

AN INTERESTING QUESTION ANSWERED

Question. – Please explain Romans 6:7: "For he that is dead is freed from sin."

Answer. – The Apostle is not here speaking of original sin – the transgression which brought the death penalty upon the race: he is addressing those who had passed from death unto life through Christ, and who now, at the time of his writing, were New Creatures in Christ Jesus. He is representing sin as the great taskmaster which previously held them in slavery to wickedness, and he exhorts them now to consider themselves as though they had gotten free from that slavery to the taskmaster in as full and complete a sense as a slave would be free from his master if he died. You will notice this thought running through the discourse of this chapter, as for instance in verses 12,14,16,17,18, and this is explained to be figurative language in verse 19.

It will be noticed that this is not a question of sin having dominion over the New Creature, but a question of sin still having dominion over the flesh, the earthen vessel. Carrying on the same argument, the Apostle says (8:10), "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of righteousness." Then he exhorts that it be not satisfactory to us merely to count our bodies dead to sin, so that we will not permit them to serve sin, but that the new mind in us shall take control and actuate these mortal bodies, and make of them servants of the new mind, servants of righteousness, servants of Christ. He assures us that the Spirit of God which was powerful enough to raise our Lord Jesus actually from the dead is powerful enough, if we lay hold of it properly, to permit such a quickening of our mortal bodies to newness of life.

Man can pay his penalty in death; but when the penalty has been inflicted to the full there is nothing of man left: hence it means his utter and everlasting destruction. To suppose anything left after the penalty had been inflicted, would be to suppose some part of him that had not been condemned; but we know that the language of Genesis is, "Thou shalt surely die," and that the law was stated to be, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." We see, then, that nothing of the man, nothing of the being, is exempted from the penalty, and so long as the man lay under the penalty he could have no right to life to all eternity.

There is no provision for a second life except through a redemption accomplished by our Lord Jesus – the work being finished at Calvary, and subsequently accepted of the Father, and his acceptance manifested by the outpouring of the holy Spirit at Pentecost. But God did not deal with the man to acquit him. God merely passes the man as a purchased possession over to the care of his Redeemer, Jesus, – Justice giving to Jesus a full title to the man, and all the rights, etc., which he ever enjoyed.

You will perceive that this gives the man no rights of his own, but commits all things to the Son. We must therefore inquire of the Son how he proposes to deal with the purchased possession. Briefly we understand the testimony of the Word to be that the Son, during the Millennial Age, will judge the world by, through and in conjunction with his elect Church, and that all shall have the opportunity of coming up to human perfection under the chastisements and disciplines of the Millennial Age, and that failing to improve these blessed opportunities they will be cut off in the Second Death. Some of the Scriptures bearing upon the subject would seem to imply punishment for misdeeds of the present life – but we believe only for such misdeeds as were committed against some degree of light, or against some of the children of light. Those who had no knowledge whatever of the divine arrangement in Christ could have no responsibility in the

sense of meriting special punishment, because they were under the original condemnation, and their personal responsibility under the New Covenant could only begin when they came to some degree of knowledge respecting it. However, we can readily see that to whatever extent any violate the laws of nature, they degrade themselves; and that every step downward in the present life, will require effort to retrace it during the Millennial Age.
