

Week 2

Renewing Our Minds

A Daily Study of the Book of Romans

Week 2: January 11-15, 2021

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Romans 12:1-2

Cornerstone Assembly of God
10551 Chalkley Rd., N. Chesterfield, VA 23237

SMALL GROUPS

Small Groups have one, simple purpose: to bring people together. We believe God created us to live in relationship with others and only then can we live the full life He intends for us. Sharing life through community is part of our design, but meaningful relationships aren't always easy to find. That's why Small Groups exist—to make these life-changing relationships relevant and accessible to you.

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Tuesday, January 12 at 7pm on Zoom

RSVP by email: abutler@cornerstone.ag

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Join us in prayer each weekday morning on Zoom at 7:45am. Just go to the website home page (cornerstone.ag) and click on the link for “Morning Prayer.”

Abraham Justified by Faith

¹What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? ²If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about – but not before God. ³What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” ^a

⁴Now when a man works his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. ⁶David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” ^b

⁹Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. ¹⁰ Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! ¹¹ And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

¹³It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. ¹⁴For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, ¹⁵because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. ¹⁷As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” ^c He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

¹⁸Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”^d ¹⁹Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. ²²This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” ²³The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, ²⁴but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

^a3 Romans 4:3 and Gen. 15:6 and 22; ^b8 Romans 4:8 and Psalm 32:1,2; ^c17 Romans 4:17 and Gen. 17:5;
^d18 Romans 4:18 and Gen. 15:5

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. This passage assumes that the reader is familiar with Abraham and the promises God made to him. In order to better understand what Paul is saying, look up these verses and record those promises.

Genesis 12:2-3

Genesis 15:4-5

Genesis 17:4-8

2. What arguments does Paul use to show that Abraham was justified by faith?

Romans 4:3-5

Romans 4:9-11

Romans 4:13-15

3. Why is it so important for Paul to demonstrate that Abraham was justified by faith? (Romans 4:11-12,16-17)

4. What does this tell us about the recipients of God's promises to Abraham? (vv. 13-16)

5. What made it difficult for Abraham to trust in God's promise? What truth about God helped him to persevere in faith?

★ PRAYER POINT ★

GREATER FAITH IN GOD & HIS PROMISES

- When have you trusted God's promises and seen them fulfilled?
- What are you trusting Him for today?
- When it is hard for you to trust God?

COMMENTARY

This chapter is a “case study” in justification by faith. Paul has emphasized that for both Jew and Gentile, there is only one way of salvation--by grace, through faith, not by works of the law. Further, he has stated that circumcision has value only as an outward sign of an inward faith. Paul now makes these doctrines concrete by applying them to one of the central characters in Judaism: Abraham, the father of the race. If Paul can show that even Abraham was justified by faith, then his point is proven.

v. 2 “If . . . Abraham was justified by works” . . . This was actually the view of many Jewish teachers of Paul’s day. Abraham was regarded as someone who had kept the whole law perfectly, although the law was not given through Moses until hundreds of years later! (Gal. 3:17)

v. 3 “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” . . . This is a quote from Gen. 15:6. The Jewish teachers of Paul’s day taught that Abraham’s faith was a work by which he earned righteousness. But Paul rejects this. Abraham’s righteousness was not earned or merited, but credited.

vv. 4-5 Paul uses an everyday illustration to show that earning righteousness is incompatible with having it “credited”. Someone who receives a paycheck for their work doesn’t regard those wages as a gift, but simply as what they have earned. So if what the Jews believed about Abraham were true, the Scriptures would say that Abraham “earned” righteousness. But instead, they say that it was credited to him.

On the other hand, if a man does not work, but trusts God (as Abraham did), his faith is credited as righteousness. Paul is not contrasting hard work with laziness, but faith with law-keeping. Those who attempt to achieve righteousness through their own efforts will fail, while those who trust God for righteousness will receive it (Rom. 9:30-32).

vv. 6-8 Paul quotes Psalm 32:1-2, written by King David, to further support his argument. David’s sins are well documented (2 Sam. 11), so no one could claim that he had obeyed the law perfectly. In this Psalm, David speaks of God’s blessing coming not to the man who obeys the law, but to the man whose sins are forgiven, covered, and not counted against him.

vv. 9-12 The Jewish teachers of Paul’s day regarded circumcision as a saving act that guaranteed escape from God’s judgment. But Paul asks a simple question: was Abraham circumcised before or after he was declared righteous by God? The answer is that he was circumcised several years afterward (Gen. 15:6; 16:16; 17:1). In that case, reasons Paul, circumcision could not be the basis of Abraham’s righteousness! It was not a saving work, but only a sign of the righteousness he already possessed through faith.

