

## **Romans 6**

### **Romans 6:1-2**

“What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?”

Paul addresses the issue of life after the messianic event. Once we have been set free from the power of sin, which is death, should we continue with that way of life? Paul begins with this question and unfolds his understanding of our transformation as followers of the resurrected Christ.

“To make this clear, Paul will propose a series of three [or four] partial analogies through which he seeks to make evident that we are being drawn into a messianic reality that effects a radical transformation in the comportment of those who are something like the vanguard of this new humanity. The analogies he offers point to fundamental changes in status: from death to life after death [6:2-11], a transitional analogy of tools or weapons [6:12-14], which prepares the way for the analogy of a transfer of ownership for slaves [6:16-22] and the freedom of becoming a widow [7:1-6] (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 100).”

### **Romans 6:2-11 - Life After Dying**

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

### **Romans 6:5-11**

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

“Here Paul's point has little to do with a cultic act and everything to do with a transformation in the comportments of those who are assimilated into the messianic event.... The point is that it should be impossible, unthinkable even, that those who have entered into this messianic reality should in anyway continue to sin (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 101).”

“But Paul's point is not that the believer will somehow be delivered from death but that's the one so incorporated has already died so now must live as one who has died, as one for whom death lies not ahead (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 101).”

“The analogy is complex. It requires that we see that if death is connected to sin, then the overcoming of death is at the same time the overcoming of sin, that is, injustice (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 101).”

“The analogy may not be cultic at all since baptism with the messiah had the meaning of martyrdom in the Gospel of Mark and for some centuries thereafter. That is, baptism had been meaning of sharing the actual fate of the one who was condemned and executed by the legal officers any and all law (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 101-02).”

**Romans 6:5** [Jennings' translation]

“For if we have been united [with him] in the likeness of his death, we shall certainly be united [with him] in the resurrection (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 102).”

“I have modified the translation to reflect a certain ambiguity in what Paul is saying. The words in brackets are supplied by translators to specify that we are being united with the messiah. Although this makes certain sense, we must also leave open the possibility that is left open in the Greek, which is that the being united has to do not with our being united one by one with the messiah but *with one another*. That is, the newness of our walking or comportment is precisely something like a common life, a shared life, a life in relation to one another (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 102).”

**Romans 6:6**

“We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.”

“We should notice that Paul regards the Adamic situation as one of having been enslaved. We have already been conquered by violence. But the threat of death that held us captive has been overcome by the messiah's resurrection from the dead – a resurrection that anticipates and it entails our own (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 103).”

**Romans 6:9-11**

“We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

“For resurrection there is no further death. Death is not ahead but behind. It is deprived of its capacity to rule over life. And this rule is intimately connected to the rule of law (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 104).”

“Those who pass over into the messianic reality through identification with the messiah are those who must leave off the Adamic reality of sin and death. Living ‘after death’ means for us as well that existence is no longer a ‘being-toward-death,’ just as it is no longer a living under the law but a living toward God. This is the messianic reality into which we are being incorporated (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 104).”

“Through this threat of death, the ruler makes the subject submitted to the desire of the ruler. The ruler enforces rule by awakening fear. We are under attack, he might say, in our way of life, our freedom, in our civilization are at risk.... The passions [sociopolitical/not sexual meanings] to which we submit under the dominion of sin are the passions of fear, anger, greed, resentment. These are all social or, rather, antisocial passions. They are the passions of the political, as any newspaper will testify (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 105).”

## **Romans 6:12 - 7:6 - Partial Analogies**

### **Romans 6:12-14**

“Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. 13 No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

“When we are ruled by the [anti]social passions of fear and anger, we become tools of injustice, witting or unwitting accomplices in the rule of violence and death. In Paul's day, this might have meant that we become accomplices in the imperial project of domination. In our own, we become accomplices in the violent economic and military structures of our own imperium (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 105).”

### **Romans 6:15**

“What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”

We return to Paul's initial question in this section of the letter. Paul has not quite answered it to his own satisfaction. Here we encounter the partial analogies of his argument.

“The first has to do with the analogy of a slave who is transferred from one owner to another. In exploring this analogy we must recall that Paul had introduced himself as a slave of the messiah and he will now explicate this designation as it might apply also to his readers (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 106).”

### **Romans 6:16-19**

“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 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, 18 and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness [justice]. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.”

“One obedience leads to death, while the other leads to justice. Paul is not offering a speculative anthropology that suggests that one is in any case a slave; instead, he is seeking to oppose the radical alternative between being determined or ruled by justice or by injustice. (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 107).”

“Justice vent leads toward holiness, toward becoming holy. Paul had already defined those to whom he is writing as those called to be holy, and here he makes clear that the basis for becoming holy is becoming just. That is, the way one belongs to the divine [holy] is through justice - a justice that comes not from the law or in accordance with the law but outside the law (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 107).”

### **Romans 6:22-23**

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

“What you get from obedience to sin is shame and death, and accordingly what you get from obedience to God's holiness and life. But here Paul wishes to correct a possible misunderstanding. What you get in the first case is a wage, what is owed. In the second case there is not a wage but a gift. The ground of the gift, we must remind ourselves, is the sheer grace, favor, or unconditional generosity of the Divine (Jennings, *Outlaw Justice*, 108).”