

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
July 31, 2016

Lesson Text: Romans 6:1-4, 12-14, 20-23
Lesson Title: Raised to New Life

Introduction

According to Paul's teaching in the first five chapters of Romans, every person born into this world is a sinner and the only remedy for sin is justification through Jesus Christ. With that truth established, Paul turns his attention to sanctification.

Although there is a vast difference between justification and sanctification, Paul beautifully explains how the two are connected and woven together in Romans 6 and 7. *Justification* deals with the *penalty for sin* which is forgiven through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Sanctification* deals with the *power of sin* in the believer's life. The end result of *justification* is salvation; the end result of *sanctification* is holiness. *Justification* and *sanctification* both rest on the work of Jesus Christ for the unbeliever and believer.

In every age, some have questioned the doctrine of *justification* by faith on the incorrect conclusion that it leads to sin. For whatever reason, some think the more we sin the more we can experience God's grace. Presumably, their thinking is, if good works will not save, sinful works or deeds will not condemn. Why, then, should believers be concerned about their sin and living a holy life? Paul answers that question in this section as he magnifies the new life believers have in Christ.

Dead to Sin (Romans 6:1-4; 12-14)

Verse 1-2

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Paul had said, “...*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Romans 5:20). He did not want anyone to misinterpret the scripture mean sin should be condoned in order to generate grace. That kind of conclusion was contrary to the Word of God. Believers do not have a license to sin because God treats us as righteous. To make his point, Paul asks the rhetorical question: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.”

“Continue” means “to stay at or with.” He is referring to habitual sin. A believer can sin, but he does not live in habitual sin as he did prior to salvation (1 John 3:5-9). There are a lot of professing believers in the church and the world who want to be saved yet live however they please. Paul’s answer to his question is unmistakably clear, “God forbid.”

“God forbid” means “may it never be so.” Paul’s language here is designed to express the absurdity to even think that way. The absurdity is presented in Paul’s next question, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” “We” is a reference to Paul and all repentant sinners now justified and saved by grace. Paul says, “We have died to sin.” That means the old life of sin we lived is “dead,” gone, perished. A Christian is a person who has “died” to sin. To “continue” to live in “sin” is a contradiction of who we are in Christ. It is a contradiction of the purposes of God’s grace.

Sanctification and holy living is not found in some secret formula or set of rules established by an individual or particular denomination. A sanctified life is a life characterized by being “dead to sin.”

Verse 3

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

At this point, Paul asks, “Know ye not...” “Know ye not” is the Greek word *agnoeo*, meaning “to understand, perceive, or consider.” A person who “knows” is called a gnostic; a person who does not know is called an agnostic. To Paul, knowledge of why we deserved condemnation is the basis for holy living.

Paul seemed stunned that some believers had missed the fact “baptism into Jesus Christ” signified identification with Him in “his death.” “Baptized” is the Greek word *baptize*, which means “to immerse, submerge.” To be “baptized” into something is to be completely enveloped by it. “Baptized into Jesus Christ” means to be totally incorporated into Him, to become a member of His body (1 Corinthians 12:13), and to share with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, everything we were as sinful men and women was represented in Him. He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). The moment a sinner calls upon the Lord for salvation, that sinner identifies with Christ’s redeeming work on the cross and His death. All the sins of the repentant sinner, past, present, and future, died with Jesus Christ on the cross. When He died, we died with Him. Therefore, it is impossible to die to sin with Christ on the cross and “continue” to habitually live in sin.

Verse 4

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

“Therefore” indicates Paul’s next statement is a continuation of what he has just written. In other words, what he says next further explains the truth he is presenting. Because we have been “baptized into his death,” we are also “buried with him by baptism into death.”

“Buried with Him by baptism into death” signifies sin no longer has a judicial hold on us. This “baptism” is the same as the “baptism” in verse 3, spiritual, not water. Justification is not received through a literal sprinkling of water or immersion in water. It is received through faith alone.

“We are buried with him” means our experience is His experience. “By baptism” refers to our identification with Him. “Into death” speaks of His being enveloped by death. “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead” means the believer is raised from a dead life of sin to a new life in the same manner Christ was resurrected from the grave. “By the glory of the Father” means Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God the Father. “Even so we also” speaks about the potential every believer has now to “walk in the newness of life.” Our identification with Christ’s “burial” and “resurrection” means we experience the new kind of life Christ experienced when He arose and we can now conduct ourselves and live accordingly.

Note: In verses 3 and 4, Paul uses the words “death...buried...and raised.” You cannot find three words more suitable to define the difference between the old life of sin and the new life of salvation. Christ was crucified, died, and buried. He rose from the grave victorious. By placing faith in Jesus Christ, you died, were buried, and are now alive to a new life in Christ.

Our identification through faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection was so we might “walk in the newness of life.” This “newness of life” is not something temporary, it is permanent because Christ died once, was buried once, and was raised once. So, if you think you should “continue” to sin, think about your identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

Verse 12

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

Just knowing what has been accomplished on our behalf through Christ’s work on the cross is not in itself sanctification or walking in the newness of life. Before we were saved, we could not refuse sin’s authority. Whether an unsaved

person likes to admit it or not, his sinful nature reigns. But after the sinner identifies with Jesus Christ he no longer follows the course of the evil one. Once the sinner is raised from the spiritual deadness of sin to new life in Christ, he no longer has to let sin “reign” in his life.