vv. 11-12 “he is the father” . . . This is Paul’s conclusion: Abraham is the spiritual “father” of all believers, both circumcised and uncircumcised. Jewishness was always a matter of faith rather than circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29), so Abraham is the father of believing Jews. But God declared him righteous prior to circumcision so that he might be the father of believing Gentiles as well.

vv. 13-15 Paul now turns to the covenant that God made with Abraham. He argues that God's promise that Abraham would be heir of the world (Gen. 18:18; 22:17-18) cannot depend on law-keeping for its fulfillment. This would be to ask the impossible, because the law brings condemnation and wrath; it has no power to produce obedience (Gal. 3:21-22). A promise which was contingent on such a condition would be worthless. Paul's basic point here is that law and promise are mutually exclusive (see Gal. 3:18).

vv. 16-17 The fact that God's promises to Abraham were received by faith and not works is no accident. God arranged things in this way so that His promises would be guaranteed, not only to Abraham's physical offspring (believing Jews), but to his spiritual offspring as well (believing Gentiles). Paul applies the statement that Abraham would be the father of many nations (Gen. 17:5) to all believers. Those who share Abraham's faith are his spiritual offspring, and will come from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

v. 17 "the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" . . . This could refer to God calling into existence the Jewish nation through Abraham and Sarah, who were "as good as dead" (v. 19). It could also refer to God's ability to raise up sons of Abraham from spiritually dead Gentiles. And it could refer to the resurrection of Jesus, by which believing Gentiles are made members of God's household and become recipients of the promises (Eph. 2:19; Gal. 3:22, 29).

vv. 18-25 Paul discusses Abraham's hope that God would give him a son (Gen. 15:4-5). Just as Abraham's trust in God resulted in righteousness being credited to him, so also our faith in God will result in righteousness being credited to us. The content of that faith may be different- for Abraham it was faith in God's promise to give him a son, while for us it is faith in God's promise to give forgiveness and eternal life through Christ. But the object of that faith is always God.

Peace and Joy through Christ

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^a have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! ¹⁰For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! ¹¹Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

^a¹ Or let us; also in verses 2 and 3

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What terms does Paul use to describe our condition prior to salvation? v6, v8, v10

In your own words, summarize what these terms tell us about man's condition apart from Christ.

2. What does it mean to be "reconciled" to God? (vv. 10-11; see also Ephesians 2:14-16, Colossians 1:19-20)

3. What is the "hope of the glory of God" that Paul refers to in vs. 2?

Matthew 16:27

Romans 8:16-19,23

1 Cor 15:42-44

Colossians 3:4

1 John 3:2

4. How is God's love for us so amazingly different than any human love? (vv. 6-8)

5. What do God's past actions on our behalf tell us about our future? (vv. 9-10)

6. Why can believers rejoice in the midst of suffering? (vv. 3-5; see also James 1:2-4)

7. What kind of suffering do the Scriptures commend? (1 Peter 3:14-17, 4:12-16)

★ PRAYER POINT ★

PERSERVERANCE & GOD'S ANSWERS IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

- Which verse in this passage is the most encouraging to you?
- What trials are you going through and how does this passage change how you think about it?
- Is your hope for the future in the glory of God? Or something else? How does this affect your joy?

COMMENTARY

In this section, Paul moves from the source and means of justification to the effects of justification: peace and joy. In addition, Paul mentions that the death of Christ brings reconciliation with God and escape from His wrath.

v. 1 “peace with God” . . . This is not the peace of God, the freedom from fear and anxiety that God gives to those who trust Him (Phil. 4:7). It is peace with God, the objective fact that we are no longer God’s enemies (see v. 10; also Col. 1:21-22).

Although the unbeliever may claim that his feelings toward God are neutral or even positive, the Scriptures tell us that he is in fact hostile toward God and His Law (Rom. 8:7).

v. 2 “through whom we have gained access” . . . This verse reminds us that to reach God, we must go through Christ (Heb. 4:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:5). The perfect tense of the verb expresses the continuing effects of a past action. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 4:25), we now have continual access to God’s grace.

