

ROMANS

Lesson 6

Romans Chapter 6

In this lesson in our study of Romans, Paul will now begin to introduce us to another basic tenet in our faith: the power that the gospel, the good news, has to change lives. However, what I want you to see that it's not just the role that the gospel will play in that change, but the role you must play as well.

The longtime music and program director for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Cliff Barrows, once said "Everyone wants to grow, but no one wants to change." Saint John Chrysostom, an early Archbishop of Constantinople, wrote "It is absurd...for those who are called to reign with Christ to choose to be captives to sin, as if one should throw down the crown from off his head and choose to be the slave of a hysterical woman who comes begging and covered in rags...How is it that sin can reign in you? It is not from any power of its own but only from your laziness." And years ago I can remember being at a fall revival where the preacher made a comment that hit me right between the eyes: "If there's sin in your life...it's there because you want it there."

In that context, let's take an honest look at the effect of the gospel on our lives, i.e., the power and the hope that comes with placing our faith in Christ, and the responsibility to change that comes with it as well.

Read Romans Chapter 6 from the Contemporary English Version (CEV) below, or from your favorite version.

Romans 6

Dead to Sin but Alive because of Christ

¹What should we say? Should we keep on sinning, so that God's wonderful kindness will show up even better? ²No, we should not! If we are dead to sin, how can we go on sinning? ³Don't you know that all who share in Christ Jesus by being baptized also share in his death? ⁴When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptized, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

⁵If we shared in Jesus' death by being baptized, we will be raised to life with him. ⁶We know that the persons we used to be were nailed to the cross with Jesus. This was done, so that our sinful bodies would no longer be the slaves of sin. ⁷We know that sin doesn't have power over dead people.

⁸As surely as we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. ⁹We know that death no longer has any power over Christ. He died and was raised to life, never again to die. ¹⁰When Christ died, he died for sin once and for all. But now he is alive, and he lives only for God. ¹¹In the same way, you must think of yourselves as dead to the power of sin. But Christ Jesus has given life to you, and you live for God.

¹²Don't let sin rule your body. After all, your body is bound to die, so don't obey its desires ¹³or let any part of it become a slave of evil. Give yourselves to God, as people who have been raised from death to life. Make every part of your body a slave that pleases God. ¹⁴Don't let sin keep ruling your lives. You are ruled by God's kindness and not by the Law.

Slaves Who Do What Pleases God

¹⁵What does all this mean? Does it mean we are free to sin, because we are ruled by God's wonderful kindness and not by the Law? Certainly not! ¹⁶Don't you know that you are slaves of anyone you obey? You can be slaves of sin and die, or you can be obedient slaves of God and be acceptable to him. ¹⁷You used to be slaves of sin. But I thank God that with all your heart you obeyed the teaching you received from me. ¹⁸Now you are set free from sin and are slaves who please God.

¹⁹I am using these everyday examples, because in some ways you are still weak. You used to let the different parts of your body be slaves of your evil thoughts. But now you must make every part of your body serve God, so that you will belong completely to him.

²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you didn't have to please God. ²¹But what good did you receive from the things you did? All you have to show for them is your shame, and they lead to death. ²²Now you have been set free from sin, and you are God's slaves. This will make you holy and will lead you to eternal life. ²³Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Rather than a verse-by-verse study, let's examine what we should be doing in order to live the kind of life now possible through Christ. Consider the following questions.

1. Paul tells us several things in Romans 6:1-12. He tells us that (1) being baptized, we are dead to sin, (2) that when Christ returns he will resurrect our bodies just as He was resurrected, (3) that we have a new life, and (4) that now, just as Christ lives for God, we should live that life to please God.
 - a. Jot down some things that readily come to mind which have changed in your life. How is your life different with Christ living in it?
 - b. Are you happy that you became a Christian, or do you envy your lost friends, co-workers and neighbors?
 - c. Have you considered all of the blessings that God has brought into your life? Have you thought about the great gift of eternal life and the priceless joy of an eternity with Him?
 - d. How can we live this new life? What must we do? Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 and jot down some of the things that we are instructed to do to begin living this new life.

2. Paul tells us that even though we may die, when Christ comes he will raise us from the dead, as he was raised. What does the Bible tell us about this blessed event? Look at 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and John 14:1-4.

3. If we see death as separation from God, then life is being united with God, in eternity. This is what Christ accomplishes for us. What does this also tell us about our physical death? Will we, as followers of Christ, be separated from God until the day Christ resurrects us? What can we learn about this from the passage in Matthew 22:31-32 and Romans 8:38-39?

4. In Romans 6:13-23, Paul then instructs us to become slaves to God and not sin. To really understand your role in this, do the following in conjunction with the Romans Chapter 6 text printed above:
 - a. Underline or highlight every instance where the word "you" or "your" appears.
 - b. Underline or highlight every instance where the word "slave" is used.

5. Based on the preceding exercise, do you think that you have a responsibility and an action to take, now that you have a new life in Christ?
6. Can we as believers assume that once we're saved that Christ will do all of the changing in our lives? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this new life that we have been given? (see John 14:15-27)
7. In the second part of Romans 6:19, what does Paul tell us about our responsibility? What are we to do?
8. BONUS QUESTION: What church practice did Saint John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, ban in the latter half of the 4th Century?

In summary then, we see that the moment that we accept Christ, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, and are on the way to beginning a new life, free from the power of sin. We also see that while the world around us does not change and the lure of sin is still there, we are the ones who are now empowered to deny sin and to live the holy and sanctified lives that God wants us to live. He sends His Holy Spirit to show us and help us live that life, and He provides us with His Holy Word to show us what we should be doing and that it is our responsibility to live out this new life which Christ's blood purchased for us.

With the hope of Christ's second coming, the blessing of an eternal life, and the power of the Holy Spirit living within us, we are no longer slaves to sin. We must now put that old life behind us, and with purpose and determination, allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in living a holy life that will reflect how much we love God for all that He has done for us.

We saw in the last lesson that we are now reconciled to God, giving us peace with God. Let us celebrate that peace by living to please God, not ourselves, and to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness".

May He richly bless you as you study His Holy Word with us this week.

Yours in Christ,

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