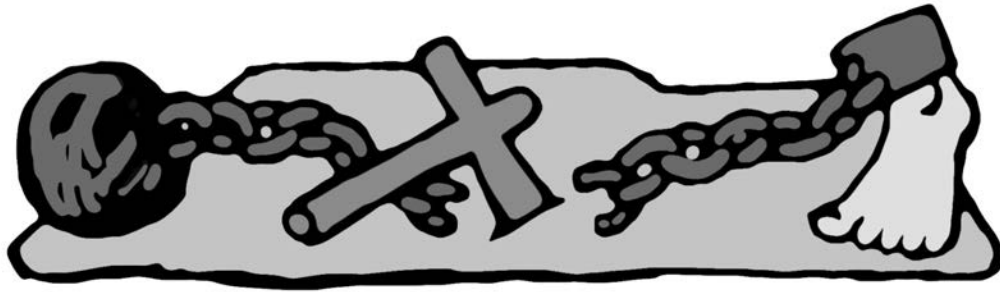


Victory Over Sin



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 6; 1 John 1:8–2:1.

MEMORY VERSE: “[Do not] let sin keep [continue] ruling your lives. You are ruled by God’s kindness and not by the Law” (Romans 6:14, CEV).

GOOD WORKS cannot save us. So, why should we continue doing good works? Why not just keep sinning instead?

Romans 6 is Paul’s answer to these important questions. Here, Paul explains the topic of “sanctification.” Sanctification is the act of our moving forward in victory over sin. It also includes showing more and more of Jesus’ love in our lives. “Sanctification” comes from the Greek word *hagiasmos*. *Hagiasmos* appears only in two verses in Romans. In English Bibles, *hagiasmos* can be written as “become holy” (Romans 6:19, NlrV) and “holy living” (Romans 6:22, NlrV).

The Bible often uses the verb “to sanctify.” To sanctify means “to separate something for a special work,” almost always for God. And “to be sanctified” often is shown as something that already happened in the past (Acts 20:32). This meaning of “to separate” does not mean that sanctification is not the work of a lifetime or that the Bible is saying that our being made holy is not important. In fact, the Bible teaches that our being made holy is both things. But remember that the Bible almost always uses other words to describe sanctification.

This week, we will look more at the topic of being saved by faith. We will look at God’s promise to us of victory over sin. God gives this promise to everyone saved by Jesus.



What does it mean for us to become holy? It means God chose us to do a special work for Him.

“WHERE SIN SPREAD” (Romans 5:20, NLV)

In Romans 5:20, Paul says: “But where sin spread, God’s loving-favor spread all the more” (NLV). Sin is everywhere. The ruin that has happened because of sin is awful. We might feel that our sins are too evil to forgive. But Paul says God’s saving power is enough to defeat sin. That should give us hope! In Romans 5:21, Paul shows that sin leads to death. But God’s saving power defeats death. In Jesus, God gives us everlasting life.

In Romans 6:1, Paul asks a question to prove his idea about God’s saving power. How does Paul answer this question? Why does he ask this question in the first place? What wrong thinking is Paul trying to correct?

In Romans 6, Paul argues that people who are made right with God should not sin. Why? These people have died to sin. Then Paul uses the word picture of baptism to explain his meaning.

Baptism is a word picture for burial. What is buried when we are baptized? The answer is: “our old life, our old sinful self” (Romans 6:6, NLV). That is, the body ruled by sin. And so, “the power of sin” (Romans 6:6, NLV) is destroyed. We no longer serve sin. In Romans 6, Paul says that sin is the same as a person who rules over his servants. But when God destroys the “power of sin,” then sin’s grip on the body is broken. Those who rise from the “grave of water” no longer serve sin. They live new lives.

Jesus died one time, and for all people. But now He is alive forever. In the same way, baptized Christians die to sin. They never again should come under sin’s control. Of course, any baptized Christian knows that sin does not disappear from our lives when we come out of the water. *After all, our not being ruled by sin is **not** the same as saying we longer need to fight against sin.*

“From Romans 6, we clearly see what the words of Paul mean. Paul writes: (1) ‘we have died with Christ’ and (2) ‘we will live with Him also’ (Romans 6:8, NLV). These ideas show we do not need to give in to sin. But sin and wanting to give into it will be part of us (Galatians 5:17) until the body is turned to ashes and a new [holy] body is raised up at the Second Coming that is free from the damage of sin.”—Martin Luther, *Commentary [Explanation] on Romans*, page 100, adapted.



Sin spread. But where sin spread, God’s spread His loving-favor even more.

WHEN SIN RULES (Romans 6:12)



Paul warns us that sin tries to rule over us as a king.