“the hope of the glory of God” . . . Not only do we look forward to seeing the glory of Christ which will be revealed when he returns (Luke 9:26), but we anticipate eagerly the glorious changes which will take place in us as well (Rom. 8:16-23; 1 Cor. 15:42-43; Eph. 3:20-21; Col. 3:4).

vv. 3-5 “we also rejoice in our sufferings” . . . The change in our standing before God is so dramatic that it produces great joy; not only as we anticipate the glorious things to come, but also as we experience present difficulties. This is because God can use those difficulties for good; to produce in us Christlike character and to strengthen our hope for the future. (The hope of a glorified body is much sweeter to a paraplegic than to someone who has never experienced physical suffering.)

“This hope does not disappoint us” . . . The hope Paul is speaking of is not mere wishful thinking; it is faith in God’s promises. This kind of hope will always be rewarded (Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:1).

v. 6 “at just the right time” . . . This phrase emphasizes God’s sovereign control in salvation. Jesus spoke of the fact that the time and manner of his death were under his own control (Matt. 26:18; John 10:17-18). But there is more to it than this. Christ’s death was part of God’s plan from the beginning, the event toward which all of history until that point had been moving. Thus, Christ came at the “fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), the “consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9:26). In the same way, the events of the past 2,000 years have been preparing for his return (1 Tim. 6:14-15).

“when we were still powerless” . . . This was not a case of “God helps those who help themselves,” but rather of God helping those who were completely unable to help themselves.

“Christ died for the ungodly” . . . Christ did not die for good people doing their best to find their way to God. He died for ungodly sinners (vs. 8) who were his enemies (vs. 10). There was nothing about the people for whom Christ died which made them worthy of salvation, nothing within them which drew God to them.

vv. 7-8 These two verses bring out the completely unexpected nature of Christ's death. The way in which God chose to save people--by sending His own Son to suffer and die in the place of guilty sinners--is not something that men would ever have come up with. It is possible, Paul says, that someone might die for a good man. But Christ's death was not like this. God's love is far greater. Christ died, not for good men, but for guilty sinners! And he did it, not after they had reformed, but while they were still sinning! It is absolutely incredible. No wonder that "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18).

v. 9 Here Paul reasons from the greater to the lesser: if Christ has done the great work of dying to justify guilty sinners, he will certainly do the lesser work of saving us from God's coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10).

v. 10 "when we were God's enemies" . . . Whether men realize it or not, if they have not been reconciled to God through Christ, they are His enemies and His wrath rests upon them (Eph. 2:3).

"we were reconciled" . . . Reconciliation refers to the elimination of the barrier of sin between God and men; the restoration of a relationship; the ceasing of hostilities (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 1:19-20). Paul speaks of this as a past event, one which took place at the cross.

"we shall be saved" . . . The logic Paul uses here is similar to Rom. 4:25; both Christ's death and his resurrection have significance for believers. It was through Christ's death that our sins were forgiven and we were reconciled to God. But it is through his resurrection life that we obtain positive righteousness and it is that life which will save us from God's coming judgment. In a way, the distinction is artificial, because both Christ's death and resurrection were part of God's plan of salvation.

Death through Adam, Life through Jesus

¹²Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned--¹³For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

¹⁵But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ¹⁶Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. ¹⁷For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

²⁰The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. List the series of comparisons between Adam's sin and Christ's obedience.

Adam's Sin

Christ's Obedience

v15

v16

v17

v18

v19

2. What is the "one trespass" referred to in verse 18? (see Genesis 3:1-19). What is the "one act of righteousness" referred to in verse 18? (see Romans 4:25 and Philippians 2:8)

3. Who are the "many" who are made sinners by Adam's disobedience? (v. 19; see v. 12) Who are the "many" who are made righteous by Christ's obedience? (v. 19; see v. 17)

4. What does Paul mean by the phrase "all sinned," when he states that "death came to all men, because all sinned" (v. 12; see vv. 15 and 19)

5. What phrases does Paul use to indicate that Christ's act of obedience is more than adequate to overcome the effects of Adam's sin?

v15

v17

v20

★ PRAYER POINT ★

KNOWING THE GREATNESS & LOVE OF JESUS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

- How do you feel about Adam's sin being credited to you? How about Christ's righteousness being credited to you?
- Why do you think Paul spends so much time contrasting Adam and Christ?
- How does studying this passage make you want to worship Jesus more?

COMMENTARY

The basic point of this passage is that Adam and Christ are the heads of two races of people: Adam of a race of condemned sinners, and Christ of those who have received “grace and righteousness.”

