



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 9: Romans 6

Romans chapter six is a beautiful, detailed description of exactly what Jesus' death, burial and resurrection means for us as Christians, and exactly how we need to respond to ensure that the blood of Christ covers our sins. It describes the powerful change that should be seen in the lives of all those who claim to be Christians. It also makes it very clear that we are either dead and in sin, or alive and in Christ, there are no other options.

Before You Begin: Throughout chapter six we find 19 references to death, nine references to life, and 17 references to sin, in addition to other key words and phrases. Paul will be comparing and contrasting these ideas throughout the entire text and taking the time to mark these words before beginning your study can be very beneficial in following Paul's reasoning.

Read Romans 6:1-4

Chapter six begins with, "What shall we say then, are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" This is a clear reference to the conclusion of chapter five, where Paul taught that as the sinfulness of man increased, the grace of God increased abundantly more. Paul wanted to ensure that his readers in no way misunderstood what he was teaching, which is clear by the following phrase, "by no

means!" For Paul the idea of a Christian continuing to live in sin, and even boasting in their sin, was completely preposterous and unacceptable.

Continuing on in verses 2b-4 Paul makes it clear that a life of sin is something that all Christians should have left behind. It's also important to note that Paul specifies the idea of living in sin in verse two. Remember in Romans 3:23 he made it clear that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. His point here is that although we have sin and are not perfect, we cannot live in sin and be pleasing to God.

What is the difference in being fallible humans and living in sin?

Beginning in verse three we find the phrase, "do you not know." According to Denny Petrillo in his class on Romans, this phrase is the same as Paul saying, "Shame on you! You know better than this!" And what is it that they know? That all who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into his death.



Finer Grounds Bible Study

In the Christian world today one of the most hotly debated issues is the idea of baptism. Paul is going to remove all confusion and doubt as he explains, in detail, exactly what baptism is and what it accomplishes for the faithful believer. As we begin this study, it is important to ensure that we all understand the meaning of the word, “baptism,” as this can be a “churchy” word that we often use and do not fully understand. The word itself is transliterated, not translated, from the Greek word “baptizo.” This means that rather than translating the meaning of the word, they simply changed the Greek letters into English letters.

“Baptizo,” in the Greek language, literally meant to plunge or to immerse (Strong's #907, Zodhiates). Therefore, we could say that we baptize our dishes when we wash them. There are many today who practice “baptism” by sprinkling or pouring, however this would not meet the definition of immersion. Continuing on in verse four, we also see that the act of baptism is a re-enactment of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus died, was fully immersed in a tomb, and rose again, through the act of baptism we die spiritually to our life of sin, bury the old man of sin in the water, and are raised to walk in newness of life.

Does understanding the meaning of the word “baptizo” change your understanding of the act of baptism?

Read Romans 6:5-11

Once again, in verse five we see the importance of little big words. In verse five Paul writes, “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” This is a classic if-then conditional statement. When Paul states that if we have been united with Christ in death, we will be united in his resurrection, this also means that if we have not been united with Christ in death, we will not be united in his resurrection. According to verse four how are we united with Christ in death? Specifically, through the act of baptism.

Many today teach and believe that baptism is not essential for salvation, or that it is merely an outward display that reflects an inward change. Yet in the first 11 verses of Romans 6 we see that baptism is where:

- We are buried into Jesus’ death (vs 3-4)
- We are able to walk in newness of life (vs 4)
- We are united with Jesus’ resurrection (vs 5)
- We crucify our old self of sin (vs 6)
- We are freed from sin (vs 7)



Finer Grounds Bible Study

- We have the promise of life with Jesus (vs 7)
- We die to sin (vs 11)

How can we be in a right relationship with God if we have not been buried into Jesus' death? How can we be right with God if we are not yet walking in newness of life? How can we be righteous before God if we are not yet united with Jesus in his resurrection? How can we be justified if we have not yet crucified our old self of sin? The act of baptism is so much more than simply a symbolic display of obedience, it is the dividing line between being dead in sin and alive in God.

Have you been baptized into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the purpose of crucifying your old self and rising to walk in newness of life? If not, what does Romans 6:1-11 teach about your current condition before God?

There is another implication found in this text that is important for understanding the overall context of the book of Romans. As we have already seen, in verse three Paul states, "Do you not know." However, in verses six and nine Paul also states, "We know that..." Paul is reminding the Roman Christians of something they already know, believe, and have obeyed. It is important to remember that Romans is being written to those who have already been baptized into Christ.

He also uses the pronoun we/us 14 times in this text. Paul also reminds them through his use of personal pronouns that he has also been buried with Christ in baptism. We see this in Acts 9:9-19, where after three days of praying Paul was immediately baptized when Ananias came to him.

What does Paul's example teach us about the necessity of baptism?

When we see the understanding that the Roman Christians had about baptism, and that they had all been buried with Christ in baptism (verse 3), what does this mean for us today?

Read Romans 6:12-14

In this section we have the first direct commands found in Romans:

- Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body (verse 12).
- Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness (verse 13).

These "do not's" are directly correlated with "dos":

- Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life (verse 13)



Finer Grounds Bible Study

- Present your members to God as instruments for righteousness (verse 13).

