



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 26 - July 2 (A) – Romans 6:12-23

Focus: *Sanctification*

word of life

“But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:22-23 NRSV)

Read Romans 6:12-23

This week’s lectionary text begins with the concluding word, “therefore”. Clearly, the author of Romans, the Apostle Paul, is presenting a closing argument or thesis. But what is the argument? To understand Romans 6:12-23, it is critical to go back and read the preceding verses. In doing so, we find an explanation of baptism as the means for the Christian to be united with Christ—both in his death and his resurrection. The old self and sin has died; a new self, alive in Christ, has come into being. Thus, and in conclusion, Paul writes, “Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.” (Romans 6:12 NRSV)

1. *How does sin still exercise dominion in our mortal bodies?*
2. *Is it possible for Christians to no longer sin? Explain your answer.*

Because of God’s grace extended through Christ, lives are changed. “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” (Romans 6:14 NRSV) Paul is so definitive in his writing. He leaves no doubt about his own personal conviction concerning sin. And yet, a human only needs to live a single day to realize sin is still in the world and manifested in the lives of Christians. As much as we welcome the passionate plea from Paul to NOT let sin have dominion over our lives and to NOT present our bodies for instruments of wickedness, the question has to be asked: Is Paul simply being optimistic about a human’s ability and will to overcome the powers of sin?

3. *What evidence is there to support that sin has dominion over the Christian?*
4. *What evidence is there to support that Christians are no longer controlled by sin?*

A key to this passage can be found in the doxological refrain, “But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17 NRSV)

Not only are Christians set free *from* something—the power of sin and the power of death. Christians are also set free by the grace of God *for* something. We dare present ourselves before God as instruments of righteousness. It is God who empowers us to live a right and holy life. This process of living daily in response to God’s grace is sometimes referred to as *sanctification*.

Paul writes, “But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:22-23 NRSV) Eternal life vs. death! Sin vs. righteousness! Paul presents clear choices.

5. *Whom do you serve? (sin or God)*
6. *What enslaves you? (sin or righteousness)*
7. *Are these questions as simple as they sound? Explain your answer.*

Word among us

“Amen!” “Go to the sanctuary!” “The bulletins can be found in the narthex!”

The church is often accused of using a foreign language! Some preachers spice their sermons with theological words such as ecclesiology, soteriology, Christology and others.

One such word often reserved for the church is *sanctification*. But what does that word really mean? The Greek root word is associated with *holy, set aside for God's purpose*. Thus, we connect holy with the bible, baptism and communion. We reference the Holy Bible, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. And yet the word *sanctification* is usually reserved to describe what happens to people as they (and we) are transformed into God's holy followers.

1. *When have you heard that word sanctification?*
2. *What does the word sanctification mean to you?*

Sanctification follows justification. In other words, first we experience God's grace in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. Our baptism unites us to Christ. As we live in God's grace and claim our baptism in daily living, we turn to God to empower us to live a changed life as a new creation in Christ. We pray for God to be manifested in our lives—hourly and daily. It is God's own Spirit at work sanctifying us, making us holy, and creating new hearts.

3. *Give an example (if any) when someone described you as “holy”. How did that feel?*
4. *How does it make you feel to know God is in the process of making you holy?*
5. *How and why might you resist God at work in your life?*

We are to love God with our whole being. Imagine what God might do with our lives if we fully presented ourselves to God. Imagine our lives without the distraction of the power of sin pulling at us. Imagine!

6. *Once we are freed from the power of sin and the fear of death, what does God envision our lives to be?*
7. *How might we claim that vision?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

In baptism we die to sin and rise to new life. This is staggering good news. It easily can take a lifetime for us to grasp the varied ways God is at work to bring this new life into being. We are not to let sin have dominion, but instead we are to present ourselves to God and become instruments of righteousness. We have the incredible opportunity to become enslaved to God and to be blessed by grace in Christ. God has given us the free and priceless gift of eternal life.

8. *What excites you about these gifts from God?*
9. *How might you partner with God in the process of sanctification?*

Prayer

O mighty God, here we are. Create in us a masterpiece which gives you glory. Amen

last word

Open your arms wide and pray for God's holy presence.