From Death To Life
Rom 6:1-4, 12-14, 17-23
SS Lesson for 07/31/2016

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 5:17-21

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews how through Jesus, Christians have passed From Death to Life. The study's aim is to understand that we are meant to live the new life in Jesus Christ. The study's application is to embrace the new life and cooperate with God in its implementation.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Rom 6:4

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

God’s provided righteousness involves more than declaring believers righteous on the basis of faith. In Romans the first clue to this fact is in 5:5: “God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.” The presence of the Holy Spirit within believers and God’s reproduction of an attribute of His (His love) in believers speak of their new natures and their new lives. This new kind of life, with the sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit, is now discussed at length by Paul in chapters 6-8.

Romans 6:1-2. The questions that open this section demand reflection. A review of God’s provision by grace through Jesus Christ should elicit praise to God. But the teaching on God’s justification of sinful people (3:21-5.21) and the statement of 5:20 in particular might lead some to suggest what Paul expressed: Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? Some may have reasoned that since grace increases “all the more” when sin abounds, then believers ought to sin more so they could experience more grace! The apostle voiced this idea only to reject it vehemently: By no means! (mē genōtō; cf. 3:4) In no way is the abundance of God’s grace designed to encourage sin. Then Paul explained why such a thought cannot be entertained. The fact is, Christians died to sin (cf. 6:7, 11). The Greek aorist (past) tense for “died” suggests a specific point when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means separation, not extinction (cf. vv. 6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin. Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (vv. 18, 22). That being true, Paul asked, How can they live in it any longer? Obviously believers cannot live in sin if they died to it.

Romans 6:3-4. Paul explained in more detail the spiritual basis for his abrupt declaration, “We died to sin” (v. 2). Whether the Roman Christians knew it or not, the fact is that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death. The question here is whether Paul had in mind Spirit baptism (1 Cor. 12:13) or water baptism. Some object to taking Romans 6:3 as Spirit baptism because that verse speaks of being “baptized into Christ” whereas 1 Corinthians 12:13 speaks of Spirit baptism placing the believer into Christ’s body. Of course, both are true: the believer is “baptized” (placed into) Christ and also into the body of Christ, and both are done by the Holy Spirit. Others take Romans 6:3 to refer to water baptism, but the problem with that is that it seems to suggest that baptism saves. However, the New Testament consistently denies baptismal regeneration, presenting water baptism as a public attestation to an accomplished spiritual work (cf., e.g., Acts 10:44-48; 16:29-33). The spiritual reality Paul spoke of is that by faith believers are “baptized (placed into) Christ” and thereby are united and identified with Him. This spiritual reality is then graphically witnessed to and pictured by believers’ baptism in water. The one baptism (by water) is the visible picture of the spiritual truth of the other baptism (identification with Christ; cf. Gal. 3:27, “baptized into Christ... clothed with Christ”). This is supported by the statement, We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death. Christ’s burial shows that He actually died (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Christians’ “burial” with Christ shows that they in fact died with Him to their former sinful ways of living. The purpose of their identification with Christ in His death and burial is that just as Christ was raised from the dead (lit., “out from dead ones”; cf. Rom. 4:24; 8:11) through the glory (a synonym for God’s power; cf. Eph. 1:19; Col. 2:12) of the Father, we too may live a new life (lit., “so also in newness of life we should walk about”). The Greek word “newness” (kainotētē) speaks of life that has a new or fresh quality. The resurrection of Jesus was not just a resuscitation; it was a new form of life. In the same way the spiritual lives of believers in Jesus have a new, fresh quality. Also, a believer’s identification with Jesus Christ in His resurrection, besides being the start of new spiritual life now, is also the guarantee of physical resurrection. This work of God at salvation in identifying a believer with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection—thus separating him from sin’s power and giving him a new quality of life—is the basis of the Holy Spirit’s continuing work in sanctification.
Sanctification begins with regeneration, the implanting of spiritual life in a believer. From that starting point sanctification is God’s progressively separating a believer from sin to Himself and transforming his total life experience toward holiness and purity. The process of sanctification for a believer never ends while he is on earth in his mortal body. It is consummated in glorification when that believer through death and resurrection or through the Rapture stands in the presence of God “conformed to the likeness of His Son” (8:29). A believer’s identification with Jesus Christ by faith is both the ground and the goal of sanctification. The process of translating that identification into the daily experience of progressive sanctification, however, demands three attitudes of mind and action on a believer’s part. These Paul discussed in 6:5-23. The first attitude for sanctification demanded of believers is to “count” (pres. imper., “keep on counting”) themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (v. 11). Being able to reckon something as true, however, depends on knowing and believing certain things. These things to know and believe are stated in verses 5-10.