This demonstrates that we only have 2 options: we either live righteously and allow God to use us as his instruments, or we allow sin in our lives and we become instruments for Satan. Paul's phrasing here is very strong, he is making it clear that it is completely unacceptable for Christians to live in sin, or to allow themselves to be used as instruments, or tools, of unrighteousness.

In what ways can we as Christians allow ourselves to be instruments of unrighteousness if we are not careful?

How are you as an individual allowing yourself to be used as an instrument for righteousness? What are you personally, intentionally, doing to glorify God and spread the gospel?

Read Romans 6:15-19

Throughout the rest of chapter six the text focuses on the analogy of slavery. We must keep in mind that slavery was still a part of daily life for the first century Christians. For instance, the entire book of Philemon is written to a Christian slave owner (Philemon) about his slave

(Onesimus) who was a new brother in Christ. This imagery would have been powerful for Paul's original readers.

Verse 15 once again emphasizes the idea that, while grace covers us when we unintentionally sin (we don't bounce back and forth from saved to not-saved every time we mess up), God's grace is also not a free pass to behave however we wish. When we look at the New Testament as a whole, 21 of the 27 books focus on how we should be living as Christians: what our daily life should look like, how we should worship, what our interactions with our family should look like, how we should treat our brethren, how we should treat the lost, how we should be glorifying God. The majority of the New Testament focuses on these areas because the reality is that our journey is just beginning when we are baptized into Christ. Although we do not bounce in and out of God's grace with every mistake, God does expect us to be continually growing and conforming more to the image of his son.

In verse 16 we receive a powerful reminder: talk is cheap. We can say whatever we want, claim whatever we want, however it is our obedience, not our words, that determine whether we are slaves of sin or righteousness. Every choice we make leads us closer to one or the other because ultimately, we can only serve one master.

This is a powerful lesson that I have learned through raising my children. So much of what I have done in my life I have done



Finer Grounds Bible Study

simply because I didn't question whether or not there were other options. While these are emotionally charged issues I strongly recommend sitting down, praying, opening God's word, and considering where you stand on issues such as:

- How you or your children will find/choose a spouse
- What method of birth control, if any, you will use
- How you will educate your children
- How you will handle your finances (debt or no debt)
- When/if your children will be given electronics
- What you watch on tv/listen to on the radio
- How you dress
- Dancing
- Your language/speech

So often I am afraid that we are allowing society to make these decisions for us simply because we have never really considered the possibility of another way. It's just so easy to automatically go along with cultural expectations without even realizing that's what we are doing. I strongly urge you to really take the time to come to a studied conviction on these issues and others like them, remembering that our obedience to God's will is what will determine whether we are slaves to sin or to righteousness.

Based on your current obedience, are you a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness?

Really stopping to consider our daily decisions and obedience can be very humbling, but that is why I am so thankful for verses 17-18! Paul knows many of these brethren personally, and he's reminding them that though they were once slaves to sin, by the grace of God they have overcome! They have committed themselves to the standards they have been taught, to God's standards, and are now set free from sin! What a wonderful reminder of the hope that we have in Christ!

It is also important to note how Paul describes their obedience: from the heart! Right actions with a wrong heart is still displeasing to God. He doesn't just want us to check off our checklist ladies, he wants us to love him enough, to trust him enough, to put his will and his ways above our own.

Do we hesitate to fully teach God's standards because we are afraid of offending people? If so, is this pleasing to God?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Do we hamper obedience from the heart by avoiding teaching on some issues, or trying to teach on some issues in a way that people do not have to sacrifice anything to be pleasing to God?

In verse 17, Paul points out the real struggle: human ways of thinking. Everything he has said thus far: continuing in sin so that grace may abound, being slaves of sin instead of slaves of righteousness, this is all a result of human thinking rather than divine. When we conform our thoughts to God's word right and wrong become much clearer. It is when we think as humans and try to justify our behaviors that we find ourselves in trouble.

Read Romans 5:20-23

Verse 20 can be very confusing. How can we be slaves of sin and free in regard to righteousness? This is something I believe we really need to consider in the American church. Paul is saying that someone who is lost, is lost. If a lost person doesn't do the things that righteousness requires (giving to the poor, attending worship, serving others, etc.) it doesn't matter, it can't make them more lost.

There have been times that I have seen brethren hold those in the world to the same standards (or even higher!) that they hold the brethren to, and Paul is saying that this just doesn't make sense. We cannot expect someone who is lost to understand the way

we live as Christians. When it comes to the world, we must first teach them the gospel, then we can teach them how to live righteously.

This section concludes with a reminder that ultimately, we reap what we sow. When we live as slaves to sin, we reap fruit that we are ashamed of. I truly cannot think of a single sin that does not have negative consequences here on the earth. If those negative consequences are not enough, verse 23 reminds us that the wages of sin is death. It doesn't say the wages of "big" sin is death, it says that the minute we commit any sin at all we deserve to die.

But; what a wonderful word! But, the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. If we are in Christ Jesus (verses 3-4) we no longer have to pay the wages of sin! The gift of God, his son, has already paid it for us! So the question then becomes, are you in Christ Jesus according to Romans 6? And if so, are you living as a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness?

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