

TEACHING PLAN

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says about a particular topic.

In Romans 6, Paul began by asking a series of questions that all followers of Christ would do well to ponder. Having found Christ, can believers continue to live in the old ways of sin? Paul's answer, of course, was a strong no. The apostle then used the remainder of the chapter to identify and discuss reasons that Christians can no longer think and live in the old ways.

> **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 6:11-14.**

What does it mean to be "dead to sin" (v. 11)?

Knowing that, what do you think it means to be alive to God in Christ?

What is Paul's basis (and ours) for believing we will live with Christ?

The Christian life is certainly not all about death. Good Friday was followed by Easter. Life is the theme of our faith. Having died with Christ means we will also live with Him. Paul described a reality, not just a possibility. The foundation of Paul's certainty is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. That Jesus had been raised from the dead meant He had conquered death, the greatest and most fundamental of human fears. Having been raised from the dead means death no longer rules over Him. The former certainty of death no longer applies. The rules have been changed because of what Christ had done. Life is the theme.

What aspects of a Christ follower's identity does Paul mention in this passage? Do you see them as part of your identity? Why or why not?

What two things are believers to refuse to do (vv. 12-13)? How do you interpret both of these instructions?

God initiated our relationship with Him, and He provides everything we need (grace, redemption, sanctification, etc.) to remain close to Him. But when we're faced with sin, which pushes us away from God, we have to choose to deny sin and remain close to Him. He never leaves, but we're often tempted to wander, run away, and build walls between Him and us. Such is the remaining evidence of the sin we're saved from. As Paul described it in this passage, not giving in to sin is a constant battle.

How can your body be used by God for righteousness? What do you think this looks like?

Each of our actions is used as a weapon, either for God or against Him. Verse 13 warns us not to offer our bodies "to sin as weapons for unrighteousness." Once we receive new life in Christ and are freed from sin and evil, we're given a position of righteousness in the eyes of God, and part of our allegiance to Him includes fighting on His team. But when we sin, our lives act as weapons against His work in the world and in us.

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self-serving justifications and the despicable act is repeated and accepted. On the other hand, being slaves to righteousness results in sanctification. The process here is one of becoming increasingly dedicated to God.

How does a person move from being a slave to sin to being a slave to righteousness?

What activities would characterize a slave to righteousness today? For thought only: Which of these are present in your life?

In this passage Paul emphasized that Christians serve a new Master who liberated them from bondage to sin and empowered them to grow in faith. The evidence of spiritual growth in a person's life is the presence of fruit (v. 21).

What is Paul referring to when He talks about spiritual fruit? Read Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 for some examples.

Read John 15:1-4. What one action must believers do to produce fruit? How does this help you better understand the slavery analogy of Romans 6?

Jesus desires to live in us. We act in obedience when we allow Him to not only live in us, but also help us break free from the bondage of sin. With those chains broken, Jesus is now able to work through us. Through our obedience we display Him and His character to the world. Only by allowing Christ to live in us can we truly have an impact for the kingdom of God.

What is the end goal of the Christian life, according to verse 23?

Being a slave to God is not demeaning. In fact, it produces "fruit" of a completely different kind from the formerly shameful life. The ongoing harvest of fruit in the Christian life results in sanctification, the Bible term for being made into the image of Jesus, a life change that develops over a lifetime. The gift of eternal life becomes in itself a motivation and compels us to serve God and to embrace a lifestyle that leads to spiritual maturity.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Once we accept the facts of Jesus' death and resurrection by faith, we enter into a personal relationship with Him and He lives in us. Our personal relationship with Jesus provides incredible riches. Not only do we get to experience everlasting life in the presence of God, but we also are freed from sin's bondage and equipped to share the gospel and reflect Jesus' love and grace to the world.

Why do we often fear surrendering our lives completely to God, allowing Him to be our Master?

BRENTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH

ROMANS

WHO IS YOUR MASTER? (ROMANS 6:11-23)

SEPTEMBER 15, 2013

COMMENTARY



Brentwood Baptist
MAKING THE CONNECTION

1. DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD (ROM. 6:11-14)

6:11. In the simplest of terms, Paul says that the way we are to experience what Jesus experienced is to count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God. Count yourselves—so far, this has been something that God has done to us, and now Paul says we are to do it to ourselves. This is a matter of conforming our minds and renewing our minds (see Rom. 12:2) to the truth from God’s perspective. God’s words change things (see Mark 4:39) and people (see Mark 2:9-12). So when God says that the believer in Christ is dead to sin as a result of identification with the death and resurrection of Christ, that person has, in fact, been changed from being a person alive to sin to being a person dead to sin.