6:5-7. The first clause should be translated, “Since (not if) we have become united in the likeness of His death,” because the statement is assumed to be true and is true. It affirms the certainty of the second clause of the sentence, which promises that believers are united with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection. As a result we know (ginōskontes suggests experimental or reflective knowing, not intuitive knowledge as in eidotes in v. 9) that our old self was crucified with Him. Literally, the last portion of this sentence is, “our old man was crucified together,” obviously with Christ. A believer’s “old man” is the person as he was spiritually before he trusted Christ, when he was still under sin (3:9), powerless and ungodly (5:6), a sinner (5:8), and an enemy of God (5:10). (“Old self” or “old man” does not refer to the sin nature as such. The Bible does not teach that the sin nature was eradicated at salvation or is ever eradicated in this life.)

The “old man” was “crucified” with Christ (cf. “baptized into His death,” 6:3; and “united with Him in His death,” v. 5) so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless. The phrase “the body of sin” does not mean that a human body is sinful in itself. It means that one’s physical body is controlled or ruled by sin (cf. 7:24). This was the condition of each believer before his conversion. But now at salvation the power of controlling sin is broken; it is “rendered powerless” or ineffective (katargēthē; trans. “nullify” in 1 Cor. 1:28). The next clause (Rom. 6:6b-7) in effect explains the first clause (v. 6a). In his unregenerate state a believer was enslaved to sin. But his “old man” was crucified (identified) with Christ, and that is the basis for deliverance from enslavement to sin. Anyone who has died has been freed from sin. The words “has been freed” are a loose rendering of dedikaïōta, literally, “has been justified or declared righteous.” The perfect tense of this verb describes a past action with a continuing effect or force. Sin no longer has the legal right to force its mastery and control on a believer, for he has died with Christ.

6:8-11. These verses state much the same truth as verses 5-7 and in the same format, beginning with if (“since”). Those who by faith receive Jesus Christ and are identified with Him have died with Christ (cf. vv. 3, 5). Because this is true, we believe (pres. tense, “we keep on believing”) that we will also live with Him. The sharing of the resurrection life of Christ begins at the moment of regeneration, but it will continue as a believer shares eternity with the Lord. Again as a result we know (eidotes, “intuitive knowledge,” perceiving a self-evident truth [cf. v. 15], not ginōskontes, “experimental or reflective knowledge” as in v. 6) that Christ’s resurrection was a removal from the sphere of physical death to an unending spiritual form of life. Having experienced physical death once and having been removed from its realm by resurrection life, Jesus cannot die again (lit., “dies no more”). In resurrection Jesus Christ was victorious over death (Acts 2:24) and death no longer has mastery (kyrieuei, “rules as lord”; cf. Rom. 6:14) over Him as it does over all other human beings (John 10:17-18). Paul summarized this discussion by stating that Jesus in His physical death... died to sin (i.e., in reference to sin) once for all (epaphax; cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). This stands in opposition to the doctrine and practice of the so-called perpetual sacrifice of Christ in the Roman Catholic Mass. Contrariwise, the life He lives, He lives (pres. tense, “keeps on living”) to God. Resurrection life is eternal in quality and everlasting in duration. Furthermore, God is its Source and also its Goal. What is true of Jesus Christ in reality and experience, believers who are identified with Him by faith are commanded to reckon true for themselves. They are to count themselves dead to (in reference to) sin but alive to God. Since they are dead to its power (Rom. 6:2), they ought to recognize that fact and not continue in sin. Instead they are to realize they have new life in Christ; they share His resurrection life (cf. Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12-13).

