

- **\*READ Romans 6:1,2\*** There is much that has been said about the letter that Paul wrote to the Romans. Many people have said that it is a theological masterpiece, to which I would agree. Others have referred to it as one of the most difficult writings to understand outside of Revelation or Hebrews. I would also tend to agree on that sentiment. However, I don't think it is complicated because the Lord wasn't able to inspire Paul to write it in an understandable way. Instead, I believe much of the difficulty stems from the fact that we are so far removed from the worldview of a first century Jew or Gentile that we have a hard time wrapping our minds around the arguments that Paul is making in regards to the **"obedience of faith"** that is mentioned both at the beginning (1:5) and end (16:26) of the letter. With this in mind, we're going to begin this evening by taking a very simple and logical look at the first five chapters of Romans to see if we can figure out exactly what Paul believes and is teaching concerning soteriology (the study of salvation or preservation).

### Paul's Soteriological Teaching In Romans 1-5

#### A. Romans 1-3 — Salvation is necessary because all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory.

1. **Chapter 1** begins by establishing the fact that the Gentile world is guilty of sinning against the natural laws of God. *"For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them."* (1:18,19)
2. **Chapter 2** follows up by stating that the Jews were just as guilty as the Gentiles because they too had sinned. *"You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written: The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."* (2:23,24)
3. **Chapter 3** then confirms that all people who sin have rejected and fallen short of the glory of God. All of those of the world who reject God are described in a graphic way in 3:9-18. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles have a reason to boast. It is God alone who is willing to justify both Jews and Gentiles through faith.

#### B. Romans 4 — Abraham serves as our example of one who was saved through trust and faith in God.

1. The Jews would be well familiar with the story of Abraham, and the Apostle Paul works upon that knowledge by bringing up Abraham as someone who lived by faith and was approved by God because of the great faith that he displayed in his life.
2. Though Abraham was seen as the legendary father of the Jews, Paul wants both the Jews and Gentiles to understand that Abraham was able to stand righteous before God even before the Law was a reality. *"For the promise to Abraham or to His descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith."* (3:13)
3. Paul concludes this section by making the connection between Abraham's faith and belief and the faith and belief of those who would put such in Jesus. *"Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification."* (4:22-25)

#### C. Romans 5 — Through faith in Jesus Christ we have the opportunity to access God's peace and grace, to be reconciled back to Him, and to now live in hope.

1. The fulfillment of Abraham's faith many thousands of years ago is found in those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. It is through faith in Jesus that we are able to find peace and grace in God. (5:1,2)
  2. It was through the mercy of God that Jesus came and died for the ungodly. Just as sin and death were introduced through Adam, Jesus has come and introduced grace and life. (5:6-17)
- It is at this point that there are some very evident components of salvation. Faith obviously seems to be involved in order to receive grace, mercy, and peace. But at what point is faith acted upon? When

is faith shown as being real and legitimate? Abraham believed God through his faithful actions and it was credited to him as righteousness. How is our belief and faith in God displayed? I am convinced that chapter 6 of Romans gives us the answer as to the point and time when belief and faith are acted upon and someone is credited as righteous before God. Romans 6, baptism, and Paul's tying in of this subject with the broader context of this letter will be our considerations for the remainder of this evening.

## **What does Paul teach us about baptism & its place in the salvation process?**

### **I. At the point of baptism, we are considered dead in regards to sin. (vv.1,2,12-14)**

1. The three questions that are posed at the beginning of the chapter help us to understand that this next section on the subject of baptism is tied back into what we have seen in the previous chapters. The very preceding verses are focusing on the completely necessary work of Jesus in introducing justification and righteousness which leads to eternal life. **(5:18,19)** Paul's main point in the final two verses seems to be on the all sufficient nature of God's grace through Jesus. No matter how multiplied the trespasses were through the law, God's grace multiplied all the more. Nothing could stop God from giving life to those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. **(5:20,21)**
2. Therefore, Paul asks these questions that we find in the very beginning of **Romans 6:1,2**, *"What should we say then? Should we continue in sin so that grace may multiply? Absolutely not! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"* It seems very evident to me that Paul is working on the assumption that they know that they have already done something that has caused them to live in a way that sin is no longer a part of their lives. This seems to be why Paul states that they were people who had died to sin. They were a people that were to no longer live in active rebellion to God by committing sinful actions that go against His will.
3. This is abundantly evident if we skip a little down the chapter to **vv.12-14**. In these verses, Paul is very clear that people who have been baptized are people who are no longer to allow sin to have a place within their lives. None of the parts of our bodies are to any longer be used *"to sin as weapons of unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace."* That is exactly what Paul is trying to get across in **5:20,21**. They no longer had to live under the guilt of sin accrued through the Law, but they could not live in grace and life because they had died to sin. The question then becomes, how does one die to sin? Thankfully, I believe **vv.3-11** answer this question for us.

### **II. At the point of baptism, we are buried in the likeness of Jesus and raised to newness of life with Jesus. (vv.3-11)**

1. Paul goes on to equate, beginning in **v.3**, our burial in the water to the death and burial that Jesus experienced when He was killed laid in the grave following. Five times within these few verses there are allusions to our uniting with Jesus in His death through our own death and burial.
  - a) *"Or are you unaware that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"* **(6:3)**
  - b) *"Therefore, we were buried with Him by baptism into death..."* **(6:4)**
  - c) *"For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death..."* **(6:5)**
  - d) *"For we know that our old self was crucified with Him..."* **(6:6)**
  - e) *"Now if we died with Christ..."* **(6:8)**
2. These verses clearly show us that it is at the point of baptism that we die as the sinful person who has lived apart from Christ and is worthy of death. But upon putting our faith in Jesus and the reconciliation that He has provided through His atoning sacrifice, we are able to repent of our sins and make the decision to start a new life with a clean slate. Our old selves die and are buried in the water, and Paul also emphasizes the new life that comes at the point of our raising up out of the water.

