

Study 7: Romans Chapter 6

Introduction

“If God’s grace covers our sin, and no matter how big our sin is God’s grace extends to cover it – then let’s go out and sin some more so that we can get more of God’s grace!”

Before they even ask the question, Paul heads them off. In the next five chapters, he asks then answers eight questions, two of them in chapter 6.

Body of the Study

Why shouldn’t we continue sinning so that we can get more grace?

What does baptism accomplish?

Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace?

What are the consequences to our bondage in Christ?

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *If we were slaves (slaves to sin), how did we obtain our freedom? Think through the example that Paul is using – how could a slave obtain his freedom – and then make the application to us.*
- *Look at the ways that our conversion mirrors the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. What things take place in baptism? (List at least five things).*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 7 in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 7: Chapter 6

Introduction

The next logical question that any inquiring reader would ask is, “If God’s grace covers our sin, and no matter how big our sin is God’s grace extends to cover it – then let’s go out and sin some more so that we can get more of God’s grace!”

Before they even ask the question, Paul heads them off. In the next five chapters, he asks then answers eight questions, two of them in this chapter.

Romans 6 is very often used to teach about baptism. And it does teach about baptism. But that is not what the chapter is about, as we will see in this study.

Body of the Study

Why shouldn’t we continue sinning so that we can get more grace?

This first question that Paul asks and answers springs from his comparison of Christ and Adam. Sin entered through Adam and was conquered through Christ (5:19). The Law entered that we might have the knowledge of sin and be convicted of our sinful relationship with (separation from) God (5:20). Through the Law we are condemned, but God’s grace is more powerful than sin (5:20), and through His grace we are freed from sin. His grace is big enough to cover the biggest sin. So, a natural conclusion would be that if we continue to sin, God’s grace will continue to cover our sin, and we will be blessed with grace by sinning.

Certainly not! (NKJV), May it never be! (NASB), God forbid! (KJV), By no means! (NIV), What a ghastly thought! (JB Phillips), No, indeed! (McCord).

Paul absolutely rejects any idea that God *tolerates* sin of any kind. The point is that in becoming christians, we have started *a new life*. We no longer live a life of sin, but we have put to death that former way. It is exactly a mirror of Jesus death. When Jesus died, his earthly life – his life in the flesh – ended. When we became christians, our life of living to fulfil our fleshly desires ended too. (But this doesn’t mean that christians don’t sin – far from it – but christians don’t live a life that just seeks pleasure and sin – a life *characterised by sin*. Faith’s hall of fame (Heb 11) is full of God’s people who have sinned, but are still regarded as being the great examples of faith). The point here is that sin is not the purpose of our life (as it might have been before we became christians). Paul has already countered the notion of continuing in sin “...*let us do evil that good may come...*” in 3:8, and the answer at that place was obvious to all!

When Jesus rose from the dead His “spiritual life” commenced. [For the purists, I am *not* saying that Jesus did not have a spiritual life and character in His former life – He did – for His very nature was that of God. But the entire purpose of His mission was spiritual, and begun before the foundation of the world. After having reconciled man to God on the cross, He sat down at God’s right hand. His work of reconciliation was finished. At God’s right hand He is crowned King and Priest and makes intercession for us. His earthly life was (metaphorically) physical. He came to keep the Law (perfectly), fulfil the prophecies, and become a man so that He can be the great intercessor. He called himself the Son of Man. And finally, He died as a man. But it was through the resurrection that His true nature was demonstrated: “...*declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead...*” (1:4). If He had died and never risen again all that we could say about Him was that He was a good man who went about doing good – perhaps like many of the prophets who went before Him. Whilst after His resurrection He had something of a physical body, it was not a normal one. He said to Mary in the garden not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. He appeared to the two on the road to Emmaus and then instantly vanished out of their sight. Instantly He appeared in Jerusalem many miles away. He

appeared to the 12 as they were eating and came into the room even though the doors were locked. And yet He was still able to show His nail-scarred hands to Thomas and His spear-wounded side. His body was physical – but it wasn't!!! So, Jesus life before the cross was “physical” and His life after the cross was “spiritual”].

The illustration that Paul now makes builds on the analogy between Jesus' death and our obedience to the faith.

What does baptism accomplish?

The point that Paul wants to make here is not one about *baptism*. He is teaching about *death*. Read verses 1-14, and make two lists. On one list count the number of times that the word baptism (or its derivatives) are used. On the other list, count how many times death / died (and their derivatives) are used.