6:12. The attitude of mind that a believer has died to sin must be translated into action in his experience. Paul commanded, Therefore do not let sin reign (pres. imper., “do not let sin continue to reign”) as it did before salvation. The present imperative negative can also be translated, “Stop letting sin reign.” When sin reigns in people’s lives and bodies, they obey its evil desires. Sin enslaves (v. 6), making a person subject to his own desires. Epithymia refers to “longings” or “desires,” which may be either good or evil, depending on how the word is used. Here, in the case of sin, the desires are evil. In your mortal body
means that sin manifests itself through one’s physical actions in this body. The Greek here stresses that the body is mortal or dying. Perhaps this suggests the foolishness of giving in to the desires of a body that is transitory and decaying. To give in to a dying master is strange indeed.

6:13. Actually this verse repeats the command of verse 12 in more specific terms. Do not offer (lit., “do not continue to present,” or “stop presenting”) the parts of your body (lit., “your members”; cf. v. 19) to sin, as instruments (hopla, frequently in military context, “weapons” or “armor”; cf. 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7; 10:4) of wickedness (adikia, “unrighteousness” in contrasting parallelism with righteousness, later in Rom. 6:13). On the contrary, in sharp contrast, Paul commanded, offer (aorist imper., “present once and for all”; also used in v. 19) yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life (lit., “as if being alive out from dead ones”; cf. John 5:24) and offer the parts of your body (lit., “and your members”) to Him as instruments (hopla) of righteousness (dikaiosynēs). A related passage is Paul’s exhortation, “Offer your bodies as living sacrifices... to God” (Rom. 12:1). Because they were once dead in sin (cf. Eph. 2:1) but have been given new life (Rom. 6:11) believers ought to live for God. Their bodies should be used not for sin (v. 12) or unrighteousness (v. 13) but for promoting righteousness (cf. “bodies” and “body”; 7:5; 23; 1 Cor. 6:15).

6:14. God’s design is that sin shall not be your master (kyrieusei; “shall not rule as lord”; cf. v. 9). The reason this should not happen is that you are not under Law, but under grace. Paul had already explained that “the Law was added so that the trespass might increase” (5:20), and elsewhere he declared, “The power of sin is the Law” (1 Cor. 15:56). If believers were still under the Law, it would be impossible to keep sin from exercising mastery. But since believers are “under grace,” this can be done by following Paul’s instructions.

6:15-16. The mention that believers are “under grace” (v. 14) raised another aberrant idea that the apostle refuted. The question is, Shall we sin because we are... under grace instead of the Law? The Greek aorist (past) tense here may have the sense of committing an act of sin now and then, in contrast to living a life of sin intuitively” a self in mind, but as with all aorist (past) tense in Gr.) a self-evident truth; cf. 6:9) that in effect there is no middle ground between being a slave to sin and a slave to obedience to God. As the Lord Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and money” (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13). Paul also pointed out that being a slave to sin leads to death (cf. Rom. 6:21, 23). This is not physical death only or even spiritual death only, but death in general as the natural consequence and inevitable concomitant of sin (cf. Gen. 2:17). On the other hand being a slave to obedience (to God and His gospel obviously) leads to righteousness (again righteousness in the general sense as equivalent to eternal life or glorification). Death is the normal consequence of sin (which is disobeying God); righteousness is the normal consequence of obeyeing God and living for Him.

