiven, we must not think that we can sin with impunity thereby causing grace to actually abound or increase to us. Sin committed in the anticipation of grace applied or forgiveness given is another sin in and of itself. Paul states that the believer has “died” to sin (Rom. 6:2). How did this happen? Paul says, through what Christ has done for us in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4). Paul couches this operation of grace by using the phrase, “baptized into Christ Jesus.” Baptism suggests complete identification. Paul is saying that the Christian is so identified with Christ, that he or she is regarded as having died with Christ, being buried with him, and as having been raised from the dead. If this is true, then the Christian is a completely new creature, and Paul acknowledges this by saying that we are henceforth to live in the light of this fact to the glory of the Father and in newness of life (Rom. 6:4b).

In fact, being identified with Jesus in his death drives Paul to the conclusion that since he experienced resurrection, we too, shall experience a resurrection. Being united in his death guarantees our future resurrection (Rom. 6:5). In the light of this anticipation Paul then comes back to the present and states that since we died with Christ, “we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we should no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). If we have died with Jesus, then the power of sin is broken and the possibility to live for the glory of God is reality. Sin is committed through our bodies, and before salvation we committed sin willingly, freely and without restraint and naturally. In other words, before Christ, we could not help sinning. Paul is saying here, then why would you want to consider living the way you used to live and expect grace to always remedy the situation.

The error that Paul is seeking to remedy is what we call “antinomianism” which simply means “against law”. The Russian monk, Rasputin adopted this false doctrine as he weaved his sinister designs in the house of Romanov before the Communist Revolution. He would have agreed with this statement: “the more you sin, the more grace you will receive, so sin all you like.” Is this what God says? No, the Scriptures over and over assert that sin is a deadly enemy and must be fought against continually. Many Christians also think that we wage war in the flesh, but the Bible tells us that in our flesh dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18). Fighting sin is a spiritual activity not a fleshy one. If you use

fleshly resources you will fail every time. The phrase “body of sin” in Romans 6:6 probably is a reference to our entire persons as controlled by sin. It is simply our human nature apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul states that we are no longer enslaved to sin, and this came about because we died with Jesus, and therefore since we died, we are now free from sin (Rom. 6:6, 7) as a power that we could not resist previously. It is also an anticipatory statement of what we will experience in glory one day; namely, complete freedom from sin. Since Jesus has experienced resurrection, death no longer has any hold or power over him (Rom. 6:8 – 10). He now lives in the power of an endless and indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Death has no dominion over Jesus Christ. He has conquered it. This death that Jesus died is described in Romans 6:10 as a death to sin. He died to sin once for all. He cannot offer himself again as a sacrifice for sin – it is complete, the work of redemption is complete (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). His death was conditioned by sin, not his own, but ours (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Isa. 53).

Thus, we arrive at verse 11. In view of what Jesus has done for us, we must consider ourselves identified with him, and therefore as “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.” All of the previous doctrinal and theological statements now bring Paul to his exhortation. In principle, we are dead to sin and alive to God. We have to make this a deep seated conviction because God says this is what is true (cf: 2 Cor. 5:14 – 17). Paul views the believer as dead to sin and alive to God (see Col. 3:1 – 4), and he exhorts us to live like that.

Now if we stop at verse 11, we might still be tempted to think from a theological point of view, that we can adopt the antinomian attitude revealed in verse 1. If this is true, and is a done deal from God’s perspective as God views me, then sin is no problem. But we know that sin is a real problem, that’s why Paul warns us in Romans 6:12 to not let sin reign. Sin as an opposing force must still be reckoned with. In principle, it is one thing to say that we died to sin, but in practice, it is quite another thing. Paul knows the presence of sin. He states that when he wants to do good, sin is right there with him (Rom. 7:14 – 20). Therefore, Paul says the Christian must adopt the position of being at war, of being in a constant conflict that requires very hard warfare (1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:10 – 20; 1 Thess. 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:3). Battles will be won and lost in this war. We must stand guard vigilantly, because if we don’t sin will rise up and overcome us. Spiritual vigilance is no easy work. It is much easier to let our guard down and allow sin to do its nasty work in us - in our “mortal bodies”.

So how do we not let sin reign in our mortal bodies? Paul gives the answer in verse 13. Negatively, we must not offer the members of our bodies as instruments of sin, and positively, we must offer our members as instruments for righteousness. Don’t offer yourself to sin, rather offer yourself to God. Make it definite and deliberate and keep on doing it. We must learn to love and cherish righteousness as our standard. We can do this, if we are Christians, because God the Holy Spirit dwells within us. Paul tells us in verse 14, that we are not under Law, but under grace. The Law demands, commands, rebukes, accuses, restrains, & constrains us. The Law reveals not so much itself, but looks away to Another – the Law-giver Himself. The Law can not do one thing though. It can never save! Only grace can save. Grace dethrones sin. Through God’s grace comes pardon and cleansing. As a believer you don’t have to yield to sin’s lordship. Instead you can yield willingly to loving service. Use every means God has given.

Seeking to strive with you

Russ

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