

Gospel Transformation Study Bible Commentary

Romans 6

Robert W. Yarbrough, "Romans," in *Gospel Transformation Bible: English Standard Version*, ed. Bryan Chapell and Dane Ortlund (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 1509–1510.

6:1–11 The gospel message is not only for proclaiming and believing: it is for living. Grace and forgiveness do not mean we can "continue in sin that grace may abound" (v. 1). That notion is unthinkable (v. 2). Christian baptism signifies our unity with Christ in his death (v. 3); when he was crucified, we were present with him in that he bore our sins (see also 2 Cor. 5:21). But this also means that when Jesus was raised from death "by the glory of the Father," a transformed way of living became possible for those who trust in him (Rom. 6:4). Although we will not experience bodily resurrection until Christ comes again, believers already, by virtue of their union with Christ, have been resurrected with him and possess the benefits of his new life (see also 8:10; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). This co-resurrection with Christ has profound ethical implications. It is true that all of us fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), but it is also true that Christ's resurrection brings change into our lives now, in this present life. Through faith, we are united with Christ both in his death and in his resurrection (6:5–6). God's goal in the gospel is for his people to "no longer be enslaved to sin" (v. 6). Jesus' death, and our union with him there, breaks sin's stranglehold (v. 7). Jesus' resurrection life infuses the lives of believers both now and in the age to come (vv. 8–9). Jesus defeated death and is alive in God's presence (v. 10). We as his followers can and should consider ourselves "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11).

6:12–14 The gospel message calls believers to humble defiance of sin's claim to "reign" in our physical bodies and everyday lives (v. 12). Because believers "have been brought from death to life" (v. 13), we can "present" ourselves and every part of our bodies to God. Eyes, ears, hands, feet, voices, minds—our entire bodies, once ravaged by sin (3:13–18), become tools "for righteousness." Sin's "dominion" is broken. The law's tyranny ended in Jesus' death. We do not groan under law, leading to sin; we are "under grace," which ushers us into God's "dominion" (6:14)—his own goodness and fullness. We become fully human again as intended at creation, before the effects of Adam's fall diminished us.

6:15–19 In 6:15–7:6 Paul deals with the second of three misunderstandings of gospel teaching (see also 6:1–14 and 7:7–25). Is it true that sin is now permissible, since we are "under grace" and not under law (6:15)?

No! Paul invokes what we might call "the presentation principle." You are the slave of the person to whom you present your life (v. 16), so, by all means, present yourself to God (see also 12:1–2)! The "standard of teaching" of the gospel calls forth a dedication "from the heart" (6:17). Our very hearts have been changed. The gospel brings heart-transformation, not merely behavior modification. Sin

is not inevitable, as it was before. We have been “set free” (v. 18). We are not miserably enveloped in impurity and lawlessness; rather, “righteousness leading to sanctification” is the promise of the gospel (v. 19). “Sanctification” here means progressive conformity to God in his holiness.

6:20–23 These brief verses give the “backstory” of the sanctification promised in the preceding verses. Before the gospel is received, sin has the upper hand (v. 20). There is no way out, and deep down we sense this (v. 21). The gospel makes God our Master, produces his fruit in our lives, and sets us on course for the age to come (“eternal life”; v. 22). We do not dread sin’s bitter payoff. There is rejoicing in God’s “free gift” (v. 23). All is of grace.