

FPFWC Christian Development



Liberating Gospels

April 2022

Spring Quarter

April 30, 2022

Lesson #5 – Freedom From Sin

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Romans 6:1-14

Key Verse - If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.—Romans 6:5

ICE BREAKER –

1. *What does it mean to live a “new life” for God?*
2. *What spiritual resources can you employ to fortify yourself against sin?*
3. *How can you face death honestly, confidently, and without fear?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

The letter to the Roman church was probably written during Paul’s long stay in Corinth (Acts 18:11), in about AD 58 in the midst of his third missionary journey. The church in Rome had been planted by other, unknown missionaries—possibly people who had been present to hear Peter at Pentecost (2:10). Beyond encouraging the believers there, Paul’s letter also sought the Roman believers’ support for a planned mission into Spain (Romans 15:23–28).

The nature of the church in Rome was influenced by an edict, issued by Emperor Claudius in about AD 49, that had forced Jews living in the city to leave (Acts 18:2). The Roman historian Suetonius tells us that Claudius “banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus,” the word Chrestus likely referring to Christ. This experience probably fostered a certain division within the Roman church between Gentile and Jewish believers, with each group contending that it had better claim on salvation in Christ than did the other (compare Romans 11:13–24).

The expulsion of Jews from Rome resulted in Gentile Christians being in the majority in the church there, if they had not been the majority already (Romans 1:5–6, 13). Their majority status seems to have continued even after the death of Claudius in AD 54 allowed Jews to return to the imperial city (compare Acts 18:2 with Romans 16:3–5a). Much of Paul’s letter is therefore directed specifically to the Gentile believers there (11:13).

Paul used this letter as an opportunity to carefully explain the gospel (and his own teaching on it) to an audience who did not know him and had never heard him preach in person. As a result, this letter contains the most thorough and organized defense of Paul’s preaching (Romans 2:16; 16:25). He argued that faith in Jesus is the only way to be justified before God. This justification comes by grace, through faith in Jesus, and not by obedience to the Old Testament law (3:21–26). Both Jew and Gentile are alike in sin, and both can be saved only through the redemption of Jesus (3:23–24). To confirm his point that God has always been concerned about faith, Paul used the example of Abraham. Abraham was declared righteous before God on the basis of his faith, not his obedience to the law (4:13).

In Romans 5 Paul again looked closely at the work of Jesus Christ. Adam was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27) but gave in to temptation (3:6). Through the sin of Adam, death came into the world (3:19; Romans 5:12). Jesus, however, has done what Adam could not. Jesus, God himself in the flesh, was sinless despite temptation (Hebrews 4:15). And His death and resurrection brought grace and life to the world (Romans 5:17). Now, in Romans 6, Paul turns to examine the practical effect of Jesus' work in our lives.

LESSON COMMENTARY

6:1–2. One might wrongly think that it is appropriate to continue to live in sin either so that God might be glorified as He causes grace to abound (5:20), or so that the believer might have a more profound experience of grace. Paul will demonstrate that while both are spiritually possible, both are morally irrational, for sin ruins a believer's life. **Died to sin** (v. 2) indicates that when Jesus died on the cross (cf. 6:10), the believer died with Him in a spiritual yet real sense (cf. the comments on Gl 2:19–20; Col 2:20; 3:1–3; 2Tm 2:11; 1Pt 2:24).

6:3–4. **Into** carries a referential sense, indicating that baptism is especially a baptism "with reference to" **Christ Jesus**, and even more narrowly is a reference to **His death**. Paul closely connects baptism with the salvation experience in v. 4, but it is not a cause of salvation. Baptism depicts that aspect of the Christian's conversion that unites him to Christ, especially to Christ in His death. It is the outward expression of saving faith and the solemn symbol of dying with Christ. This was brought about by God so that **we too might walk in newness of life** (v. 4; cf. 7:6, where the Spirit is said to bring about this "newness").

6:5–7. The **likeness of His death** indicates that the believer's experience of dying with Christ is not identical to His death. The believer did not die physically upon the cross, but the benefits of Christ's death are experienced when the believer trusts Christ. This union with Christ guarantees the believer **resurrection** with Him in the future. The **old self** (v. 6) is not a reference to the old sin nature, for Paul makes it clear in the passage that it is not a "nature" or part of the believer that is crucified, but the entire person. It is a reference to who the believer was in Adam, under the mastery of sin. That person **was crucified** with Jesus on His cross and no longer exists. The believer is now "in Christ," no longer "in Adam" under sin. **Body of sin** refers to the believer's body as owned, dominated, ruled by sin. **Done away with** means "rendered powerless." As a result, believers are no longer **slaves to sin**, for a dead slave is no longer a slave (v. 7).

6:8–10. The believer was united with Jesus in His death, a death undergone with reference to breaking the power of sin (**He died to sin**, v. 10). Jesus rose from the dead, and the believer is united with Him in that as well. If Jesus' condition is irreversible (Jesus **is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him**, v. 9), then the believer's condition is also irreversible. Sin is no longer the slave master over the believer.

6:11. Here, for the first time in Romans, Paul gives a true command, the first application of the entire book. **Consider** means "to count, compute, calculate, take into account, to make account of" something, and here means "a deliberate and sober judgment on the basis of the facts one has." The believer is not commanded

to “put the old sin nature to death” as he is in Eph 4:22 and Col 3:9 (see the comments there), for this is done for him and her by God at the moment of conversion. Rather, believers are *commanded to understand these profound facts*, and failure to do so amounts to sin (cf. Jms 4:17).

6:12–14. Paul continues the application of these truths. **Sin** was personified previously as a slave master, but here as a king who **reigns** (v. 12). **Presenting** is used in the LXX for one serving a superior (1Kg 10:8; 2Kg 5:25; Pr 22:29). Christians are no longer in Adam, under the tyranny of sin as a slave master or a king, but instead are now in Christ, under the rule of God to whom allegiance is owed. Verse 14 is developed fully in chap. 7 (see the comments there).

LESSON NUGGET – Being a Christian is a matter of bondage or freedom. Who is your master, Jesus Christ or the old life? You are not under the authority of Moses, but that does not mean you have freedom to break God’s moral law (Romans 8:1-5). Yield yourself to the Lord; He is the most wonderful Master, and the “salary” He pays lasts forever.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*