Is the answer surprising? This passage has long been used (and rightly so) to teach about the nature of baptism, that we have linked in our minds that that is what it is teaching about.

Jesus did something physical. He died on the cross, he was buried in the grave, and He rose again. His first “physical” life ended, and His “spiritual” life began when He rose from the dead. In His death He accomplished the reconciliation of man to God. (1 Cor 15:1-4)

In exactly the same way, our baptism mirrors Jesus death. Our former “fleshly” life ends, and our old man is put to death. When we are buried in baptism we mirror the death of Jesus. When we rise up out of the water we rise to walk in a new “spiritual” life. We are new creatures. We have new beginnings. Our former lives (as sinners) are left behind – they are dead and buried – and we now have received the reconciliation to God.

[Incidentally, read very carefully what Paul says here, and ask yourself how it could be this way if we are only baptised *because* our sins are already forgiven. It is very plain that what we are doing is to mirror Christ's death burial and resurrection. If that is the case (and it is), then the only way that we could be saved *before* we are baptised is if Christ had accomplished the work of salvation *before* He died on the cross].

In our baptism, we are made free from sin (6:7). And it is through our faithful obedience to God in baptism that we put to death our sinful past and “...become alive to God in Jesus Christ...” (6:11).

Remember, that Paul is answering the question here that he posed at the beginning of the chapter (*shall we continue in sin?*). If we have killed off our old and sinful man, how could we even *think* of continuing to live that way?

And yet in our conversion we don't *actually* kill our *old man* – our sinful past, because we still sin after we have become christians. But we have *finished* and *put to death* living our life that is sinful *by its nature*. We no longer seek pleasure ahead of seeking God, and (try to) live the way that He would have us to do. And sometimes we fail. But in the past, what we now regard as failures we often regarded as triumphs. Baptism does not change our nature from being sinful. Baptism comes as the *fruit* of repentance. If the repentance was complete and perfect, then we would of course have such an abhorrent view of sin that we would not go anywhere near it ever again.

The bottom line is that *our* baptism symbolised *our* death to sin and the beginning of *our* new life in Christ. So, how could we possibly even contemplate continuing to live in sin? Only the dead are buried, and only the resurrected rise from the grave. In exactly the same way in baptism we symbolise our death to sin and resurrection to a new life, as we mirror the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace?

This second question almost seems like a repeat of the first question. And like the first question, the answer is the same – *certainly not!*

Paul has shown that we are not living under Law but under grace. It is only partly true that we do not live under Law – because we do live under the Law of Christ (Gal 6:2), and under the law of the land. But we are not *saved by keeping the Law* – we are saved by God’s grace. That is, Christ’s Law is not “*do not touch, do not handle, do not taste – and do go to church every Sunday, and don’t miss Wednesday night’s bible class either...*”. That is exactly the style of the Old Covenant. But rather the law of Christ is a law which is written on our hearts (Heb 10:16).

Because we are not bound by the Law, does not give us the freedom to sin. We cannot just choose what we do and what we don’t do, and then claim that it is all right because we are not bound by the law. Sin is still sin, and to be faithful to God we cannot ignore the things that He has said.

Paul uses the example of a slave. We are all in bondage like a slave in one way or another. Some of us are in bondage to sin, and some of us are in bondage to God. Those of us in bondage to God were all at one point in bondage to sin, “*...but we have obeyed from the heart...the doctrine that we were delivered...*” (6:17).

What are the consequences to our bondage in Christ?

We used to serve sin, but now we serve Christ. Our bodies used to be slaves of sin, and what we need to do now is to turn them into slaves for righteousness (6:19).

Looking back at our past lives, we were going on a journey that would end in death and destruction. But the end of what we have now is holiness and everlasting life.

Paul uses the term *slave* eight times in this passage:

6:16	Whoever we obey as slaves	They own us as a slave
6:17 / 18	We were slaves of sin	But we became slaves of righteousness
6:19	We were slaves of uncleanness and lawlessness	But we are to now present ourselves as slaves of righteousness for holiness
6:20	As slaves of sin we were free from righteousness	We have now become slaves of God, and holiness is the fruit.

The end of the former life was death and destruction, but the end of our life in Christ is everlasting (6:22) and eternal (6:23) life.

In the next chapter, Paul is still considering the same question, but uses another example – that of marriage to illustrate the point.