

Freedom from Sin

Romans 6:1-14

SS Lesson for 05/01/2022

Devotional Scripture: Rom 8:1-4

OUTLINE

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Key Verse: Rom 6:5

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Eternal life given through mercy (Jude 1:21)

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

President Abraham Lincoln delivered the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. By this time, the Civil War had raged for nearly two years. According to the president's decree, "All persons held as slaves ... are, and henceforward shall be free." Of course, words without appropriate action—even the words of a president—cannot create change. The proclamation did not immediately end slavery throughout the nation. This speech, however, did fan the flame of liberation, especially in the North. The Civil War ended in 1865 with a Union victory. The battle for freedom was long and bloody, but ultimately victorious. We still experience echoes of slavery. Though freedom for slaves was declared, the long process of becoming equal citizens under the law is, in many ways, an ongoing struggle. The parallel is imperfect, but some similarities exist between the fight to end slavery in the United States and Jesus' sacrifice to end slavery the world over. The lesson today focuses not on the moment of victory, but, instead, the work that is still to be done in the aftermath.

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.

Key Verse: Rom 6:5

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection

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.

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 genoito*; 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.

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" (*kainotēi*) 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 *dedikaiōtai*, 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** (*ephapax*; 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** (*adikias*, “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.

Major Theme Analysis

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

Freedom through Death to Sin (Rom 6:1-6)

- 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.
- 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,
- 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

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 being hidden in Jesus Christ (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 resurrected (4-6)

Resurrected 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.

Resurrected 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.

Resurrected because God predestined us 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.

Resurrected 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.

Resurrected 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.

Freedom from Death into New Live (Rom 6:7-11)

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

From death because of being freed from sin (7)

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

New life because of having eternal life through Jesus (8, 10-11)

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 Jesus' 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.

From death because of it having no dominion anymore (9)

No dominion because of death no longer reigning (Rom 5:14)

14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

No dominion because of being under grace (Rom 6:14)

14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

No dominion through freedom from the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15)

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

No dominion through Jesus destroying death (2 Tim 1:10)

10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Freedom from 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.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

So in this sixth chapter of Romans we turn to the matter of the revelation of God's righteousness in the life of the Christian, with the spotlight not on the 'How' of the spiritual life, but on the 'Why.'

A Definition of Sanctification

Since we are speaking of sanctification in chapters 6, 7, and 8 and will not have a full view of it in chapter 6 alone, it would be wise to pause briefly to define sanctification. Justification is the Process whereby God declares a person to be righteous on the basis of faith in the Person and work of Christ. Justification is the activity of God which liberates a person from the guilt of sin. Sanctification is the activity of God which liberates the Christian from the **power** of sin. Justification imputes the righteousness of God to man. Sanctification imparts the righteousness of God **through** man.

Traditionally, sanctification is categorized into three aspects.

(1) Positional sanctification is that state of holiness imputed to the Christian at the moment of their conversion to Christ. It denotes not so much one's spiritual condition as his spiritual position. The Corinthian believers could thus be called 'saints' even though they were in a carnal state (1 Corinthians 1:2).

(2) Progressive sanctification refers to the process in our daily lives by which we are being conformed to the image of Christ. It is the process of becoming what we are in Christ. This involves the putting off of the old habits of lying, stealing, backbiting, etc., and putting on the Christ-like qualities of honesty, mercy, and love (cf. Colossians 3:1-10ff.).

(3) Ultimate sanctification is that state of holiness that we will not attain to in this life, but will realize when we are finally in the presence of God: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Sanctification, the putting off of the old man, and the putting on of the righteousness of Christ, is three dimensional: positional, progressive, and ultimate. The argument of the apostle Paul in Romans 6 is that we are obligated to experience progressive sanctification because of our positional sanctification accomplished on the cross of Calvary.

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 superabound 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).”²³ 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.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/necessity-sanctification-romans-6>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

With Jesus' resurrection we see that both the new era of resurrection life and the old era of sin and brokenness exist side by side until Christ's return. This time of both fulfillment of promises and expectation of future perfection can be called the "Already/Not Yet." This phrase captures the tension that exists in this age. Through faith in Jesus, believers have the beginnings of resurrection life in the Holy Spirit right now (Ephesians 1:13-14). This is our spiritual resurrection and new life in Christ (2:1, 6; Colossians 3:1). The fullness of this new life will come with the final resurrection from physical death. For the believer, new life is both present and future. Our baptism has united us with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With his death, we are set free from slavery to sin. With his resurrection, we are given new life. However, we must make the choice of how we will live in this new freedom. We may continue to live in disobedience, becoming slaves to sin all over again. Or we may choose to live in righteousness, enjoying the new life Christ has purchased for us. Out of our knowledge of, and gratitude for, the grace of God, let us eagerly serve righteousness. It's the best life now—and forever.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Letting Go of Sin - Some people take advantage of God's forgiveness. They think, I can live any old way I please, and God will forgive me. The apostle Paul said absolutely not! A person with that kind of attitude and thinking is uninformed about the seriousness of sin and God's price to wipe it out through Christ's crucifixion. Once a person professes his or her belief in Jesus as Savior and becomes a Christian, the relationship to sin changes. That person should not desire to habitually sin. Jesus releases the burden of having to carry our sins around. To continue in sin would be to ignore the price Jesus paid on the Cross.

Baptism - In baptism, the new believer reenacts Jesus' death (being buried with Him) and then the resurrection (being raised to new life). Baptism shows something has changed inside the person. Following baptism, the person has a new, daily walk in faith proclaiming a relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Right Thing to Do - Paul said the new, resurrected self replaces the old person. No more speaking and acting against God. The Christian is now His representative, His advocate. However, the temptation to sin is still there. The right thing to do is to honor God by obeying His commands and walking in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Those committed to Christ long to live a life in spiritual harmony with Him.

Walking in Liberty - Paul gave instructions as to how to walk in liberty, free from sin. Rebellion and wrongdoing against God can naturally exist within through temptation by the devil. Our flesh wants to do wrong, to satisfy the wrong appetites. But Paul said, devote your whole body to God, ask Him to use it for His plans and purposes, and exhibit right living.

Why Battle This Out? - Believers are under grace, not law, right? Legalism is living by the law. The law can tell you where you fall short, but who wants to continually live under condemnation? The Bible is full of God's grace, His favor toward us in spite of our wrongs. Recognizing the Lord's love and generosity should cause us to listen to His voice and heed His instructions.