Paul warns us not to let sin “have power over” (NLV) our bodies or to let sin “rule” (NlrV) them. These wordings show that “sin” is the same as a king. The Greek word written as “have power over” and “rule” means “to be a king” or “to act as a king does.” Paul is saying that sin is all too willing to rule as a king over our bodies and control everything we do.

What is Paul telling us by saying, “Do not let sin have power” (NLV)? Paul means that people who are made right with God can choose to not allow sin to rule as king in their lives. The name of this power to choose what we want is our will.

“You need to understand the true power of the will. The will is the power of choice in every human. Everything depends on the right action of the will. God gives humans the power to choose. This power is ours to use. You cannot change your heart. You cannot in your own power give to God its love. But you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will. He will help you choose to do the good things He wants you to do. Then, your whole life will be brought under the control of Jesus’ Spirit. Jesus will be the center of your feelings and love. Your thoughts will be in perfect agreement with Jesus’ thoughts.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 47, adapted.

The Greek word in Romans 6:12 that is written as “body” (NLV) or “desires” (NlrV) means “to want or wish for.” These desires can be for good things or bad things. What happens when sin rules over us? Then sin will make us want bad things. Evil desires can be strong. We cannot turn away from evil desires or fight against them in our own power. Sin can be a mean king. Sin is a ruler who never is happy. Sin always comes back to us for more. Faith in Jesus’ promises for victory will help us defeat this hard master who shows us no mercy.

The word “so” (NLV; NlrV) at the beginning of Romans 6:12 is important. It points back to what already has been said. Here, “so” points back to Romans 6:10, 11 and to the people who were baptized. These people now have new lives because of Jesus. These people live for God. And “so,” they cannot serve sin anymore.

Free will is the power to choose right or wrong, good or evil, Jesus or sin. How are you using this gift?

LIVING BY GOD’S LOVING-FAVOR (Romans 6:14)

What does Romans 6:14 mean? Is this verse saying that the Ten Commandments no longer have power to rule over our lives? If no, then why must we continue to obey God’s laws?

Romans 6:14 is one of the most important truths in the book of Romans. This verse often is used by others to tell us we no longer need to keep the Sabbath holy.

But that idea clearly is not what the verse means. Destroying the Ten Commandments would not destroy sin. As we have said before, the Ten Commandments show us what sin is! Everything up to this point in Romans teaches us that sin is real. So, why would Paul now start saying that the Ten Commandments were thrown out?

Clearly, Paul is not doing that. Instead, Paul says that the person “living by the Law” (Romans 6:14, NLV) will be ruled by sin. Paul uses this wording to mean the person who is following the Jewish plan of worship that offered animals to God in the sinner’s place. This plan of worship also included many human-made rules. But the person who lives by God’s loving-favor will have victory over sin. God writes His law on this person’s heart. And God’s Spirit guides this person’s steps in life.

How is sin defeated by the people who live by the power of grace? Grace is God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. Christians living by the power of grace have victory because (1) they have accepted Jesus as the One who takes away their sins. (2) They have been made right with God. (3) They have been baptized into Jesus’ “death.” The old life of these Christians is destroyed. And they rise from the water to live a new life. Doing these three things will knock sin off the “throne” of our lives.

What happens when someone who lives by “God’s loving-favor” (Romans 6:14, NLV) disobeys God’s law? This person will be found guilty. This person will face death until God makes him or her right again by His loving-favor. When we live by “God’s loving-favor,” then we are free. God removes our guilt and punishment. Then we are free to live a “new life” (Romans 6:5, NLV). This life shows “we are dead to sin” (Romans 6:2, NLV). Because we are dead, we are no longer sin’s slaves.

How have you experienced a new life in Jesus?



Here are three things you can do that will “knock” sin off the throne of your heart: accept Jesus, allow God to make you right with Himself, and get baptized.

SIN OR OBEDIENCE? (Romans 6:16, 17)

In Romans 6:16, Paul shows we can choose the master we will serve. But Paul makes it clear that there are only two choices. You can obey God, or you can be a slave to sin. We can see the clear difference between these two powers. What does this difference teach us?

Again, Paul comes back to his topic about the new life we live by faith. Paul reminds us that faith does not give us the freedom to sin. Faith makes victory over sin possible for us. In fact, it is only by faith that we can have the victory that God promises us.

Paul also comes back to the word picture of sin as a mean master. A master must be obeyed. As we learned, a person must choose to serve one of two masters. He or she can serve sin. But serving sin leads to death. Or a person can choose to serve God. Our serving God leads to our being made right with Him and to everlasting life. Paul makes it clear that we must choose between one side or the other—sin or God. In the end, we must choose either everlasting life or everlasting death.