6:17-18. This discussion reminded the Apostle Paul of what the grace of God had already accomplished in his readers’ lives and he burst forth in praise. Before they responded to the gospel they had been slaves to sin, but they wholeheartedly (lit., “out from hearts,” thus inwardly and genuinely, not merely externally) obeyed (cf. “obedience” in 1 Peter 1:2) the form of teaching to which they were entrusted. Hearing the teaching of God’s Word, they committed themselves to those truths. That commitment was evidenced by their response to the gospel and their being baptized. The result was that they have been set free from sin and have become slaves (past tense in Gr.) to righteousness (cf. Rom. 6:22). This is positional and must be manifested in daily experience, but it demonstrates again that there is no middle ground. Christians are not to give in to sin because they are dead to it and no longer slaves of it. It is totally contrary to God’s plan for slaves of righteousness to become enslaved to sin!

6:19. To talk of being “enslaved” to righteousness and to God is not correct in one sense, Paul wrote, because God does not hold His children in bondage. But the word “slavery” appropriately describes an unregenerate person’s relationship to sin and to Satan. So Paul used “slavery” for contrasting the relationship of the believer as well. Before developing this idea further, the apostle in effect apologized for its use—I put this in human terms (lit., “I am speaking in human fashion”)—because you are weak in your natural selves (lit., “your flesh”). Apparently Paul felt that his readers’ spiritual perception was feeble so he used this terminology from human experience. Then he basically repeated the ideas of verses 16-17. Unsaved Romans had offered their bodies to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness (lit., “lawlessness”; cf. 1:24-27; 6:13). They had voluntarily become enslaved! But Paul exhorted believers now to offer themselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness (perfect holiness, as the end of the process [cf. v. 22]) in contrast with their former impurity.

6:20-23. Paul once again stated that slavery to sin and to righteousness are mutually exclusive (cf. vv. 13, 16). But he went on to indicate the superiority of being enslaved to righteousness and God. The benefit (this Gr. word is usually trans. “fruit”) of enslavement to sin was that it produced things that a believer is
now ashamed of. But even worse, “the end of those things is death” (lit. trans.). Responding to the gospel by faith and accepting Jesus Christ completely reverses things for an individual. He is now... set free from sin (cf. v. 18) and has been enslaved to God with the result that he has the benefit of holiness (cf. v. 19), the subject of chapters 6-8. The sinful life gives no benefit (6:21), but salvation gives the benefit of a holy, clean life (v. 22). Whereas the “end” (telos) or result of sin is death (v. 21), the “end” of salvation is eternal life. Paul then summarized these contrasts. The wages (the Gr. word opsōnia originally meant a soldier’s pay) of sin is death (eternal death here, in contrast with “eternal life” in v. 23b). This death is eternal separation from God in hell, in which unbelievers suffer conscious torment forever (Luke 16:24-25). This is the wages they have earned and deserve because of their sin (cf. Rom. 5:12; 7:13). By contrast, the gift (charisma, “grace-gift”) of God is eternal life (cf. John 3:16, 36). Eternal life is a gift that cannot be earned (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Three times in this chapter Paul wrote that sin results in death (Rom. 6:16, 21, 23). But believers have been set free from sin (vv. 18, 22) and are no longer slaves to it (vv. 6, 20) but are “slaves to righteousness” (vv. 16, 18-19; cf. v. 13). Because they are alive to God (v. 11) and have eternal life (v. 23) they should present themselves to Him (vv. 13, 19) and live accordingly, not letting sin master them (vv. 6, 11-14, 22).