6:12. Based on what we have embraced as true about our newfound status regarding sin, Paul commands us not to let sin reign in our mortal body so that we obey its evil desires. We are to cut our ties to sin. This command, coupled with the command to “count yourselves” in the previous verse, proves without doubt that the old self that was crucified with Christ was not the sin nature. Rather, it was the previous sinful lifestyle. Paul warns the believer here to cut the ties to the previous sinful lifestyle. Christ submitted himself to the reign of sin when He died in order that “grace might reign through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21). How could a believer allow sin to reign and obey its evil desires when Christ has already submitted to the reign of sin in death?

6:13. Finally, we are to consecrate ourselves to God and offer the parts of our body to Him as instruments of righteousness. **Offer** brings the language of sacrifice and worship to mind quickly. The predominant use of this word in the New Testament is to refer to “bystanders”—i.e., those who are constantly there by the side as a backdrop. The sense seems to be to come and stand alongside God, offering what you have to Him as instruments of righteousness. We are to be at His disposal for the purposes of righteousness—body, mind, will, emotions, spirit. Paul is preparing to expound the whole concept of “offering” in verses 15-20 in terms of who one is enslaved to. It is all a matter of mastery—whether sin or righteousness is the master.

6:14. In conclusion, Paul reminds the Roman believers that the gospel they are hearing about is a gospel of grace. For those under the law, sin is the master, simply because the law has no power to enable one to resist sin. Law does an excellent job of pointing out failure, but it cannot empower one to keep from failing. Only one thing can: grace. Paul had already told his readers that grace will reign through righteousness to bring eternal life (Rom. 5:21), and the time for that in the individual’s life is once the identification with Christ’s death and resurrection has been made. Once the identification with Christ is made, it is the constant flow of grace into the life of the believer that “teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:11-12).

2. A SLAVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM. 6:15-18)

The second half of this chapter of Romans serves as an illustration of the first half. In verses 1-14 Paul teaches the principle that the gospel frees the believer from the power of sin when the believer reckons himself or herself dead to sin and raised to a new life of righteousness. As a result of that truth, Paul exhorts the believer in verse 13 to offer the parts of his or her body to God as instruments of righteousness. To illustrate that exhortation, Paul will use the analogy of slavery in verses 15-23.

COMMENTARY

6:15. This is the second time in this chapter that Paul uses the diatribe format to raise and answer the same question: Does not grace allow for the throwing off of all moral restraint? The pattern here is the same as in the earlier part of the chapter: proclaim grace (5:21); raise the objection (6:1); answer the objection (6:2-14). Here the pattern is: proclaim grace (6:14); raise the objection (6:15a); answer the objection (6:15-23). There is little difference between the two objections. As for his answers, Paul answers the first one theologically and the second one illustratively.

6:16. Before looking at the details of Paul's analogy, it is helpful to note in verse 19 his stated reason for using slavery as an analog: because you are weak in your natural selves. In essence, he is simply doing what any good teacher will do to aid understanding—finding a point of common ground with his students that will move a concept (death to sin) from the abstract realm to the concrete. Slavery would have been a good analogy to almost any audience Paul addressed in his day, as it was a widespread practice (cf. Paul's letter to Philemon). But slavery was particularly apropos to his audience in Rome because of the number of slaves in the city. Certainly some, if not many, of the believers in the Rome church were slaves. Therefore, Paul's analogy would immediately be understandable to them. They would either be slaves against their will (e.g., prisoners of war), or voluntary slaves (more on the order of household servants who indentured themselves to a household for the purposes of welfare or survival).

Interestingly, Paul will address both kinds of servants in this passage, though the "voluntary" servant is his primary focus. Based on what he wrote in Romans 5, everyone is born a "slave to sin"—without choice of will. His primary focus here, however, is the death to sin that allows the voluntary offering of oneself to another master for service.

Paul picks up a key word from verse 13—"offer." In verse 13, he told the Roman believers to offer themselves to God for purposes of righteousness. Implicit in the offering, he says here, is slavery. Regardless of who you offer yourself to, you become a slave of the one you serve. If I offer myself to God, but obey sin, then I am a slave of sin, not of God. So in answering the objection raised in verse 15—"shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?"—the answer is "no" because you will become the slave of sin, not of God, if you do. And that leads to death. If you are a Christian, and continue to sin because you know God's grace will forgive you, you have in reality become a slave to sin. On the other hand, obeying God means you are a slave to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

6:17. Paul commends the Roman believers for, in practice, fulfilling what he has been explaining to them in principle: obeying the form of teaching to which they were entrusted. Two things are worthy of note here. One is the form of teaching. Instead of written copies of Scripture, oral tradition was the means for transferring history and teaching from one place, or one generation, to another. Whatever the content of the teaching was that the Rome believers had received, it was apostolic and Paul was pleased with their adherence to it. They perhaps did not know, until they had the benefit of hearing the words of Romans 6, that they had been slaves to sin—but they had been.

6:18. Not only were the Roman believers entrusted to the word of God; they were made slaves to righteousness. When they offered themselves to Christ (v. 15), they became the slaves of Christ, and to the righteousness which is the opposite of the sin to which they had died.

