

Redemption in Romans ***Victory Over Sin***

Lesson #7 for August 14, 2010

Scriptures: Romans 6; 1 John 1:8-2:1.

1. Read Romans 5:18-21, *The Message*. If all of our sinning makes God look so good because He forgives, should we just continue to sin to make God look even better? Reading Romans 6 superficially, it might seem to suggest that when we are saved by faith, there is nothing more for us to do. This lesson, dealing with the question of sanctification, will attempt to settle that issue.
2. Consider some of the expressions that we use in Christianity: Are we set right by faith? Saved by faith? Judged by works? Does faith work? What does it mean to be baptized into His death? Are we somehow mystically transported to Calvary in Old Jerusalem and actually go through the dying process? Or, is this a metaphor for a certain type of Christian experience? If we are baptized into union with Christ's death, is that saying that He is to be our Example? Jesus was not a sinner before He was baptized. He did not need to be baptized! What does it mean to be "baptized into His death." In what sense do we die at baptism? What really changes? How is that an example for us? (Romans 6:1-3) Who was listening to this book being read to them? Was it a bunch of theologians? No! They were ordinary people like us. So, we should not need theological training to understand Romans.
3. What does it mean to be under law? What does it mean to be under grace? If you are caught speeding on the freeway and have to go to court and appear before the judge, there is a possibility that the judge might say, "Since this is your very first offense, I will let you go. But, if it happens again, I will throw the book at you!" Such a driver is then described as operating under grace. Prior to the infraction, he was under law. So, which would you rather be? Under law? Or, under grace? How many times can you be forgiven?
4. In the case of Christians, are they continually breaking the law? Therefore, must they continually be living under grace? At what point does God throw the book at them? After 490 times? (Matthew 18:21,22) And if Christians continue to sin, does that mean, in fact, that sin is ruling over them? Is the solution to throw out the law?
5. What is sanctification? Being "sanitized from sin"? Ellen G. White repeatedly stated, "Sanctification is the work of a lifetime."

At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. **Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.** As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and [66] our knowledge increase. (*Christ's Object Lessons* 65.2)

The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven.

Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? (*The Faith I Live By* 116.1,2)

The work of **sanctification is the work of a lifetime**. The true Christian must be unrelenting in his endeavors. He is ever climbing, never content with that to which he has attained. The more he seeks a knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, the more he desires to reflect the divine image. Every gift imparted to him by God is used to draw others in the same line, to hunger and thirst after righteousness. The longer he walks in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice, the more willing he is to hide himself in Christ, and sacrifice all for him. (*Review and Herald*, October 3, 1899, par. 13.)

The work of **sanctification is the work of a lifetime**; it must go on continually; but this work cannot go on in the heart while the light on any part of the truth is rejected or neglected. The sanctified soul will not be content to remain in ignorance, but will desire to walk in the light and to seek for greater light. As a miner digs for gold and silver, so the follower of Christ will seek for truth as for hidden treasures, and will press from light to a greater light, ever increasing in knowledge. He will continually grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Self must be overcome. Every defect of character must be discerned in God's great mirror. We may discover whether or not we are condemned by God's standard of character. {1SM 317.2}

Certainly, these quotations suggest a real change! Lee Strobel in his book *The Case for Faith* tells how he became a Christian by noticing the changes that occurred in his wife.

6. Which is more important? Faith? Or, works? Which is harder to accomplish? Is it possible to actually overcome sin in this lifetime? Could we reach the place where sin does not dominate our lives at all? Do we actually die every day? In what sense? Does God take control? If we learn to focus our lives on Christ, does sin just fade away?
7. How many Christians are in a continual cycle of sinning, repenting, being forgiven, and then sinning again? Is that an indication of failure? How is that a victory? Are we having some successes? Do we like our sins? Or do we hate them?
8. Would you consider the sins of saints "too great" or just "too many"?
9. No serious Christian who has been baptized would suggest that at that point he permanently stopped sinning. Paul's logic seems quite clear. We are buried in the waters of baptism, and that is to represent the death of the "old man" of sin. And when we rise from the water, that is to represent the beginning of a new life dominated by Christ. We are very happy to recognize the fact that Christ defeated sin and that He lived a perfect human life on this earth and never sinned. He refuted Satan's claims and arguments that such a thing was impossible. But, how does that impact us in our daily lives?
10. Read Romans 6:2-11. If we are no longer dominated by sin, are we still controlled by it? Why do we have to struggle with it every day? Is the baptized Christian's life really different from others? Have we as individuals actually experienced dying with Christ and then living in union with Him? That experience is such an essential part of the Christian life that we use many expressions to describe it. What does it mean to be "alive to sin"? "Alive to God"? "Dead to sin"? "Dead to God"? Are we somehow mysteriously joined to Christ in His death?
11. Through this process of dying and rising, of surrendering ourselves to Christ and not to sin, are we actually becoming healthier, happier, holier people? Can we actually reach the

place where we live holy lives? Or, is holiness also a gift from God? Should the world expect Christians to be different?