Paul develops his point through a series of comparisons between Adam and Christ. These comparisons demonstrate the consequences their actions have had for the two races--death and condemnation for one, and life and justification for the other.

v. 12 “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin” . . . Paul’s use of the phrase “one man” throughout this passage, to describe both Adam and Christ, emphasizes the individual responsibility each one possessed as the head of a race of people. Adam exercised his responsibility by bringing sin and death into the world.

“death came to all men, because all sinned” . . . This phrase has been understood in two main ways. One interpretation is that all men die as a result of their own sins; we all imitate Adam by sinning, and as a result we die. The problem with this view is that the context clearly speaks of the consequences we suffer because of Adam’s sin, not ours: “many died by the trespass of the one man” (vs. 15); judgment and condemnation are “the result of one man’s sin” (vs. 16); death reigned as a result of “the trespass of the one man” (vs. 17); condemnation “for all men” was “the result of one trespass” (vs. 18); and “through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners” (vs. 19).

The second problem with this view is that it doesn’t fit the comparison which Paul is making between Adam and Christ. We aren’t saved because we imitate Christ’s obedience and do good works; we are saved because his righteousness is credited to us. In the same way, we are condemned because Adam’s sin is credited to us (vs. 18). This is not to say that we don’t deserve God’s wrath for our own sins as well. But that is not what Paul is talking about here. He is talking about the fact that when Adam, our head, sinned, we all sinned. God credits Adam’s sin to the whole human race, just as he credits Christ’s righteousness to the whole race of believers.

We Americans live in a democracy and are used to having some say in decisions which affect our lives. So the idea that Adam’s sin brought condemnation to all of his descendants, before they were even born, seems strange to us. But we should not reject a doctrine on the basis of what seems right to us at first. In fact, there are many examples from everyday life in which one person is held responsible for the actions of another; for example, a wife who is legally responsible for debts incurred by her husband. There are also many examples of people who suffer the consequences of decisions made by others acting in their behalf. For example, all U.S. citizens experienced the consequences of actions taken by the President and Congress, even though they have no direct say in which bills are passed into law.

vv. 13-14 Here Paul supports what he has just said by appealing to the fact of universal death. From Adam until Moses, every person eventually died, even though some of them lived several hundred years. But none of them sinned as Adam had, by breaking a command. And God doesn’t consider us guilty of sin when there is no law (see 4:15). If death is the result of sin

(6:23; Gen. 2:17), what explains the deaths of all these people? The answer is that they died because the guilt of Adam's sin was credited to them.

Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come . . . Adam was a "pattern" of Christ in the sense that he was the head of a race of people and his actions had consequences for all the members of that race (see 1 Cor. 15:45).

vv. 15-17 Paul contrasts the results of Adam's sin with the results of Christ's obedience. First, the work of Christ is far greater than the work of Adam. Not only did Christ reverse the effects of Adam's sin, but he brought abundant life; his grace "overflowed". Where sin increased, grace increased "all the more" (vs. 20). Second, Adam's sin brought condemnation, while Christ's gift of grace brought justification.

"death reigned" . . . This phrase, repeated in verse 14, highlights the complete power which sin and death had over mankind as a result of Adam's sin. All people were "slaves to sin" (6:16-17), completely unable to escape either sin or death. But Christ brought about a complete reversal: those who have received the gift of righteousness will reign in life by grace through Christ (see vs. 21).

"gift of righteousness" . . . The fact that righteousness is a "gift," and that it is "received," points to the fact that Paul is not talking about ethical righteousness, or good behavior. He is referring instead to judicial righteousness, the right standing before God which has been credited to us because of Christ's work on our behalf.

vv. 18-19 "the many" . . . This phrase is used twice; first to refer to the whole human race, and second to refer to all those who have received God's grace. Both usages refer to an entire race of people; the "many" who through Adam were made sinners, and the "many" who through Christ will be made righteous.

Dead to Sin, Alive in Christ

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What does Paul's imaginary questioner understand correctly about sin and grace? What wrong conclusion does this person draw? (v. 1; see 5:20-21)
2. What does water baptism symbolize in this passage? (vv. 3-4; see Colossians 2:12)
3. What is our relationship to sin prior to salvation? (v. 6; see Romans 6:16-20)
4. What is our relationship to sin after salvation? (vv. 6-7 and 11-14)
5. What does Christ's resurrection tell us about our future? Why? (vv. 8-10)
6. To summarize Paul's argument, why must we not go on sinning after salvation?
7. What are the key things we are to do in resisting sin?
 - v11
 - v12
 - v13

★ PRAYER POINT ★

VICTORY OVER SIN & GRACE TO LIVE IN HOLINESS

- What have you found helpful in resisting sin?
- What mistakes do we make in attempting to resist sin?
- How has this passage affected your view of sin?

