

## **Five steps to spiritual progress and growth**

### **Romans 6:1-14 (NKJV)**

- 1) What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?
- 2) Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
- 3) Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?
- 4) Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5) For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,
- 6) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.
- 7) For he who has died has been freed from sin.
- 8) Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,
- 9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.
- 10) For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.
- 11) Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- 12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13) And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

14) For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

### **Introduction**

This whole portion of Scripture deals with the whole reality that those who call themselves Christians should not be under the dominion (rule) of sin. Some people could conclude that though God saves his people by grace and because He saves His people freely (Romans 3:24-28) some might think that we can now do what we want and sin like we want because then God's grace would just abound and multiply! Paul says this kind of thinking is ludicrous and dishonoring to God. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue to sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Certainly not!" Christ didn't save his people so that they would have a license to sin? On the contrary, Paul argues that now if you have been baptized into Christ (verse 3), in other words if you have been united to Christ by His Spirit if you have been born again, you have died to sin. To live under the dominion and slavery of your sinful passions should be an anomaly and irregularity for a believer in God.

What follows here are five steps how to progress in your spiritual walk. The first step is actually our entrance into the kingdom of God, and the following four steps describe how progress is made while in the kingdom of God. Some Christians aren't growing in Christlikeness. Some are stagnant. Some are living in a backslidden state. Some are living in bondage to sin because they don't know the normal Christian life. Here follows what I have learned from Watchman Nee, a Christian writer in the 20th century who lived in China and died as a martyr after he suffered for 20 years in prison because of his faith in Christ. He

wrote a book called "The Normal Christian life" which made a great impact in my life.

### **Step 1 Knowing**

This term "knowing" is used as a synonym for faith. In the first five chapters of Romans, the truths have been unpacked that we are all sinners and therefore guilty before God. It was stated that none is righteous, that there is no one that is good. That we humans are all in need of getting justice from God. And then we saw that only by faith, as a free gift given by God, we are made right with God through the righteousness and the atoning death of Christ Jesus. We can know these things theologically. The Devils know the facts of the redemption in Christ as well. But as Hebrews 11:1 says: "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for." To believe in the finished work of Christ is to "know that you know that you know" that Christ finished work applies to you personally. When Paul speaks of "knowing" in this passage, it means having an unwavering conviction that Christ indeed paid the highest price for me and rose again from the dead for my everlasting justification. No one comes into the kingdom of God without experiencing Romans verse 3. "Or do you not KNOW that you who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death?" What does that mean? I don't believe this means water baptism. But baptism into the Holy Spirit. That is the entrance into God's salvation. But let's see how this happens.

a) Knowing that God has dealt with all your sins at the cross. Romans 3:24, says: "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His BLOOD, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness... "

Romans 5:9 "Much more then, having now been justified by His BLOOD, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

The blood of Jesus Christ has been spilled to forgive all believers' sins. Believers have been justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ. There is power in the blood of Christ! The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sins (1 John 1:7). "How much more will the blood of Christ who was offered through the eternal Spirit cleanse us from an evil conscience to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14). The entrance into the Christian life is to **know** that all your sins have been dealt with, forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ when He died on the cross 2000 years ago on Golgotha. **ALL** your sins! All your sins before and after your conversion. If you doubt this fact, you won't grow and progress in your spiritual life. Jesus died the death you had to die! If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The blood of Jesus Christ dealt with all the sins of believers: present, past, and future.

b) Knowing that God has dealt with sin (your old man; the sinful nature) at the cross

(Verse 6) "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that the body of sin may be done away with."

Not only did Jesus die for believers on the cross to cleanse them from all their sins, but believers' sin (sinful nature, the old man) was crucified with Him when Jesus died. When Jesus died, you died with him! When Jesus rose from the dead, you were raised with Him. Paul said this must be a conviction in your heart! In Galatians 2:20 Paul said: "I am crucified with Christ, I no longer live. The life I now live I live in faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me". I can explain this truth in this way: let's say you bought a new book, and you are traveling with this book across the world. In this book, there is a bookmark. Wherever you take the book, the bookmark goes with it, although the bookmark is not part of the book. So it is with Jesus. Whatever happened with Jesus happened to the believer in Christ. When Jesus died, all the believers died with Him. When Jesus rose from the dead, we rose with Him. When Jesus went to heaven, we

went with Him. Jesus is seated now in heaven. The Bible says believers are seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We have been united with Christ by faith, in his death and his resurrection and His life. When Jesus died on the cross our old man died with Him, that is why we have a new identity. We are no longer people of wrath. We are not children of darkness and disobedience! We are now the children of God by faith! Believers are children of the light. Believers are heirs of God! Co-heirs with Christ. We are united to God by faith.

