

In Romans 6:4, Paul writes that “...we have been buried with Him [Christ] through baptism into death....” The phrase, “buried with Him through baptism into death,” simply means that we have been identified with Christ’s “death.” Because we have been placed (baptized) into Christ through the avenue of the Spirit and are perceived by the Father as having always been in Christ, our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ are realities. As a result, we can “walk in newness of life,” Christ’s resurrected “life,” a life lived from God’s perspective and by His power:

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

This truth ties in perfectly with Romans 5:10 and Romans 5:17:

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

To “be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10) on a daily basis (from Satan’s schemes) means to “reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17). Therefore, to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), we must learn to live by the life of Another, Christ’s very life, as we face the “circumstances” of our day. Is it not amazing how consistently Paul’s teaching ends up at the same place? He realized that imitating Christ through our own self-effort is an act of futility and places the believer under Law. Intimacy with Jesus, on the other hand, results in a desire to yield to His indwelling presence every moment of the day. Truly, “...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2Corinthians 3:6).

Thus, we could have been with Christ when He died (v.3), when He was “buried” (v.4), and when He was resurrected (v.4). In fact, Ephesians 2:4-6 states:

“God...made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-6)

The tense used in Ephesians 2:4-6 is the past tense. Also, all of these changes occurred as a result of our being placed “in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 6:5 should now come alive. It states that “...we have become united with Him [with Christ] in the likeness of His death....” Paul continues by writing: “...we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” Yes, at some point in the future we will receive a glorified body. But Paul is also saying that we can live in Christ’s resurrected power in the here and now!

The Old Self Crucified

In Romans 6:6, we observe “*that our old self,*” inherited from Adam, “*was crucified with Him [Christ]*”:

knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;
(Romans 6:6)

What a tremendous statement! It means that the person we used to be “*was crucified*”! Also, the verb tenses prove that this act occurred in the past, on the cross, and is thus a completed act. This change could transpire due to the kind of life, eternal life, we received once we were placed in Christ. For this reason, and a host of others, I believe that the “*old self*” was completely eradicated when we received Christ (when we were justified). Refer to Circle Diagram 4.

Some believers perceive the “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) as being declared dead by God yet alive in the New Testament believer. They view God as somehow pretending that the “*old self*” is dead due to their belief that it is alive, yet wounded. They maintain, that the “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) is only positionally dead—that we must deal with it until physical death, at which time it is eradicated. Paul’s statement is strong proof that such a situation is impossible. The “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) was eradicated at the point of justification (when we received eternal life), since it died on the cross with Christ.

A *battle takes place inside every church saint between the new self and the power of sin.*

A battle takes place inside every church saint not between the old self and the new self, but between the new self and the power of sin. Two verses besides Romans 6:6 speak of the death and eradication of the “*old self.*” Colossians 3:9 states that “*the old self*” has been “*laid aside*” (eradicated):

“Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.” (Colossians 3:9)

No cause for argument here.

“that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.”
(Ephesians 4:22)

The wording of Ephesians 4:22 seems to indicate (on the surface at least) that the old self is still alive in the New Testament believer—that the saint is to “*lay aside the old self*” on a moment-by-moment basis. This error stems from a misunderstanding of the aorist infinitive “*lay aside*” (Greek infinitives are sometimes difficult to translate). However, should Ephesians 4:22 teach that the “*old self*” remains alive (but wounded)

after spiritual regeneration/salvation (as is communicated in many Christian circles) it would indeed create a contradiction.

As I sought to reconcile this “apparent” contradiction in Paul’s epistle, I discovered that John Murray believed the grammar allowed and the exegesis demanded that the infinitive “*lay aside*” is an infinitive of result. He went on to say that the “past tense” is indicated here. Murray’s translation resolves the matter:

“so that *ye have put off*, according to the former manner of life, the old man.”

As a result, Murray interpreted Ephesians 4:21-22 as follows:

“You were taught in Christ with regard to the fact that your old man was laid aside.”ⁱ

Praise God that our “*old self*” (old man, sinful nature, dead spirit, Adamic nature) was eradicated through the cross and will never be dealt with again! We would face a major dilemma should we be required to continually “*lay aside the old self*” for the “*old self*” to be laid “*aside.*” Ephesians 4:23-24 produces an additional quandary:

and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. (Ephesians 4:23-24)

Should New Testament believers be required to “*put on the new self*” on an ongoing basis, we would be lost and without Christ during those times when we failed to lay the “*old self*” aside and put him (the new self) on! During such times, the “*old self*” alone would live in us—making us “*children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3). Yet, the Scriptures teach that we became the “*new self*” for all eternity once we were placed in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:13) subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved. Therefore, we are not required to continually put on the “*new self*” to remain the “*new self.*” Should we be required to put off the “*old self,*” yet fail to do so, and at the same time put on the “*new self,*” we would be dual natured (a “cahog”—old self plus new self), a state which Paul classifies as adulterous (Romans 7:1-4—verses studied in much depth shortly). Scripture validates time and time again that the “*old self*” has been eradicated (crucified and disposed) and that the “*new self,*” being eternal, lives on.