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

The concern of Romans 6 is the grace of justification. If justification is all by grace through faith, and our sins are washed away through the free gift of God in the Lord Jesus, will this not lead us to freely sin all the more? If the pardon for sin is totally free, will it not take away our incentive to live righteously? Many have asked this question, and Paul provided the answer. The thought in this question fails to comprehend the powerful transition that takes place in the one who has been justified. The true Christian must and will leave behind a sinful life because of the fundamental change that his justification brings into his life. The new life we live is based in our union with Christ, which is sealed by the positional change worked into our lives through justification. First of all, we are buried with Christ, having been baptized into His death. Much ink has been spilled trying to explain what baptism this is. Is it water baptism? Is it Spirit baptism? Is it both? The context is clearly dealing with the position of the believer, so it is best to take this as a positional matter. It refers to our baptism into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). When we are justified, we are removed from the domain, or realm, of sin and put into the body of Christ. We no longer belong to sin; rather, we belong to Christ. This is our new position forever. Because of this, we begin to live a life consistent with the fact that we now belong to Christ. In connection with this, let us not overlook the meaning of the word "burial." Burial is the seal of death. It is a finality. When something is buried, that is it. It is dead; it is finished. So our old, Adamic life is finished. Our position has forever changed. We are in Christ now. Therefore we cannot go back to our old life of sin. We must move on to our new life in Christ. Next, just like Christ, we have been raised up from the dead into newness of life. Among other things, this also speaks of our new position in Christ. We are no longer dead. We have been made alive unto God. We have been joined not only to the death of Christ but also to His resurrection. This represents a fundamental change of identity. How incongruous to think of going back into a life of sin! We have been raised to new life in Jesus. Thus, justification contradicts any thought or doctrine that suggests that the believer will receive grace and use it to sin more. The true Christian will not do that. We have a new standing in Christ, and our union with Christ cancels the reign of sin over us forever. So it naturally follows that in our experience, we will live this out. We are now in Christ. The whole argument of Romans 6 affirms this (vv. 12-14, 20-23). Grace does not lead to a life of sin. On the contrary, grace raises us to a new life, a life of righteousness and holiness, seeking to live the life Christ calls us to. We have new life in Him.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In 1979, the iconoclastic folk singer Bob Dylan announced his conversion to Christianity with a new album titled Slow Train Coming. It featured the Grammy Award-winning “Gotta Serve Somebody,” a song that expressed that new Christian’s understanding of how life really works. Dylan sang of the fact that life involves service either to Satan or to the Lord. Dylan’s spiritual journey since then has been the subject of much speculation. But the words of his song ring true today, nearly 40 years later. Many people think they serve only themselves. Their highest good is their own pleasure and satisfaction. They reject God’s authority in their lives, often by denying his existence. Yet as Dylan discovered, we are all servants of another. We delude ourselves if we think we are the masters of our fate and the captains of our souls. That outlook leads us to become slaves to our passions, which in turn leads to horribly messy lives and an eternity without Christ. The apostle Paul
stresses that we are either servants to sin or servants to righteousness. There is no middle ground. This is the topic for today’s lesson.

Much of Romans 6 uses the metaphor of slavery. This fact brings with it a problem of certain mental associations, since slavery in the ancient world was not always equivalent to the slavery of the U.S. into the nineteenth century. America’s sordid history of slavery involved slave traders “harvesting” people in Africa, transporting them from their homeland, then selling them as commodities. This was often justified on the racist theory that such Africans were inferior, even subhuman. This horrific legacy tends to dominate our understanding of the practice of slavery. In Paul’s day, however, people became slaves for various reasons. Most slaves were the human spoils of war, peoples from nations conquered by the Roman legions. Roman slavery was not based on race, and there was no assumption that slaves were soulless or intellectually inferior. Some slaves were highly educated, and their masters were known to free them after a period of service. Such people thus attained the status of loyal freedmen (compare “the Synagogue of the Freedmen” in Acts 6:9). But unless such freedom was granted, slaves were considered possessions of their owners, and we should not think that slaves were never abused in that regard. Even so, slavery in the first century AD did not have the across-the-board odious reputation we generally associate with that word now. We also acknowledge that slavery in the first-century Roman Empire and in nineteenth-century America operated under similar assumptions. There was a master, and slaves were obligated to serve that master. Disobedience could be punished harshly. The will of the master was primary, and the slave had to obey. This is the background for much of what Paul has to say when he refers to people as “slaves to sin.”

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

From Death to New Life (Rom 6:1-4)

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?  
2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?  
3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?  
4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

By not continuing in sin (1-2)

Not continuing in sin through obeying the Bible (1 John 2:1)

2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

Not continuing in sin by being careful whom we associate (1 Cor 15:33-34)

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God — I say this to your shame.