The first step to progress is therefore to **KNOW** that you have been baptized into the Spirit of God. It is to **KNOW** that all our sins are forgiven by the blood of Christ, and it is to **KNOW** that your sinful nature or old man has been crucified with Christ 2000 years ago. This knowledge only comes as we repent of our sins and receive Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior and Righteousness.

## **Step 2 Reckoning**

Verse 11 says "reckon yourself dead indeed to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Why does Paul say this? If the preceding truth is true that what happened to Christ happened to us and if it is true that Christ died to sin, we ought to die to sin as well. Sin is an irregularity, an anomaly an inconsistency in being a child of God! It should be! Because we as Christians think it is normal to sin, we can fall into the trap of becoming complacent with sin. We can become too familiar with it and not see it as our enemy. Sin is more dangerous than a black mamba or an unexploded hand grenade or bomb! Do you believe that? Sin is serious. Sin has devastating consequences.

Paul said: reckon yourself dead to sin. In other words, count yourself dead. Jesus died to sin, and so did we. Jesus lives for God, and so do we. Let's say you have to count all your receipts at the of the end of the month to see if it corresponds to your Bank statements. You have to count them one by one, don't you? If you don't count them all, you won't be able to discern if you made a mistake in your calculations or

if fraud took place or not. So we have to do with sin. We have to go through them all and count ourselves dead to them! To reckon yourself dead to something means you count the things that you are dead to. A Christian reckons or counts himself dead to idolatry, dead to pride, dead to blasphemy, dead to taking the name of the Lord in vain, dead to disrespecting older people and your parents, dead to murder, dead to adultery, dead to sexual sin, dead to lust, dead to greed, dead to gossip, dead to slander, dead to thefts, dead to lies, dead to pornography, dead to covetousness, dead to fornication etc, etc. Are you doing this friend? Or do you count yourself alive to sin and dead to God?

Why should a Christians do this? A Christians should do this because sinning should be an irregularity! What happened to Jesus happened to me! I am not the old Nico anymore! I have been baptized into the family of God. I have been born again! My citizenship is in heaven. Sin and sins are my enemies! I should not make friends with them!!! I should not hang around with sin!! If I give a foothold to Satan, he will take over my whole life! I will become enslaved to sin. Sin will have dominion over me if I don't kill it! As John Owen said: kill sin or it will kill you!! The second step to spiritual progress is to reckon yourself dead to sin and alive to God. Remember that God has saved you from your sins! You belong to God, not to this world or Satan or your old self. Your old self is your enemy! He has been crucified with Christ! Treat sin and your old self as enemies of God.

### **Step 3 Presenting your bodies to God**

Verse 13 says: "We should not present our bodies (or yield our bodies or surrender our bodies) as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourself to God and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

The third step to spiritual progress is surrendering your bodies and the parts of your bodies continually to God. First, surrender yourself. Your

heart! Yes nobody gets saved unless he surrendered his life to Christ. If Jesus is not Lord of your life, then you are not saved. But as we walk with God in this life, we seem to forget what we did many years ago. To keep growing, to keep progressing in your walk with God, you need to keep surrendering to God. Your body can be used for evil or good. Think of a toolbox. In a toolbox, the man of a family has different instruments. He has nails, hammers, prestik, pliers and many more things. All of those tools can be used to fix things; it can be used for something good and useful or it can be used to break down and destroy and for evil purposes. God has given us hands, and feet and eyes and ears and fingers and brains and mouths and so on. We can surrender these things unto God for good and right purposes or we can use it for evil. We can use our mouths to gossip and slander or to praise God and to witness for Him or to edify and encourage other people. We can use our hands to steal and break down, or we can use them to wash dishes and clean houses and make motorcars or computers! We can use our feet to go to pubs and bars and to go to places where God does not want us to go, or we can use our feet to proclaim the gospel and to love our neighbors and visit the sick and suffering. And so we can go on and on. My friend, have you given your members, your body parts, one for one for righteousness? For Gods glory? Romans 12:1,2 also says: "By the mercies of God present your bodies as a holy and living sacrifice unto God, that is your spiritual worship."

