

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Romans 6:1-4, 12-14, 17-23

English Standard Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, July 31, 2016

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 31, 2016**, is from **Romans 6:1-4, 12-14, 17-23**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson with other Bible students and teachers through the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Romans 6:1-4, 12-14, 17-23

(Romans 6:1) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?

In the previous chapters in his letter, Paul proved that by our faith in Jesus Christ and His death in our behalf we are justified by God as a matter of pure grace – we are declared to be right with God and acceptable to live forever in God’s Kingdom. Furthermore, we are now reconciled to God; we are no longer God’s enemies but instead God’s friends and members of God’s family through faith in Jesus Christ. In chapter 6, Paul turned to sanctification – to holy, loving, living through faith in Jesus Christ. Rather than justification and reconciliation giving believers in Jesus an excuse to sin or continue living in sin or sin even more, being placed in a right and loving relationship with God gives believers good reasons to fight against sin and temptations – to live for God in the loving obedience exemplified and taught by Jesus Christ to His followers.

(Romans 6:2) By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

When a person dies their spiritual body separates from their physical body. Those who sincerely place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior separate themselves from sin, from living in sin, and from practicing sin. They repent. Repentance means more than feeling sorry for the sins you have committed; repentance means turning away from those sins and committing yourself to avoiding all sins. When your body dies, you cannot live in it any longer and as it decays you would not enjoy living in it. Likewise, when you turn to God in Jesus Christ in repentance and place your faith in Jesus Christ,

you will not enjoy living in sin any longer – sin will have the stench of death and you will not want to abide in sin. You will turn to Jesus Christ and ask Him to help you live a holy and loving life, and He will hear your plea.

(Romans 6:3) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Though Paul had not yet been to Rome, he knew that baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit was part of the Gospel that Jesus had commanded His followers to preach and obey; therefore, he could give advice on how to avoid sin knowing that the Christians in Rome had been baptized (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptism followed repentance for sins and demonstrated to the Church and confirmed for the believing Christian that they were converted, had been given a new heart, and had dedicated themselves to a new way of living in obedience to their new Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Paul knew they had been taught about the Holy Spirit who would abide within them and help them fight against sin and temptations (Acts 2:38).

(Romans 6:4) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Baptism showed the Church that the new believer had chosen to so identify themselves with Jesus Christ that they considered themselves dead to sin or separated from sin. Paul wanted believers to know that when tempted to sin they could remind themselves that they had been baptized and buried with Christ; therefore, they were dead to sin and were able to live a new life. Because Christians were symbolically buried with Christ through baptism they had good reasons to commit themselves to permanently living a new life apart from practicing sin. Furthermore, just as the power and glory of God had truly raised Jesus from the dead and given Him a resurrected and glorified body, God had given them the power to choose to live a new life knowing that the glory and power of God (that was so mighty it overcame death and freed Jesus from His tomb) would empower and guide them to fight and win against sin and temptations. Though believers know they do not live in sinless perfection in this life, they know God wants them to live more closely to him and fight against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil with the resurrection power God offers them as they live a new life following Jesus. Having been baptized should not encourage believers to think that they can live in sin with impunity and a guarantee of forgiveness by God no matter what they do; rather, having been baptized should give Christians good reasons to believe they can overcome sins and temptations and glorify God with the power God will give them to be victorious.

(Romans 6:12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Paul argued that since Jesus Christ is the believer's Lord and Savior that the believer should let Jesus Christ reign over them as their King rather than let sin (which Paul personified as a being or person) reign over their mortal body. Believers can choose to obey the evil desires of sin and misuse their mortal bodies, or they can choose to obey Jesus Christ and use their mortal bodies in the service of God. Because human bodies are mortal, believers have a limited time on earth to serve Jesus Christ; to sin is a destructive waste of time. Sanctification includes and involves making the right choices for the right reasons when loving God and others as God has commanded.

(Romans 6:13) Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Obviously, justification and reconciliation does not make the believer perfect in this life, but when believers know that they are justified and reconciled by grace through faith in Jesus Christ they will be inspired to love and live for God instead of sin, to set themselves apart for God and His holy use, to grow in God's grace. When they are tempted to sin, they can remember these facts and resolve not to offer any part of themselves to do anything wicked.

When tempted they can recommit themselves to God and prayerfully declare, “I have offered myself to God. Rather than be used as an instrument of wickedness, I offered myself to the service of God. God has given me life and a new life in Jesus Christ, and I offer every part of myself to God to promote righteousness. Oh God, guide me, direct me, empower me, to do your will.”