Not continuing in sin through the power of God's grace (Titus 2:11-12)

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

Not continuing in sin through holiness (1 Peter 1:15-17)

15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.
By being baptized into death (3-4)

Baptized into death to symbolize burying our sins (Col 2:12-13)
12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.

Baptized into death to symbolize death of our sinful nature (Col 3:1-3)
3 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Baptized into death to symbolize being baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13)
For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Baptized into death to symbolize being clothed with Jesus (Gal 3:27)
27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

By being raised into a new life (4)

Raised into life to present us to God (2 Cor 4:14)
14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

Raised into life as part of being a new creation (2 Cor 5:17)
17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Raised into life to be seated with Jesus in heavenly places (Eph 2:5-7)
5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Raised into life because God predestined some for glorification (Rom 8:30)
30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Raised into life so that Jesus will be glorified in His holy people (2 Thess 1:10)
10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Raised into life because of being God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:9-10)
9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

From Instruments of Unrighteousness to Righteousness (Rom 6:12-14)
12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.
13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.
14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
By not letting sin reign (12-13)

*Not letting sin reign in our bodies (Romans 7:23-24)*

23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

*Not letting sin reign to lead us to willfully sin (Psalms 19:13)*

13 Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

*Not letting sin reign our footsteps (Psalms 119:133)*

133 Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me.

*Not letting sin reign through our sinful nature (Romans 8:13)*

13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

By being under grace (14)

*Grace through endurance (2 Tim 2:11-13)*

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

*Grace through the first resurrection (Rev 20:6)*

6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

*Grace through being in the brilliant presence of God (Rev 22:5)*

5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

*Grace that provides way of living in this present age (Titus 2:11-12)*

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,

*Grace from the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10)*

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.
From Slaves to Sin to Slaves of Righteousness (Rom 6:17-23)

17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.
18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.
20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.
21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.
22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.
23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

By being set free from sin (17-20)

Free from sin through justification (Rom 3:22-24)
22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Free from sin so that we might have peace with God (Rom 5:1-2)
5 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through 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.

Free from sin of the trespass of Adam (Rom 5:15)
15 But 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!

Free from sin through grace (2 Cor 8:9)
9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Free from sin through a gift from God (Eph 2:8)
8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.

By bearing godly fruit (21-22)

Bearing godly fruit by conducting our life in a pure and righteous way (Prov 20:11)
11 Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.

Bearing godly fruit by testing the influential spirit of a decision (1 John 4:1)
4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Bearing godly fruit by displaying the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22-25)
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Bearing godly fruit by doing deeds that please God (Eph 5:9-11)
9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Bearing godly fruit by living a life worthy of God (Col 1:9-10)
9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Resulting in receiving the gift of eternal life (23)

Eternal life that comes through being in Jesus (1 John 5:11-12)
11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Eternal life that God promised before the beginning of time (Titus 1:2)
2 a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,

Eternal life because of being an heir of God (Titus 3:7)
7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Eternal life given to display unlimited patience (1 Tim 1:16)
16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Eternal life given through mercy (Jude 1:21)
21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Question Raised (6:1-2)
The sixth chapter begins with a question: “What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” (Romans 6:1). This question is somewhat prompted by Paul’s statement in chapter 5: “… but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (Romans 5:20b). This question probably is best understood as arising out of the entire preceding section on justification by faith alone. This question would surely occur to the opponents of Paul’s gospel: “If salvation is all of God, all of grace, and appropriated on the basis of faith alone, without any human effort; if all of our sins necessitate and promote the grace of God—then why not continue to live as we always have (in sin), so that God’s grace may continue to abound?”

Paul’s summary answer is contained in verse 2: “May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Romans 6:2). When the expression “May it never be!” occurs in Romans, it is Paul’s vehement response to an improper conclusion based upon a proper premise. God’s grace does super abound man’s sin. Man’s sin does occasion the manifestation of grace. But we are not to continue the life characterized by sin at the time prior to our conversion. The reason is because such a practice would be inconsistent with our position in Christ. In Christ we are dead to sin. How, then, could we continue to live in sin? Such a practice would deny our position.

