



**WEEK OF MARCH 6, 2022**

**LESSON AIM:** Pursue holiness as part  
of your new life in Christ.

**UNIT:** Romans (Part 3)

**THEME:** Holy

**LESSON TEXT:** Romans 6:1-4, 11-23

**SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT:** Acts 22:6-16; 26:19-23; 2 Corinthians 5:11-17;  
Ephesians 5:1-10

## RAISED TO A HOLY LIFE

BY MARK SCOTT

Holiness is hard to come by today. It almost seems to be a slippery virtue in our culture. But second to love, holiness is probably God's greatest quality. It is God's "otherliness," setting him apart from his creation. Since creation presently is stained with sin, God's holiness is partially viewed as moral excellence. When applied to his people, holiness has to do with being dedicated solely to God. The theological term for it, *sanctification*, is the major theme of Romans 6–8.

In the immediate context, Paul championed grace as the answer to sin. The text assumes the genre of a diatribe, and so one can almost hear the wheels turning in the minds of some in the Roman church: *Let's see, if grace increases where there is sin, then the way to get more grace . . . is to sin more*. Paul battled against such thinking in Romans 6.

**Baptism Declares Death***Romans 6:1-4, 11-14*

Paul took the believers back to their baptism to make his point. There was a day when Christians said no to sin, when they died to sin's effect on their lives, and when they committed to live for God. On that day, they put their faith in Christ, confessed his name, and followed their faith in baptism. The act of baptism declared that grace won and sin lost. To continue to live a life of sin is to misunderstand grace. Paul said no to this in the strongest way (*By no means!*—notice the same phrase in 6:15).

*Baptism* is a death. The word itself has the smell of death all over it. Jesus was baptized in water (Matthew 3:13-17), but he was also baptized (buried) in Joseph's tomb (John 19:41-42). If one is dead, it is hard to sin. Our baptism unites us with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, it could hardly be a "work" for it is something that someone else does to someone. When the evangelist Juan Carlos Ortiz baptizes someone, he says, "I kill you in the name of Jesus."

Since believers do not physically die in their baptism, they must *count* (consider or reckon) *themselves dead*. This allows them to also count themselves *alive to God* as they live this *new life* (a qualitatively new life). Sin cannot *reign*

(be king) in their lives. That would make their body an *instrument (weapon) of wickedness* instead of an *instrument of righteousness*. Christians are to give no breath to their old dead lives. They are to live for the holy God who brought life to them. Grace, not law, now controls them, and their baptism declared this change.

**Allegiance Declares Slavery***Romans 6:15-23*

Paul shifted from the metaphor of death (baptism) to the metaphor of slavery in this part of the chapter. The word *slaves* appears 10 times in this section. It is difficult to think of slavery in the United States and not think of the Civil War (1861–65) or (in modern times) the debate about critical race theory. But slavery was different in Paul's day. Sometimes even prominent people would sell themselves into slavery to lean into others for their care. So, the metaphor is appropriate to Paul's argument since one could choose slavery as a means of showing allegiance.

We become slaves to whatever we embrace. Giving in to addictions makes us a slave to those addictions. It has to do with the illusion of freedom. Our freedom depends on the object of our choice. Following Paul's argument and metaphor (*an example from everyday life*), to choose sin is to choose a union with death. Choosing sin makes people *slaves to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness*. In fact, choosing sin proved that they were free from righteousness. The *benefit* (fruit) of those things was shame and death.

But, to choose obedience is to choose righteousness and holiness. Paul acknowledged that the Roman Christians had chosen well. They chose to follow the *pattern of teaching* that had been given them in the gospel. Due to the nature of their choice, the believers experienced freedom and had *become slaves of God*. The benefits (fruits) are *holiness* and *eternal life*. Paul summed it up in the last verse. The *wages* (money to be used to purchase food) *of sin is death*. In great contrast though is the *gift* (charisma) from God, which is *eternal life in Christ Jesus*. When our highest allegiance is to be a slave of Christ, because of who he is and what he brings, we experience true freedom. ■

## DON'T FORGET YOUR BAPTISM

BY DAVID FAUST

When I was 9 years old, at an evening service at our church on Good Friday, I walked forward during the invitation while the congregation sang,

Coming home, coming home,  
Nevermore to roam;  
Open now Thine arms of love,  
Lord, I'm coming home.

