

Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans

Overcoming Sin

Lesson #7 for November 18, 2017

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

1. What is supposed to be the meaning of baptism? (Romans 6:1-4) Can you bury someone by sprinkling a little dirt on his head?

βaptizo [*baptizo* /bap·tid·zo/] verb. From a derivative of 911; *TDNT* 1:529; *TDNTA* 92; GK 966; 80 occurrences; AV translates as “baptize” 76 times, “wash” twice, “baptist” once, and “baptized + 2258” once. 1 to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk). 2 to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one’s self, bathe. 3 to overwhelm. Additional Information: Not to be confused with 911, bapto. The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be “dipped” (*bapto*) into boiling water and then “baptised” (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! *Bible Study Magazine*, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989.—Strong, J. (1996); *The Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*.* [Brackets and content in brackets are in the original.]

2. You do not have to argue with a Catholic friend as to how baptism was performed in the days of the apostles. It is admitted that it was by immersion. Here is the explanation from a Catholic New Testament done by two Jesuit scholars—James A. Kleist, SJ and Joseph L. Lilly, CM. The footnote for Romans 6:3 says:

St. Paul alludes to the manner in which baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive church by immersion. The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave. And the ascent is suggestive of a resurrection to a new life.—James A. Kleist SJ and Joseph L. Lilly CM, *The New Testament: Rendered from the Original Greek*,* The Bruce Publishing Company, 1954.

3. The experience of baptism is intended to be the outward public manifestation of a change that has already taken place in the life of the believer. It is no less of a change than dying, being buried, and then arising to a new life. This is best symbolized by the act of being “buried” into the water and then being brought up again to live a new life in close connection with Jesus Christ. But, we need to be honest about the great controversy. Such a change alerts the Devil to go to work even harder to defeat that person’s intentions! Things may seem to get a lot worse for those who declare themselves for Christ!
4. “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (*Romans 6:14*).

If works can't save us, why bother with them at all? Why not just keep on sinning?

Chapter 6 is Paul's answer to this important question. Paul here is dealing with what commonly is understood as "sanctification," the process by which we overcome sin and, more and more, reflect the character of Christ. The word *sanctification* appears only twice in Romans. It appears in Romans 6:19, 22 as the Greek word *hagiasmos*, which means "sanctification." In English, it appears in these two texts as the word *holiness*.

Does this mean that Paul has nothing to say about what commonly is understood by sanctification? Not at all.

In the Bible "to sanctify" means "to dedicate," usually to God. Thus, to be sanctified often is presented as a past completed act. For example, "all them which are sanctified" (*Acts 20:32*). The sanctified ones in this definition are the ones who are dedicated to God.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath, November 11.

5. If all of our sinning makes God look so good because He forgives, shouldn't 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.
6. 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"? (Romans 6:1-3) 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! In what sense do we die at baptism? What really changes? How is that an example for us? 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 special theological training to understand Romans. We don't know how that church got started. They seemed to be good Christians. Who were their leaders and teachers?
7. 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?
8. In the case of Christians, aren't 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?
9. What is sanctification? Is it 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.—Ellen G. White, *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. [Have you ever heard this discussed?]

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?—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 21, 1891**; *RH*,* June 4, 1895, par. 7; *The Faith I Live By** 116.1-2. See also *6SDABC** 1072.4; *9MR** 300.4; *MYP** 35.2.

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.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* October 3, 1899, par. 13. [What is your role?]

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.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* June 17, 1890, par. 14; *Selected Messages*,* Book 1, 317.2. [Bold type and text within brackets are added.]

Do these quotations suggest that sanctification involves a real change in us? 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.

10. 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? 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?
11. 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?
12. Would you consider the sins of saints “too great”? Or, just “too many”?
13. 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?

14. 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? Paul suggested that we start out "alive to sin" and "dead to God."
15. Through this process of dying and rising, of surrendering ourselves to Christ and not to sin, are we actually becoming a 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? (Matthew 5:16)
16. 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"? Is that all we need?
17. Can you tell whether sin is actually dethroned in your life? Can you tell whether sin is dethroned in the life of another person? Where did the natural desires come from that seem to give us such a bad time?

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** 47. Compare GC* 555.1.

18. 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? Do we have good angels and evil angels?
19. 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. "If it bleeds, it leads" is the motto in news these days? 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?
20. 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." (*Phillips**) 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 also to change our lives?

21. How are we supposed to understand Romans 6:14? Should it be put together with Romans 10:4 and Colossians 2:14 to prove that the keeping of the Ten Commandments is no longer necessary for Christians? That is what many of our Christian friends do. Are the Ten Commandments still binding?

Romans 6:14: For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (KJV*)

6:14: Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God's grace. (GNB*)

Romans 10:4: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (KJV*)

10:14: For Christ has brought the Law to an end, so that everyone who believes is put right with God. (GNB*)

Colossians 2:14: Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. (KJV*)

2:14: He cancelled the unfavorable record of our debts with its binding rules and did away with it completely by nailing it to the cross. (GNB*)

22. Think about the contrast between law and grace: **For example, law is demanding, exacting, exposing, accusing, unforgiving, provoking, irritating, unyielding, impersonal; and it leads to rebellion!** But, is that the fault of the law? No! The law is perfect. (Psalms 19:7) The trouble is that we are rebels; we are sinners. But, sinners that we are, when we see God as He is—infinately gracious—then we realize that **grace is giving, forgiving, covering, persuading, very personal; and it wins us to repentance and faith.** Who wouldn't want to be alive in the context of grace?

God placed man under law, as an indispensable condition of his very existence. He was a subject of the divine government, and there can be no government without law.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 49.1.

Then, “under Law” is the ideal place to be, but not for sinners because when we are under Law, what does it do to us? It makes us rebellious! What is it that wins us from rebelliousness to faith? Grace! It is because of the kind of people we are—we cannot survive under law—that we need to be under grace.

Since we are all sinners, the law provokes! The law discourages! But, grace encourages! The picture of a gracious God softens the heart of the rebel and wins him to repentance and faith. “The kindness of God leads you to repentance.” (Romans 2:4, NASB,* 1995)

23. Of course, our Christian friends do not want to get rid of nine of the Ten Commandments; they only want to get rid of the Sabbath commandment. But, there is no easy way to directly attack the Sabbath; so, they try to say we do not need to keep the law as a whole. But then, they rush to say that the other nine commandments are supported by the teachings of the New Testament. Isn't the Sabbath commandment also supported by the teachings of Christ and others in the New Testament?
24. 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 Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans* - #7 - page 5 of 6)

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.

25. Paul wanted 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?
26. 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 television? Or, even movies?
27. 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?
28. 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, and dedicated to Him, resulting in righteousness and eternal life. We cannot stand with our feet on both sides of the fence.
29. 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.**
30. 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.
31. 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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Last Modified: September 29, 2017

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