Serving sin leads us to death.

Read Romans 6:17. How does this verse explain more fully what Paul says in Romans 6:16?

Notice that verse 17 connects the idea of obedience to correct “teaching” (NLV). The Roman Christians learned the important rules of the Christian faith. And they obeyed them. So, for Paul, the correct teaching helped the Romans to become “right with God” (Romans 6:18, NLV). But correct teaching can help us only when we “obey [it] with all [our] heart” (Romans 6:17, NLV). Some people say the right teaching is not important as long as we show love. But things are not as easy as that. In an earlier lesson, we learned how worried Paul was about false teaching in the Galatian churches. False teaching led believers away from God. So, we need to be very careful not to think that our beliefs are not important.

What if we sin after we are baptized? Does our sin mean we are not truly saved? How does 1 John 1:8–2:1 help us understand what it means to follow Jesus, even after we sin at times?

FREE FROM SIN (Galatians 6:19–23)

Read Romans 6:19–23. What important ideas do these verses teach us? How can you make these important truths a real part of your life? What does Paul say we risk losing because of our bad choices?

Paul’s words in Romans 6:19–23 show that he fully understands we are ruined by sin. He knows that “human thinking is weak” (Romans 6:19, NIV) because of sin. Paul knows humans can do a lot of evil when they are left on their own. So again, Paul reminds us of our power to choose. We have the power to choose a new master. That new master is Jesus. He will give us the power to live holy lives.

Now let us jump ahead to Romans 6:23. People often use this verse to show that the penalty for sin is death. The Bible teaches us that sin is doing anything that breaks God’s law. But sin is more than something that is punished by death. We should see sin as Paul described it earlier in Romans 6. You will remember that Paul said sin is a master controlling his servants. What is more, sin fools his servants by giving them an awful paycheck for the work they did serving sin. What pay do you receive when you sin? Paul tells us, “The pay you get is death” (Romans 6:23, NIV).

Paul points our attention to the fact that serving one master means being freed from serving the other. Again, we see a clear choice must be made: we must serve one master or the other. We cannot serve both. But our being free from the power of sin does not mean we are somehow free of sin forever. Our being free does not mean we do not fight long and hard against sin or, at times, even fall. Our being free does not mean we no longer need to trust in God’s promises to give us victory over sin. Instead, our being free from sin means that sin no longer controls us.

Romans 6 is a powerful command to stop serving sin. Sin is a mean king. Sin offers us nothing but death as a paycheck for all the evil we do. People who are wise will want to be freed from this unkind ruler. Wise people will choose to serve God instead. People who serve God will do what is right and worthy of praise. People who serve God do not do good things to be saved. No, they do what is right because they are saved. When we try to save ourselves by good works we fail to understand the meaning of the Good News and why we need Jesus.



Sin fools his servants by giving them an awful paycheck for work done in his service.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Jesus did not sin even in His thoughts. We can have the same victory when we are joined fully to God the way Jesus the Man was. The Holy Spirit lived within Jesus and got Him ready for battle with sin. In the same way, we must stay joined to Jesus by faith. Then we will be made right with God. Sin will have no more power over us. Jesus came to make a way for us to be made right with God and to become holy. Now God reaches for the hand we hold out to Him in faith. God guides our hand to lay hold of Jesus’ life. In this way, we may live the good and holy life that Jesus lived.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 123, adapted.

“You say you are a Christian. But saying you are a Christian is not enough. Your life must show faith and good works. No man can serve two masters. The children of Satan are Satan’s servants. They give themselves to Satan’s service. Satan’s children cannot be God’s servants unless they reject the devil and all his evil works. It is not safe for servants of the King of heaven [God the Father] to take part in the fun and games that Satan’s servants enjoy. It is often said that such amusements are harmless. But God gave holy truths to His people. These truths separate God’s people from people who do not love or serve God. These same truths make God’s people holy. Seventh-day Adventists should live out these truths of their faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Special Messages] for the Church*, book 1, page 404, adapted.



“The Holy Spirit lived within Jesus and made Him ready for the fight against sin.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God gave us many wonderful promises for victory over sin. But we know that we are wicked sinners. We know how evil our hearts can be. Do our evil hearts make God’s promises useless? Explain.
- ② What changes have you experienced in your life now that you have a new life in Jesus?
- ③ We always must remember that (1) we are saved because of the things Jesus alone did for us. But what danger could we be in if we forget that (2) Jesus also helps us to become holy as He is holy? Why do we need to understand and give the same attention to both of these parts of being made right with God?