COMMENTARY

In this passage, Paul anticipates the likely reaction of his readers to the preceding two verses, 5:20-21. If it is true that “where sin increased, grace increased all the more,” then why not go on sinning and let grace increase? In other words, if God’s grace is sufficient to cover any and all sins, then let’s sin and give God an opportunity to display his grace!

Paul responds that a continuing lifestyle of unrestrained sin is inconsistent with our identity as believers. The person we used to be, a person in slavery to sin, has died. We now have a new life, one which comes from Christ and frees us from sin’s control. Therefore, our lives should reflect this new reality.

v. 1 “Shall we go on sinning” . . . ? The question Paul poses is whether, after our conversion to Christ, we can continue to live the same way we always have. After all, wouldn’t this cause grace to increase, and thus glorify God? Note that Paul never denies the basic assumption behind this question, that more sin results in more grace. What he does say, however, is that this is not an acceptable way for Christians to glorify God.

v. 2 “we died to sin; how can we live in it” . . . The reason that we can no longer continue in a lifestyle of sin is that we have died. The person who previously was under the control of sin has died. Paul’s reference to our conversion experience as death emphasizes the complete change that took place (see Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3). It is inconsistent with our identity as Christians to live as if that change had never taken place.

vv. 3-4 “all of us . . . were baptized into his death” . . . Here Paul refers to the beginning of the Christian life, to our initial faith and baptism. He wants us to understand exactly what happened when we trusted Christ, so that we will understand what the results of that event ought to be. First, we died. Being submerged under the waters of baptism symbolizes our identification with Jesus Christ in his death and burial (Col. 2:12). We were baptized “into Christ” and became spiritually united with Him (1 Cor. 12:13). Thus, when he died, we died with him.

Second, we were reborn. Our emergence from the waters of baptism symbolizes our identification with Jesus Christ in his resurrection. The new life which Jesus received from God now belongs to us as well. Therefore, we should live according to the principles of this new life, rather than those of the old.

Note that what saves us is not the physical act of water baptism, but what baptism represents—our identification with Christ through faith (1 Pet. 3:21).

v. 5 “we will be united with him in his resurrection” . . . The believer’s new life in Christ has both a present and a future aspect; it is both “already” and “not yet”. Spiritually, we are now united with Christ and share his life. But our physical resurrection lies in the future. If through faith we have become united with Him in his death, then we will certainly live with him through resurrection (2 Tim. 2:11).

vv. 6-7 “our old self was crucified with him” . . . The “old self” is Paul’s way of referring to the person each of us was before our conversion, a person under the control of sinful impulses. That person has died with Christ. The result is that the “body of sin,” i.e., the physical body

viewed as sin's instrument, has been made powerless. Sin no longer has the power to use our physical bodies to do evil. As a result, we have been freed from slavery to sin. In the same way that a dead slave is free from his master's authority, so we, having died in Christ, are free from sin's authority over our lives.

vv. 8-9 “death no longer has mastery over him” . . . Death's ultimate victory was in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But that victory quickly became death's ultimate defeat, when through the resurrection of Christ its power was broken forever (1 Cor. 15:55; 2 Tim. 1:10). Those of us who share in Christ's death through faith also share in his victory over death.

v. 11 “count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God” . . . Just as Christ, having died, was released from the power of sin and death, so we too should consider ourselves as “dead” with respect to sin. In other words, we should act in harmony with what we truly are. We should recognize that the power sin formerly had over us was broken by Christ, and we should live in accordance with that understanding

vv. 12 -13 “do not let sin reign . . . Do not offer the parts of your body to sin” . . . As a result of the victory Christ has won over sin and death, we now have a choice. We can continue to allow sin to control us, even though it no longer has any legitimate authority over us. Or we can choose to offer ourselves and our bodies to God for His use as “instruments of righteousness”. To continue to serve sin would be like a slave, having been freed from a wicked master after the Civil War, voluntarily continuing to obey that master.

v. 14 “sin shall not be your master, for you are not under law, but under grace” . . . In Paul's mind, law and grace are incompatible. One brings slavery and death, the other brings freedom.

Slaves to Righteousness

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

¹⁹I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in^a Christ Jesus our Lord.