Romans 6:6, Colossians 3:9, and Ephesians 4:22 are in agreement. Paul’s words in Galatians 2:20 serve as “the final nail in the coffin,” for they place the crucifixion of the old self (old man) in the past, never to be repeated:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.
(Galatians 2:20)

The phrase, “*have been crucified,*” is in the perfect tense in the Greek, pointing to past action, completed action, with a resulting state of being. Thus, the old self (sinful nature, old man) was “*crucified with Christ*” and eradicated the moment we repented and believed—never to turn up again.

Some theologians use Galatians 5:24 in an attempt to prove that the old self (sinful nature, old man) is alive, yet wounded in the New Testament believer. Such a mindset is invalid. Knowing that Paul contrasts “*the deeds of the flesh*” to “*the fruit of the Spirit*” in Galatians 5:16-23 is necessary to properly interpret Galatians 5:24:

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

We must understand that Scripture makes a distinction between the “*flesh*” of Galatians 5:24 and the “*old self*” of Romans 6:6. The “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) is who we used to be prior to salvation (justification) and has been “*crucified*” and eradicated (Romans 6:6). The “*flesh*” (Galatians 5:24), on the other hand, is dealt with on an ongoing basis. Romans 8:4 and Romans 8:12-13 teach that the New Testament believer can walk in one of two places— “*according to the flesh*” or “*according to the Spirit*”:

in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:4)

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:12-13)

The “*flesh*” is what we “*walk*” in when we believe the power of sin’s lie sent into our minds through the avenue of the habit patterns in the brain—the brain being a piece of “*flesh*” (Circle Diagram 7 addresses this subject and will be studied in depth later.) Thus, to “*walk according to the flesh,*” (Romans 8:4) as a New Testament believer, is to buy the power of sin’s lie as the truth. Therefore, the “*flesh*” and the “*old self*” (sinful nature) are not synonymous—something the NIV fails to take into account in Romans 7:17, 8:4-5, 12, and others, where it incorrectly renders “*flesh*” as “*sinful nature.*” The NIV commits this mistake because the individuals responsible for translating Romans 7 and 8 erroneously think that believers during the church age possess two natures—the old self (sinful nature) and the new self. This inaccuracy resulted in their perceiving the “*flesh*” and the “*sinful nature*” (the old man, old self) as being equal (the same thing) in the New Testament believer. (This subject is addressed in more depth in the materials associated with Romans 8.)

Take special note of the fact that “*the flesh*” (Galatians 5:24) is crucified by the New Testament believer on an ongoing basis, whereas the crucifixion of the “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) was a single act performed by God through Jesus’ death on the cross. Thus, the “*old self*” (Romans 6:6) was eradicated by God and will never be dealt with again. “*The flesh*” (Galatians 5:24), however, is “*crucified*” (Galatians 5:24) daily by

New Testament believers as they consider themselves dead to the power of sin's lie and yield to Christ's indwelling presence. Hence, we crucify "*the flesh*" when we consider ourselves dead to the lies the power of sin sends into our minds through the avenue of the habit patterns in the brain (the brain being a piece of "*flesh*") and walk in the truth supplied by God through the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion: Galatians 5:24 teaches that "*the flesh*" (which is not the "*old self*" of Romans 6:6 or sinful nature) is crucified daily (as a lifestyle) by New Testament believers as they consider themselves dead to the power of sin's lies and, in turn, walk in God's truth. Hence, New Testament believers who walk in fellowship with God will find themselves looking back and seeing that they have crucified "*the flesh*" on a decently consistent basis. This crucifixion of "*the flesh*" (Galatians 5:24) continues so long as we live in our earthly bodies. The eradication of the "*old self*" (Romans 6:6), on the other hand, was carried out by the Triune God the moment we met Christ. Hence, the "*old self*" is long gone, never to rear its ugly head again. After all, God "*crucified*" (eradicated) the "*old self*" (through Christ's "*body*") when He saved (justified) us (Romans 6:6; Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:20). This truth can provide incredible encouragement during times of intense warfare. (If our discussion of the "*flesh*" seems confusing at this juncture, know that Romans 8 will help.)

Romans 6:6 states:

...that our body of sin might be done away with... (Romans 6:6)

Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines "*body of sin*" as:

"a governing principle or power...an organized power, acting through the members of the body."ⁱⁱ

Coupling this input with the fact that "*done away with*" actually means "made powerless," or "to be rendered idle," we can conclude that the "*body of sin*" (power of sin) has been "made powerless," or "rendered idle," due to the "*old self*" having been eradicated. How liberating! To yield to the power of sin's influence is, therefore, unnatural. Yes, we will commit acts of sin (when we deem the power of sin's lie to be truth) so long as we live in earthly bodies, but every act of disobedience will be an unnatural event. Thus, the last phrase of Romans 6:6 states, "*...that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*" Isn't Romans a tremendous book!

ⁱ Murray, John. *Principles Of Conduct, Aspects Of Biblical Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. www.eerdmans.com. 1957. Used by permission.

ⁱⁱ Vine, W.E., Unger, Merrill F., & White, William Jr. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson. 1996. Used by permission. All rights reserved.