We won't progress in our spiritual walk unless we surrender our lives continually unto God and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God! We don't belong to ourselves; we were bought with a price! By the precious blood of Christ!

#### **Step 4 Life in the Holy Spirit**

All we need in the Christian life for salvation and godliness is to be found in the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:4 says: "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father, we should walk in newness of life."

And Romans 6:11 says that we should reckon ourselves alive unto God IN Christ Jesus.

What is this newness of life? Jesus was raised by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9,10) and so do we live by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ. Romans 8:1,2 says: "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but the spirit, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death."

My friend He who saves us from the slavery of sin is the abiding Holy Spirit. It is the power and presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit that sets us free from the dominions and bondage of sin. Our lives are hidden in Christ if we are believers. The law of the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Everything we need in our spiritual life is to be found in the Spirit of Christ. Do you need wisdom? Christ is your wisdom in the Spirit. Do you need knowledge? Jesus is your knowledge. Do you need purity? Jesus is your purity and sanctification. Do you need the power to overcome sin? Jesus is your power by the power of the Spirit. Do you need humility? The fruit of the Spirit is humility! Do you need joy? Jesus is your joy! God made Christ unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30,31). Let him who boasts boast in God! My friend to grow in the Spirit is always to receive from God and to rest in Christ Jesus! We don't progress through the works and efforts of the flesh or the works of the law, but by drinking from the streams of God's abundance. In the Gospel of John it is written: "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and **drink**. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for



the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified"(John 7:37-39 NKJV).

### **Step 5 Dying with Christ (Taking up your cross)**

And lastly, we go back to Romans 6:5; 6:8. "For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."

Now if we look at verse five, we see that it says: **IF** we have been United with him in his death, we shall we in his resurrection". Question: What is the likeness of His resurrection? Answer: It is to receive a glorified, incorruptible body isn't it? Well, we're not getting that unless we have died with Him, meaning there is a practical dying with Jesus every day that has to take place before we can receive that body! Paul said in Romans 8:36, "we die every day, we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered." Jesus said if we want to be His disciples, we have to deny ourselves, take up the crosses and follow Him. He who wants to save his life shall lose it, and he who loses it for His sake shall save it" (Matthew 16:24,25). Friend are you dying with Jesus every day? Are you prepared to suffer for Him? Are you suffering for His Name? Are you dying to your own plans and own dreams and own ambitions and what people might think of you if you make a stand for Christ?

You won't progress spiritually, you won't see heaven, you shall not live with Christ unless you died with Him. You will not receive a glorified body unless you have been planted into the likeness of His death! Let's not deceive ourselves! Let's not play church anymore, but go outside the city and bear his reproach! Jesus was not ashamed to die for us and be humiliated and spat upon. Jesus was not ashamed to be tortured for the glory of God! Let's not be ashamed of Him and for what is right and good and just! Blessed will we be if we are insulted

for Christ's sake if we suffer persecution for righteousness sake!!  
(Matthew 5:11-12).

### **Conclusion:**

Our text says that sin will not have dominion over us because we are not under the law but under grace. My friend the grace of God makes us victorious over sin. Christ has come to set us free from our sins. To grow and progress as believers in Christ we need to remember these truths. We have to cooperate with the Spirit as Christians otherwise we will backslide and sin will have dominion over us!

First, we must know that by repentance and faith in Christ alone we have been baptized into the Spirit. We must know that Jesus' blood paid for all our sins. We must know that our old man died with Jesus. We are new people with a new identity. What happened to Jesus happened to us who believe. Where Jesus is now, we are! We are seated in heavenly places!

Secondly, we must reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin and alive to God. Sin is not our friend! Make war with your flesh and with specific sins that you struggle with!

Thirdly, we should present our lives and bodies as instruments of righteousness unto God every day. We belong to God. We are His workmanship.

Fourthly, we should remember that we live in the Spirit. We have been baptized into the Spirit, and we keep on progressing by drawing strength from the Spirit. He is our life and all our blessing. He is our Treasure and Safety and Security.

And fifthly, we progress spiritually by denying ourselves and dying with Jesus everyday from our own selfish desires and sinful desires.

These steps can be summarized by faith, ongoing repentance and obedience to God!

We progress spiritually by fixing our eyes on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith! Amen