(Romans 6:14) For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Paul once again personified sin as a personal power against us. Before we came to faith in Jesus Christ, sin was our master; Satan manipulated us and so influenced our emotions and thoughts that we chose sin and wickedness and suffered the consequences. When we came to trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, Jesus freed us from slavery to sin and Satan. When we were under the law, sin took advantage of us (sin used the law and misled us to think that we would enjoy activities that God’s law forbade, perhaps because they were forbidden). When we were under the law, the law gave us no power to overcome sin and temptations. Because sin was our master, apart from Christ we were powerless to overcome sin. As followers of Jesus Christ, Jesus gives us the grace and power to overcome temptations and sins. Jesus Christ is our master and in the process of sanctification (the process of being made holy and more loving) we need to choose to follow Jesus instead of sin, which we once thought we enjoyed but now makes us feel ashamed.

(Romans 6:17) But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

Paul thanked God (not the Roman Christians) for the changed lives of those he wrote to in his letter. Believers should always praise God for their growth in grace and every victory over temptation and sin when they make the right choices. Because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and in the lives of believers as their risen Lord and Savior, God has freed Christians from slavery to sin. He has changed believers' hearts, but Christians are also conscious of choosing to change their thinking and way of living that the Holy Spirit has influenced them to do. During conversion, the Holy Spirit influences believers to carefully consider the facts and choose to dedicate their lives to Jesus Christ and the truths they have learned from Jesus Christ and the apostles (these recorded truths became the Bible that Christians give their allegiance to).

(Romans 6:18) and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

God has sanctified believers; has set them apart for holy service and freed them from sin; and they have become slaves of righteousness. God has freed believers from slavery to sin by grace through their faith in Jesus; therefore, Christians are under grace and have changed their allegiance to God and the teachings of Jesus Christ

rather than continue to live in sin. The Bible sometimes states complex truths in ways that will help people understand what is important even with their human limitations (see Romans 6:19). When believers come to faith in Jesus Christ, they choose to become a slave to righteousness – they choose to start doing what is right, what is consistent with their being right with God as He has declared them to be right (justified). Since God has declared believers right with Him, believers want (or should want) to live as people who are right with God (righteous). They want (or should want) to live in a close, loving, personal relationship with God rather than break that relationship by living in sin (they want to remain reconciled with God). They want to fulfill God’s purpose for them on earth; they want to become more Christ-like (which is the process of sanctification).

(Romans 6:19) I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

The Romans were very familiar with slavery. The Jews and the early Christians were familiar with slavery and with the concept of being a bond slave. A bond slave was a person who voluntarily chose to be someone else’s slave for life. Paul called himself “a bond slave of Jesus Christ.” When believers formerly chose (and as Christians they can still

choose) to do something impure (which can make them slaves to impure habits and strongly influence them to do what is even more wicked) they became slaves to impurity and could not free themselves; therefore, believers needed Jesus to free them from their slavery, which Jesus did by grace through faith. Now, as Christians, Paul wanted believers to offer themselves as slaves to righteousness – to doing what God wanted – which would lead them to holiness of life and true commitment to serving God, rather than go back to choosing sinful ways and falling back into slavery to sin.

(Romans 6:20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Paul wanted believers to choose to obey their righteous God in everything, because before they believed in Jesus Christ they were slaves to sin and could not choose to consistently obey God when tempted to sin; they obeyed God for selfish reasons. Paul wanted those who claim to be Christians to voluntarily place themselves under the control of the righteousness of Christ which they could now do as His committed followers.

(Romans 6:21) But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

Because Paul wanted believers to have good reasons they could use to defeat tempters and temptations to sin, he wanted them to think back (when tempted to fall back into sin) on what they had gained from the sins they had committed in the past — they had gained nothing. As a matter of fact, as they came to know and love God in Christ more, they became more ashamed of their sins. Paul warned them that not only did they not gain anything from the sins they committed, practicing sin results in death. When tempted, they needed to remember these truths and turn to Christ for help.

(Romans 6:22) But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Christians can live holy lives and more and more consistently holy as they choose to love God and live as God's bond slave. As they live truly reconciled to God in Jesus Christ, they will increasingly do what is right whenever they are tempted — they will win victory after victory over temptations and sin with the help of their Master. As a result, they will increasingly enjoy the benefits that flow from the eternal life Christ gives them and will give them fully in the future as He promised.

(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When people sin there are consequences that Paul described as wages. Wages are what people deserve and earn from their working in someone's service. Once again Paul personified "sin," because of people's human limitations in understanding spiritual truths. Everyone deserves what they earn from serving sin. When Jesus Christ is our Lord instead of sin, we do not receive the death we deserve for our sins; rather, we receive eternal life as the gift of God and all that eternal life implies — with benefits beyond description. God will always give Christians infinite unearned blessings as free gifts. No one can make God their debtor by their behavior or their works of the law.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What might you say to someone who said, "It does not matter what I do, God will always forgive me"?
2. What are some of the ways Paul made sin seem like a person?
3. Did Paul making sin seem like a person help you better understand sin and your responsibility as a Christian? Explain your answer.

4. What should be the result when Christians offer themselves to God?
5. What results when Christians offer themselves as slaves of righteousness?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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