

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Overcoming Sin – 11-17 November 2017

Christ have redeemed us from sin by His grace, and He seeks to abide in our hearts. Thus Paul reminds us, “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). Read the sixth chapter of Romans for our study this week.

Sunday: Where Sin Abounds – “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” You may recall a similar question in the third chapter, verses 5, 7, and the answer in verses 6, 8. It is another form of the question, “Shall we do evil, that good may come?” The answer must be apparent to all, ‘Not by any means,’ for this is really the force of the words rendered, “God forbid.” Although grace super-abounds where sin abounds, that is no reason why we should wilfully pile up the sin. That would be most emphatically to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).

“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” It is simply an impossibility, and there is really no question as to whether or not we may do it; for it is certain that if we are dead to sin, we cannot live in it at the same time. A man cannot at the same time be both dead and alive. Now the previous chapter has emphasized the fact that we are reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and are saved by His life. Reconciliation to God means being freed from sin; so that being “saved by His life” means that we have “passed from death unto life.” The life of sin that was enmity has been ended in the life of Christ. We are “baptized into Jesus Christ”, put on Christ. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 8:27). “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). It is in death that we come into contact with Christ. He touches us at the lowest possible point. That is what makes our salvation so sure, and so sure for every one without any exception. Sin and sickness are tributary to death. Death is the sum of all the evils possible to man. It is the lowest depth, and it is there that Christ comes in contact with us. We become united to Him in death. As the greater includes the lesser, the fact that Christ humbled Himself even to death proves that there is no ill possible to us that He does not take upon Himself.

“Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more.” “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.” It was impossible for the grave to hold Christ (Acts 2:24). Therefore, just as surely as we are baptized into the death of Christ, so surely shall we be raised from a life of sin to a life of righteousness in Him. “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” As Christ was crucified, being baptized into His death means that we are crucified with Him. “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). Crucified, yet living, because crucified with Christ, and yet He lives. He said, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). How can we live a new life? We have no power at all of ourselves; but Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; and in His prayer to the Father He said, “The glory which thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). The power that raised Jesus from the dead is exercised to raise us from the death of sin. If we are willing to allow the old life to be crucified, we may be sure of the new life.

Monday: When Sin Reigns – In the fifth chapter we learned that the reign of sin is the reign of death, because death comes by sin. But we also learned that the gift of life is offered to all, so that whoever has Christ has life. Instead of death reigning over such, they themselves “shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.” The exhortation, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,” is hence equal to an exhortation to abide in Christ, or to keep His life. We gained the life by faith, and so we are to keep it. Whose servant are you? “To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey.” If we yield ourselves to sin, then we are the servants of sin, for “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). If we yield ourselves to righteousness, we are the servants of righteousness. “No man can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). We cannot serve both sin and righteousness. No man can at once be both a sinner and a righteous man. Either sin or righteousness must rule.

We have in the sixth of Romans two terms to describe people: servants and instruments. It takes both to illustrate our relation to sin and righteousness. Sin and righteousness are rulers. We are but instruments in their hands. The kind of work a given instrument will do depends entirely upon the one who uses it. For instance, here is a good pen; what kind of work will it do? It will do good work if it is in the hands of a skilful penman, but in the hands of a bungler its work will be poor. Or, in the hands of a good man it will write only what is good; but in the hands of a bad man it will exhibit that which is evil. But man is not a mere tool. No, not by any means. There is this difference between men and ordinary instruments: the latter have no choice as to who shall use

them, while the former have full choice as to whom they will serve. They must yield themselves, not once only, but all the time. If they yield to sin, they will commit sin. If they yield to God, to be instruments in His hands, they can do nothing else but good so long as they are yielded to Him.

In the nineteenth verse we are exhorted to yield ourselves as servants of righteousness just as we have yielded ourselves servants to sin. This being done, we are assured in the following verses that just as surely as the fruit was sin and death when we were yielded to sin, so surely will the fruit be holiness when we yield ourselves servants to righteousness. Yea, even more sure; for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Righteousness is stronger than sin, even as God is stronger than Satan. God can pluck out of the hands of Satan the soul that cries out for deliverance; but none can pluck God's children out of His hand.

Tuesday: Not under the Law but Under Grace – Many people are often fond of quoting the expression "not under the law", thinking that it forever absolves them from any observance of the law of God. Strange to say, this expression is used as a cover only for non-observance of the fourth commandment. Repeat the fourth commandment to a man who objects to keeping the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day, and he will say, 'we are not under the law.' Yet that same man will quote the third commandment to a man whom he hears swearing, or the first and second against the heathen, and will acknowledge the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments. Thus it appears that men do not really believe that the statement that we are not under the law means that we are at liberty to break the law of God. It behooves us to study the whole verse, and other parts.

What about grace? "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." We know that those who are not under the law are the ones who are keeping the law. Those therefore who are under the law are the ones who are breaking it, and who are therefore under its condemnation. But "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Grace delivers from sin. Distressed by the threatenings of the law which we have broken, we flee for refuge to Christ, who is "full of grace and truth." There we find freedom from sin. In Him we not only find grace to cover all our sin, but we find the righteousness of the law, for He is full of truth, and the law is the truth (Psalms 119:142). Grace "reigns" through righteousness or obedience to the law, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Wednesday: Sin or Obedience – What Is Sin? "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). This is definite; let us hold it well in our minds. What Is Righteousness? Righteousness is the opposite of sin, because "all unrighteousness is sin." But "sin is the transgression of the law." Therefore righteousness is the keeping of the law. When we are exhorted to yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, it is the same as telling us to yield ourselves to obedience to the law. Sin has no dominion over those who yield themselves servants to righteousness, or to obedience to the law; because sin is the transgression of the law. "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." That is to say, transgression of the law has no place in them who are not under the law. Then those who are not under the law are those who obey the law. Those who break it, are under it. Nothing can be plainer. In Romans two we learned that those who reject the goodness of God are treasuring up to themselves wrath. Now wrath comes only on the children of disobedience (Ephesians 5:6). Those who sin are laying up wages for themselves. "The wages of sin is death." Sin has death in it, therefore "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." There can be no other end to sin than death, because sin is the absence of righteousness, and righteousness is the life and character of God. Persistent and final choice of sin is therefore choice of complete separation from the life of God, and so from all life, since He is the only source of life. Christ, who is the wisdom of God, says, "All they that hate Me love death" (Proverbs 8:36). Whoever suffer death at last will be only those who have worked for it.

Thursday: Free From Sin – To be free from death is to have eternal life as a gift of God. We do not work for eternal life. No works that we could do would make the smallest part of payment towards it. It is the gift of God. True, it comes only through righteousness, but righteousness is a gift. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained (prepared) that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalms 31:19). When people sin, God gives them only what they have bargained for. If any yield to God as servants of righteousness, He provides the righteousness for them, and gives them eternal life with it, all as a free gift.