^a23 Or through

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What question is Paul answering in this passage? (v. 15; see 6:14)
2. In this passage, Paul contrasts the former condition of his readers with their present condition. In the space below, list these contrasts (include verse references):

Before Salvation

After Salvation

3. What two kinds of slavery does Paul describe? (note the various terms he uses for each kind). What freedom do these two kinds of slavery offer? What is the result of each kind of slavery?
4. In what sense is our slavery a matter of choice? Explain.
5. What does it mean when Paul calls death the “wages” of sin? (v. 23)
6. The master/slave relationships is used several times in the New Testament to describe the relationship between God and His people. Review the references listed below and note what they can tell us about the Christian life.

Luke 12:35-40

Luke 16:13, 17:7-10

Luke 19:11-26

John 15:18-20

Romans 14:1-4

Ephesians 6:5-6

★ PRAYER POINT ★

INCREASED OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD & SPIRIT

- From the last two lessons, how important would you say obedience is for believers? Why?
- What examples can you think of in which exercising the “freedom” to sin actually results in slavery? Or when “slavery” to Christ results in freedom?

COMMENTARY

Paul continues his argument that grace does not mean Christians may go on sinning with abandon. In 6:1-14, he showed that sin is inconsistent with our new identity, because we have become united with Christ in his death and resurrection. Now he shows that sin is inconsistent with our new status, because we have been freed from slavery to sin and have become slaves to God.

v. 15 ““Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!” . . .

This question is a bit different from the one in 6:1. There, the question was whether we should sin in order to cause grace to increase. In other words, “Let’s sin so that God will have an opportunity to demonstrate his abundant grace!” But here, the question is whether sin really matters. In other words, “If we are no longer under the law, why should we be concerned about sin at all? Let’s go on living the way we always have and not worry about it!” But Paul rejects this in the strongest possible terms.

v. 16 “when you offer yourselves” . . . It was possible in Paul’s day for someone to voluntarily become a slave in order to pay off a debt, or just to make a living. By choosing to follow Christ, we chose to serve and obey him as our master; we voluntarily became slaves (see 1 Cor. 7:21-22). The master/slave relationship is often used to illustrate the relationship between Christ and his followers: see Matt. 10:24-25, 18:21-25, 24:45-51, 25:14-30; Luke 16:1-13; John 13:16.

“you are slaves to the one you obey, whether . . . sin . . . or obedience” . . . A slave is obligated to serve his or her master completely. Therefore, a life of compromise between sin and obedience is not an option; no one can faithfully serve two masters (Luke 16:13). However, independence is not an option either, because believers are slaves of Christ and those who do not know Christ are in bondage to sin. Therefore, our only choice is which master we will serve.

vv. 17-18 Paul now personalizes these ideas by applying them to the Roman Christians. They had formerly been slaves to sin, but were set free from it and became slaves of righteousness instead. The past tense of “obeyed” indicates that Paul is referring to their initial obedience of faith and repentance in responding to the gospel. It was this which brought about a change of masters for them.

v. 19 because you are weak in your natural selves . . . Paul is using an illustration because their ability (and ours) to grasp spiritual truth is hindered by the weakness which is part of our present human existence; we “see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Cor. 13:12).

just as . . . Where before they had offered the members of their bodies to sin, they are now to offer them to righteousness (see 6:13). Their devotion to obedience should be as complete as was their former devotion to sin.

v. 20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness Before coming to Christ, we felt no obligation to do what was right. We did the right thing when it suited us, otherwise, we did whatever we wanted. We felt “free,” but ,in reality, this freedom was slavery to sin.

v. 21 “What benefit did you reap” . . . Paul asks them to reflect on the results of their former way of life. Was there any real benefit from their sin? The answer, of course, is no. The only

result is shame. Note that the shame Paul speaks of is now, not then; it is the grace of God which they received in Christ that allows them to see their sin for the shameful thing it really is.

vv. 22-23 Throughout the passage, Paul has been contrasting the results of sin and obedience. Sin leads to death (vv. 16, 21, 23) and obedience leads to righteousness, holiness and eternal life (vv. 16, 19, 22, 23). But there is a critical difference between the results of sin and obedience. Death is the wage of sin; it is what we earn by our sin. In other words, there is a cause and effect relationship between sin and death. But eternal life is not what we earn, it is what we receive by grace as a gift of God.

It is helpful to understand that Paul is not here laying out a detailed doctrine of salvation, but contrasting two kinds of lives: one lived in slavery to sin and one lived in slavery to God. The end result of the first is death and the end result of the second is righteousness, holiness, and eternal life. The result of the first is earned as a wage, and the results of the second are given as a gift.