“Let not” means once we know we are free from sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must “not” allow “sin” to “reign” in our “bodies.” The word “reign” is used for a king to rule and to control. “Sin” is just as determined to “reign” in our lives as it did before we were saved. Although “sin” is a dethroned ruler, it is still around giving orders. But these are orders and commands the believer does not have to obey! A believer in Jesus Christ, who has the newness of life, can take the initiative to say, “I am not going to live in sin because I am now in Jesus Christ.”

Please notice Paul does not say, “You should never sin,” or “If you do sin you will lose your salvation and be lost again.” He says, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body.” The “mortal body” is the part of us that can die. Sin operates in our flesh. Our physical bodies can become a conduit for sin if we allow it to “reign.” Paul wants us to know as believers we will have a struggle with sin as long as we are in this body of flesh. If you question that truth, read and study Romans 7. Paul also wants us to know sin does not “reign” over us as believers.

Verse 13

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Believers are not to allow our “members,” (hands, feet, eyes, tongues, mind, etc.) to become “instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.” “Instruments” is the Greek word *hoplon*, used to refer to “weapons of war.” It is the same word “*weapon*” used in John 18:3 in reference to Judas when he came with the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The “members” of our physical bodies are not to be used for sinful purposes now that we have been justified.

“Yield” is the Greek word *paristemi*, meaning “to set at one’s disposal, place alongside.” When Paul uses the word “yield” the first time in reference to not “yielding” our bodies for “unrighteousness,” he says, “Do not place yourself alongside sin.” When he uses the word “yield” the second time in reference to “yielding yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead...” he says, “Now that you are justified, place yourself alongside the Lord and live the life He wants you to live.” If someone claims to be a Christian, the reality of their profession can be determined in reference to where they “yield” their life.

Verse 14

“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

“For sin shall not have dominion over you” means once we have been justified, we cannot even consider continuing to live the sinful lifestyle we lived prior to conversion. Why? Because we “are not under the law, but under grace.” Believers are free from sins “dominion.” “Dominion” refers to “rule, influence, or lordship.”

Paul is saying, “As believers, we are not under a set of rules anymore.” This verse troubles the legalists and rule setters of our day. Legalists believe Christians are kept from sinning through fear of the “law.” Those who make rules for Christians to follow fit into the same category. Their conclusion is if you do not keep fear or threat of punishment over the heads of believers, they will sin. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If you are living “under grace,” the “law” and man-made rules have nothing to offer you. Rules restricting behavior are irrelevant to the believer living “under grace.” This, according to Paul, is the truth of new life in Christ for everyone transformed by God’s amazing grace!

Free to Serve (Romans 6:20-23)

Verse 20-21

“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”

Paul makes a statement about the sinners previous condition and then asks another rhetorical question to prompt his audience to think and look within.

First, Paul says, “For when you were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” Even if you were raised in a Christian family and faithful to church, there was a point in your life at which you were a “servant of sin.” That means you were a “slave” to sin. Every person born into this world is a “servant of sin,” and “free from righteousness.” “Free from righteousness” means you did not think or try to be righteous. Unbelievers “sin” because they want to sin. Even though they know their “sin” is causing huge problems, they keep doing it because they are sinners and do not have power to do anything about it.

Second, Paul asks, “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.” “Those things whereof ye are now ashamed” are the sins committed prior to conversion. Paul is asking, “Did

the evil things you did before you were saved help you in any way?” Paul’s answer is, “No. They only brought death.” None of sins “fruit” is worth having.

Verse 22

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

“But now” are words relating to the present life believers enjoy in Christ. These two words should remind each of us who are saved what a wonderful change had taken place in our life because of Jesus Christ. God in His mercy took each of us out from under the reign of sin and death and placed us in Christ, under the reign of grace. Believers are “now,” this very moment, “free from sin” and privileged to “become servants to God.”

Our old life of sin produced no “fruit” worth having. But “now” we have “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” We have “holiness” now and “everlasting life” forever. Bondage to sin has shame. Being a “servant to God” has placed us in a status of sanctification and ultimately one day being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29) enjoying everlasting life.

Verse 23

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

This verse is the most well-known verse in Romans 6 and is commonly used to explain the gospel to unbelievers. However, Paul is writing this verse to believers. He masterfully concludes his answer to the rhetorical questions he has asked as to whether grace encourages sin.

At the heart of Paul’s answer in this verse are three contrasts: Working for wages versus a free gift; serving sin versus serving the Lord; and, death versus life. Believers know “sin” pays a terrible wage: “death.” The word “wages” was used in reference to a military soldier’s pay from a dictator who cared nothing about his well-being. Believers know if we had continued in sin we were going to have it hard while alive and ultimately face eternal “death” and God’s wrath forever.

“Sin” pays “wages,” but God also pays wages. He offers a free “gift.” “Eternal life” is not an earned benefit! At least it is not earned by you. It is a granted benefit given by God’s amazing grace, earned by Jesus Christ for all those who trust in Him. “Eternal life” is received “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The believer’s life is anchored in “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Conclusion

What does Paul want us to learn from Romans 6? He wants us to know grace is not a license to sin. He wants us to understand our victory over sin is not in obeying laws and rules. It is in our identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also wants us to know we have a responsibility to yield our physical body to Christ as an instrument of righteousness. Finally, Paul wants every believer to know and understand we no longer serve the old task master of sin. Now, we serve our new Master, Jesus Christ the Lord.

If you have never trusted Christ for salvation, the prophet Isaiah says, “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near*” (Isaiah 55:6). If you have trusted Christ for salvation, enjoy the newness of life you have in Him!

Amen.