The preacher, Paul Hakes, asked me to confess my faith by saying, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Soon I stood in the baptistery, shivering not because of the cold but because I was afraid of water. (For those of us who don't know how to swim, immersion is an extra test of faith!)

I came up from the water coughing and sputtering while the congregation sang, "O happy day, that fixed my choice on Thee, my Savior and my God!"

I don't know if anyone else besides the Lord remembers what happened that night, but for me it remains a precious memory.

Colossians 2:12 says we were buried with Christ in baptism and raised with him through faith. Baptism isn't for infants. It's for those who trust in Christ and repent of personal sin. We can't remember what happened when we were babies. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter concluded his sermon by telling his listeners, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

### Why Should We Remember Being Baptized?

**It helps us appreciate Jesus' sacrifice.** Like drowning swimmers who need a lifeguard, we can't save ourselves. Christ did the saving work, pouring out his precious blood and bearing our sins on the cross (1 Peter 1:19; 2:24). Our memories of being

baptized—and seeing new believers baptized today—should move us to thank God for his grace.

**It reminds us of our commitment to Christ.** In baptism we confirmed our decision to follow Jesus Christ and be his disciples. We united with him in his death, burial, and resurrection, accepting his free gift of eternal life and submitting to his authority as Lord (Matthew 28:18-19).

**It assures us that we belong to Christ's church.** "For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). There's a humbling commonality about baptism. It puts us all on the same footing. Whether you're the treasurer of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39) or a 9-year-old kid from an Ohio farm, you come up sopping wet and go on your way rejoicing as a member of the body of Christ.

**It motivates us to holy living.** Romans 6 compels us to ask, *Why would we choose to sin against God after he has been so gracious to us?* Our goal should be to honor God, not to live in rebellion and disobedience.

And besides all this, **looking back at our baptism reinforces our hope for what is ahead.** "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:5).

If you were baptized in the past, praise God for his saving grace and remember your baptism with joy and gratitude. If you haven't been baptized, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

**Personal Challenge:** What do you remember about your own baptism? In your small group, tell about your memories of when, where, and why you were baptized into Christ, and what baptism means to you today. ■

## DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. What circumstances did you face last week that required God's grace or strength?
2. Over the last week, to whom did you take good news?

Ask two people to read aloud **Romans 6:1-4, 11-23** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to restate the passage in their own words.

3. What verse or phrase from this passage might cause you to shout "Hallelujah!"?
4. Let's dig deeper into the passage:
  - What words or phrases in this passage describe or demonstrate the act and meaning of baptism (immersion)?
  - What words or phrases are connected to living a new life (v. 4)?
  - If you have been immersed in Christ, what do you remember about it?
  - How did your baptism demonstrate your own death, burial, and resurrection to a new life?
  - How does being "under grace" affect how you live each day?
  - What does the contrast between being slaves to sin/impurity and being slaves to obedience/righteousness teach you about how to live a holy life?
  - What do you learn about being free from sin?
  - What do you learn about God's grace?
5. What do you learn about God's nature from this passage?
6. What do you learn about human nature?
7. In verse 17, Paul talks of how "you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance." In Scripture, the heart is the core of who you are. It is the center of your will, attitudes, and intentions. With this in mind, how does one obey from the heart?
8. How could you use this passage to teach a nonbeliever or new believer about the nature of God's forgiveness and grace?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What do you need most to live in obedience to God?

**For Next Week:** Read and reflect on **Romans 7:7-12, 21-25**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■