12. Look at your own life and the lives of others around you. How does sin rule? (Romans 6:12) Is it primarily through bad habits? Bad choices? Could a person actually be falling deeper and deeper into sin and still be a Christian? How do you respond when you see a bumper sticker which says, "I'm not perfect, just forgiven"?
13. Can you tell whether sin is actually dethroned in your life? Can you tell whether sin is dethroned in the lives of others? Where did the natural desires come from that seem to give us such a bad time?
14. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 47. Compare GC 555.
15. Is sin like an addiction? Does it lead us to want to do more of the same sin? How do we or how should we use our free will each hour and each day to make that choice to become more like God as opposed to continuing to sin?
16. Look at the world around us. Would you estimate that sin is decreasing or increasing? Corruption, greed, sexual scandal, drug abuse, etc. fill our newspapers and news magazines continuously. Does that make it harder for Christians to keep themselves "unspotted from the world"? (James 1:27) How are Christians supposed to keep themselves separate from continual exposure to sin?
17. Read Romans 6:12-14. "Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God's grace." (GNB, compare *The Message*) Isn't the law like a mirror? It tells us when there is something wrong with our appearance. If your face is dirty, does it help to break the mirror? This text has been used repeatedly down through the years against Seventh-day Adventists who say that we should still observe all of the Ten Commandments including the Sabbath commandment. If the law is what defines sin, then doing away with the law would eliminate sin! In trying to understand Romans 6:14, it is useful to compare Romans 10:4 which says, "For Christ means the end of the struggle for righteousness-by-the-law for everyone who believes in him." (Philips) What does that mean? Doesn't it mean that we should give up all pretense at earning salvation by keeping the law? Does it mean that we need to learn to depend more fully on Jesus Christ not only for His grace but to change our lives.
18. If it is true that by beholding we become changed, how is that supposed to work in our day-by-day experience? Do we find time every day to contemplate the life of Christ? (*Desire of Ages* 83.4) If to the best of our ability we attempt to study the life of Christ, to think about His life, and to find ways to copy that life in our own lives, is that what is expected of us? But, so often in our attempts to do what is right, we find our plans derailed by the Devil. Is "the Devil made me do it" the story of the lives of many Christians? How can we stop

surrendering to him and surrender to the Holy Spirit instead? How can we get rid of all of our tendencies to evil? God will bring us back again and again to help us overcome.

19. Paul wants us to understand very clearly that we have only two choices. (Romans 6:15,16) We can either serve Satan and sin resulting in death, or we can serve God through obedience resulting in righteousness and eternal life. But, so many Christians' lives seem to wobble back and forth between sinning and doing good and then sinning and then doing good. So, who is master in that situation? Can we actually be freed from sin and become slaves of righteousness? (Romans 6:17) How do we eventually overcome sin? Do we really want to be slaves? Of what kind of master? What does it mean to be a slave of sin? What does it mean to be a slave of righteousness? Do we lose our tendencies to sin?
20. It is very significant to notice in this passage that obedience is related to correct doctrine or teaching. How does knowing the truth about God and His will for us through a study of Scripture help us to live the right kind of lives? Or, is doctrine relatively inconsequential, and all we really need is to learn to love? The final answer must be in accepting the idea that by beholding Jesus we become changed. We cannot change ourselves. God, the Holy Spirit, makes those changes in our lives if we give Him the opportunity. We need to form good habits by practicing living Christ-like lives. The law helps us to identify dangerous behaviors. We need to set aside some time every day to study the Bible and set the tone for the rest of our day. Don't we find time to watch TV or even movies?
21. In this life can we actually learn how to stop sinning? Can we learn to truly love in a Christ-like manner? What was Paul suggesting in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ"? What would happen if we did that?
22. Read Romans 6:19-23. Paul made one final attempt to review the fact that those who are slaves of sin do shameful things and end up with nothing more than with the wages of sin—death. By contrast, Christians are supposed to be freed from sin, slaves of God, dedicated to Him resulting in righteousness and eternal life. We cannot stand with our feet on both sides of the fence.
23. We need to conquer sin every day. We need to claim the help of Christ and the Holy Spirit. We need to fill our minds with the best possible things (Philippians 4:8) and crowd out the Devil and his ideas. Sin cannot be stamped out; it must be crowded out.
24. The fact that God has provided such unbounded grace and unlimited forgiveness does not mean that we should continually go back asking for more! All of that grace and forgiveness is supposed to help us learn to live lives that do not need forgiveness.
25. For those who believe in the great-controversy, trust-healing model of the plan of salvation, "*Faith* is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a Person well-known. The better we know Him, the better the relationship may be." (A. Graham Maxwell) Getting to know God like that and becoming truly His friend is the only solution to the problem of sin and the only road to salvation.

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