Living in Sin—A Positional Prohibition (6:3-14)
If you have come to Romans 6 looking for water, you will be disappointed, for Paul appeals to the position of the Christian as it is achieved by Spirit baptism as a reason why the Christian cannot live in sin as he formerly did. Paul begins, “or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been
baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3). We should not expect to find water every time the word baptism occurs, for there are numerous examples of ‘waterless baptism.’

John the Baptist declared, “As for me, I baptize you in water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not even fit to remove His sandals; He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).

Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

In secular Greek, the verb ‘baptizo’ meant not only ‘to immerse’ or ‘to dip’ but also to “cause to perish (as by drowning a man or sinking a ship).” The baptizing work of the Holy Spirit joins us to the Person and work of Christ in such a way that we participate in His work on the cross. We died with Him.

So far as our justification is concerned we were joined to the Person and work of Christ so that we participated in the death of Christ for our sins. He died in our place as our substitute. But with reference to our sanctification, Christ died to sin. In Christ’s work of justification, He delivered us from the penalty of sin; but in the death of Christ was also accomplished our sanctification whereby He delivered us from the power of sin. This is the point Paul is making in verses 3-11.

Water baptism does not secure either justification or sanctification, but it does symbolize it. When we are submerged into the baptismal water, we symbolize the fact that we died and were buried with Christ. Just as we participated in the sin of Adam and its consequences many years ago, so by the baptism of the Holy Spirit we have participated in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Our old self, what we were as a son of Adam, died to sin. That is, sin no longer has any claim or authority over us. Just as the Law has no authority over a dead man, just as collection agencies do not harass a corpse, so sin no longer has a claim on the one who has died.

As the sin-bearer of the world, sin had a just claim on Jesus Christ. Sin had a debt to collect. But when our Lord was crucified, He died to sin. Since sin has no claim on Christ, sin has no claim on those of us who have died to sin in Christ. Thus, our participation in the death of Christ to sin abolishes all claim sin once had on us.

But our identification with Christ does not end in death to sin; it extends to our participation in His resurrection to a new kind of life. Not only does sin have no claim on us, but in our union with Christ we have been raised to a newness of life. Sin no longer has dominion over us and we now have a new kind of life, a life which is capable of manifesting the righteousness of Christ. Positionally, we are dead to sin and alive to God. Practically we dare not fall back under the dominion of sin, but must manifest a newness of life (cf. Colossians 3:1-13).

On the basis of our position in Christ, Paul can not only cast aside any talk of continuing in sin, but can exhort us to demonstrate our position by the practice of personal righteousness:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:12-13).

As Paul will illustrate in the first verses of chapter 7 sin shall not rule over us, because we are no longer under the Law, but under grace (v. 14).

Living in Sin—A Practical Prohibition (6:15-23)

Not only are there theological or positional reasons why the Christian cannot continue to live in sin—there are practical reasons as well. One such reason is discussed in verses 15-23. The question is essentially the same as that in verse 1: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law but under grace? May it never be!” (Romans 6:15).

Paul lays down a very significant principle in verse 16, and that is that we become the slaves of whatever we choose to obey. If we give in to sin and submit to it, we are the slaves of sin. If we submit to God and serve Him, we become His slaves.

While we were unsaved we had no choice, but were by our very nature the slaves of sin. The fruit of such service was hardly praiseworthy, for of the things we once did we are now deeply ashamed (v. 21). When we turned to God by faith in Christ and accepted the gospel, we were freed from servitude to sin and made servants of God.
We should not deceive ourselves by supposing that these two alternatives—slavery to sin, or slavery to God—are only two of many options for the Christian. In reality, we must be one or the other. We are never truly free, but are only free to choose whether we will be the slaves of sin or the slaves of God.