- a) *"Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in newness of life.**" (6:4)*
  - b) *"For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, **we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection.**" (6:5)*
  - c) *"Now if we died with Christ, **we believe that we will also live with him,** because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over him." (6:8,9)*
  - d) *"So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and **alive to God in Christ Jesus.**" (6:11)*
3. This life that we are able to live through putting our faith in Jesus and being baptized is the life that Paul wrote about back in **Romans 5:18-21**. *"Through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone...so also grace will reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus our Lord."* Our baptism is to be done in the exact likeness of what Jesus experienced. *"He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24)* These words of Peter only further confirm the salvation process that Paul is clearly laying out in this text, but as we move on we will see that our life moving forward is also impacted by our baptism.

### **III. At the point of baptism, we are no longer enslaved to sin for we are now enslaved to God in righteousness. (vv.15-20)**

1. We, again, see this idea being put forth by Paul that was first seen in the first few verse, *"What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?"* is Paul's rhetorical question, and *"Absolutely not!"* is Paul's emphatic response to this rhetorical question. Why the emphatic response? It must be because there was something significant that takes place when faith is acted upon in baptism, and that significant something is that we are released from being enslaved to Satan and sin.
2. All throughout **Romans 5** we can find clear statements to the fact that *"Christ died for the ungodly," "Christ died for us," "we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son,"* and *"saved by His life."* Each of these statements are made on the basis that our new life was bought and paid for by what Jesus did for each of us. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die for us?
3. *"Although you used to be slaves of sin..."* Each of us were owned and enslaved to the sin that we had and were committed in our lives, and there was no righteousness found within us. We were in fact, *"free with regard to righteousness."* And yet, upon our faith being acted upon in baptism, Paul says that we have been set free from sin and instead enslaved to righteousness. **(6:18)** This is vitally significant because he has just stated that being enslaved to sin leads to death and only through being enslaved to God through obedience to Him can we find righteousness. The question then becomes...at what point do we become obedient to God so that we can have this righteousness that we were previously *"free with regard to?"*

### **IV. At the point of baptism, we are considered to have been obedient to the teachings of the Gospel. (v.17)**

1. So many in the religious world would take a stand upon the teaching that we access the mercy, grace, and righteousness of God when we simply acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Many would teach that obedience is only something that makes place following our conversation to faith in Christ, but notice everything that is said in this verse.  
*"But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness."*
2. Firstly, notice that it is while we were slaves of sin that we decided to make a big change. A person who decides to leave the clutches of sin is a person who has their eyes opened to the reality of

their position before God. They realize through hearing the teaching of the Gospel that they are on a road which leads to death, and they desire to find the life that is promised in Christ Jesus. It is at this point that the person has the decision whether or not to be obedient to the Gospel teaching of how to come to know Jesus. I can't think of a place where it is more clear than what is recorded in **Acts 2:37,38** between Peter and the Jews he was preaching to. They asked what needed to be done in order to be forgiven of their sins, foremost of all was crucifying the Son of God, and Peter responds very simply: *"Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

3. Just as is noted in this text, those people who obeyed this teaching were set free from sin, and they became enslaved to righteousness which can be evidenced by looking at the verses that conclude **Acts 2**. They were committed to the Apostle's doctrine, to worship, and to fellowship with other disciples of Jesus. Again, notice the similarities between what is seen in **Acts 2** and what is found in these first six chapters of Romans. Peter convicts the Jews of their sin, they respond in faith by asking what must be done, and Peter commands them to repent and be baptized. Here in **Romans 6**, we find Paul convicting the world of sin, instructing them that faith will save, and then he instructs them as to how they can act upon their faith. This is the simply message of Paul's teaching on salvation in Romans and it lines up exactly with what Peter taught in **Acts 2**.

**V. At the point of baptism, we are on track for eternal life in Christ Jesus. (vv.21-23)**

1. It is at the final few verses of **Romans 6** that we solidify Paul's teachings by speaking to the fruit that is produced by those who come to Jesus in obedient faith. While the outcome of sin is death, the good news is that those who are obedient to Christ begin the process of sanctification which is becoming holy and pure in all that we do. This indeed is a process that takes great effort for we have to learn to live apart from the sin that had entangled us for so long, but the outcome of this process is eternal life!
2. So many people would look at these considerations and try to make the argument that our holding to the necessary inclusion of baptism in the salvation process is making salvation something that we earn instead of something that is given to us. However, notice that Paul makes it abundantly clear that the eternal life that comes as a result of our sanctification that comes as a result of our becoming enslaved to God...that comes as a result of our obedience to the Gospel...that comes as a result of our dying and being raised with Jesus is only the gift of God. He freely has made this way possible, and there is nothing that we can do to force His hand. We can only come to Him in completely trust, faith, and obedience to what He has laid forth.

The problem that so many have with the inclusion of baptism into the salvation process often stems from being our own preconceived theological beliefs and ideas to the table and making them work into the text. But if we will simply open the text and work through Paul's teachings in **Romans 1-6**, we can clearly see the role that baptism plays when accompanied by real trusting faith in God. Praise God for His grace and mercy, and may none of us waste the lovingkindness of God that He has put before us.