Lest we should give even a moment’s thought about serving sin, Paul contrasts the two kinds of servitude. There is the servitude of God and there is service to sin. While servitude to sin produces unrighteousness and that which causes shame, servitude to God produces the fruit of righteousness and sanctification. The end result of sin is death, while the outcome of righteousness is eternal life.

So not only does continuing to live in sin contradict our position in Christ as dead to sin and alive to God, and our profession of this at baptism, it violates every principle of common sense, since it constitutes us as slaves of sin, accomplishing shameful unrighteousness, and following the path which leads to death.

What we see in chapter 6 is not so much the method of sanctification as the motive for it. We must leave the life of sin behind and seek to offer our bodies to God so that His righteousness may be lived out in us.

We do learn from chapter 6 that the basis for our sanctification is to be found at the same place as we found the provision for our justification—at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as our Lord died for sin and was raised for our justification, so our Lord died to sin and was raised to live His life to God.

**There is no work which you or I can perform which can earn our salvation.** That work has been accomplished on the cross of Calvary. There is no work which you or I can perform to attain to sanctification. Our sanctification is accomplished only by our identification with Christ in His death to sin and in His resurrection to newness of life.

What troubles me is the interpretation of this chapter that sees it as the method of attaining sanctification, rather than as our motivation for sanctification. What we shall learn from chapter 7 is that although sanctification is absolutely necessary, so it is also absolutely impossible to accomplish through human striving and effort. Sanctification cannot be produced through revivals, consecrations and dedications. The beautiful message of Romans 8 is that what we cannot do in and of ourselves, God has already accomplished through the work of His Son, and this is appropriated through the Holy Spirit by faith.

**Application**

Surely we must recognize first of all the necessity of sanctification for the Christian. All too often we present the gospel as though it were some insignificant modification or addition to the life of an individual. It is like another investment we add to our portfolio, or additional insurance in case our other policies fail.

The message of the gospel calls for a radical transformation of life. The call of the gospel is the call to repentance—to change. Acceptance of God’s provision of righteousness in Christ demands the outworking of righteousness in our lives and the putting away of sin. The great blemish on the testimony of Christianity has been the lives of those who have failed to realize that the gospel calls for radical change. Not a change which we initiate, but a change with which we co-operate.

Second, we should recognize the error of those who understand this chapter to teach that once a person has been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, he or she is incapable of sinning. Not only does chapter 7 and much of the Scriptures refute this, but so does our experience. The consistent challenge of the New Testament is that our practice should conform to our position.

Finally, let us not seek some kind of formula—know, reckon, yield,—which all too easily is perverted into a kind of work which we perform in order to be sanctified. This chapter does not focus our attention on the how of sanctification so much as it does the why. Herein, we find not the method of sanctification, but the motive for it.

(Adapted from URL: https://bible.org/seriespage/8-necessity-sanctification-romans-6)
Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Why does sin linger in our lives? Can we ever truly die to sin? It is wise to acknowledge our struggles with ungodly attitudes and behaviors, as Paul himself did in Romans 7:14-23. Denial of sin just makes the situation worse. But here is the lesson of Paul: we must not be dominated by sin. Our focus, our goal, our passion must be for obedience to God’s will. To accomplish this transformation, Paul tells us to remember our baptism, remember how we pledged our lives to the Lord Jesus and chose to live for him! Don’t look back on your pre-baptismal life with any fondness. Allow the Holy Spirit to empower you for victory over sins, sins that may be large or small. Don’t just die to these sins—renew your determination to live for Christ.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God’s grace is never a pass to sin; rather, grace gives power to escape sin’s dominion (Rom. 6:1-2)
2. Baptism is a public statement that we have changed our view of sin and now live for God (vss. 3-4)
3. Temptations appear in the believer’s life, but through the Holy Spirit we can resist sin’s control (vss. 12-13)
4. In our new life in Christ, believers operate under new management by the grace of God (vss. 14, 20)
5. Believers are not bound by the guilt of their past life but freed by the joy of the new life (vss. 21-22)
6. Eternal life is a gift; we cannot earn it or ever repay what we owe (vs. 23)