

FREEDOM

Believers are Freed from the Power of Sin

First Thoughts

It's easy to take our freedom for granted both physically and spiritually. To be "debt free" gives us a sense of relief and being "cancer free" brings a sense of joy. Each phrase brings up different realities. However, they share one word in common: *freedom*. Being liberated from debt can be a financial game changer. Anyone with cancer or any other illness would be ecstatic to know it was gone. But the ultimate and the greatest freedom we have been given is to be free from the power of sin in our lives. We have accepted Jesus as Our Lord and Savior and now we are in a new relationship with God. Believers will now progress from justification to sanctification in our salvation. We have been saved and made right with God and now, our lives should reflect this change. Stop embracing the old ways of sinfulness and embrace your Savior instead. In Romans 6, Paul explains what *union with Christ* means in the life of the believer. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. We should always remember what Jesus did for us and who we are in Christ. Our freedom is a gift from God. Our position and our identity have changed. God has not only forgiven us for our sins; He has moved us from unrighteousness to righteousness through Jesus. We have died to sin because all our sins were nailed to the cross along with our Savior. We are dead to sin and alive in Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ in this present world!

Understanding the Context

Paul is writing to the saints in Rome. Paul has been in Corinth for about 3 months, preparing for his trip to Jerusalem to deliver gifts collected from the saints in Macedonia and Archaia. He wants to go west to preach the gospel to people who have not heard it. He wants to go to Spain (Rom. 15:23-24). In the first few chapters of Romans, Paul has gone over the central theme of the *Unrighteousness of sinful man*. He made it clear that everyone, Jews and Gentiles stand guilty before a Holy God. He explains the gift of *Righteousness in Jesus*, and *Justification by Jesus* to mankind. In Romans 5 Paul speaks of the fruits of the new relationship the saints now have with God only because of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. After repentance and then acceptance by grace through faith we are immediately made right with God. Paul talks about the new life in Christ. This includes peace, joy, and reconciliation. Then Paul focuses on the reality that the old life of sin has been replaced with the new life in Christ which marks the beginning of the second aspect of salvation: *Sanctification* (being made Holy). He explains that with Adam, all humanity shares in his sin that leads to death: spiritually and physically. The only way to true and eternal life is to share first in Jesus' death, His burial, and then in His resurrection. Jesus is the second Adam. The first Adam disobeyed God but the second Adam obeyed God. The obedience of Jesus has brought LIFE to all people; whoever will repent, believe, and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Paul knew that the all-efficient and sufficient victory from the work of Christ gave mankind a new identity in Jesus. **No matter how bad the sinfulness of the descendants of Adam were (that's you and I), it could not eclipse (or over take) the grace of God in Christ.** Jesus gave us the abundant life and eternal life. Rom. 5 ends with verse 20b, "But where sin multiplied, Grace multiplied even more". Hallelujah 🙌

Key Doctrine: Baptism

Baptism is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. (See Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42.)

Memory Verse: Romans 6:11

"So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Dead to Sin (Rom. 6:1-7) • Believers need to understand that they live in union with Christ and they should act accordingly.

Paul raised a probing question: If believers wanted God's grace to be multiplied, should they sin more? Growing disciples would have asked the question innocently and honestly. The enemies of the gospel would have asked the question in an effort to deceive people who had placed their faith in Christ. Paul's stern answer keeps us from pondering it for even one second: "Absolutely not!" The reason for such a quick and sharp response drives home the truth about the reign of sin in a believer's life. When we gave our lives to Christ, we died to a way of life controlled by sin. Paul is reinforcing the most basic doctrine of Christ's death for sinners. The dying with Christ and then living in Christ. It signals a shift from justification to sanctification. How does that shift happen? The first step is to believe. Paul demonstrated how God has done everything necessary for salvation. When it comes to sanctification, Paul emphasized that Christians must express faith. The object of that faith is the resurrection of Christ. Believing in the resurrection also implies belief in the crucifixion since Christ had to die in order to live again. Baptism represents the reality that believers were incorporated into the death of Christ by faith. Baptism serves as a reminder of our liberation from sin. It reminds us that giving our lives to Christ involves being buried with him and being raised to a new life in Him. Baptism is a picture(symbol) that we have been changed by Jesus. Paul also illustrated new life with the picture of slavery. Slaves to sin do not have the ability to liberate themselves from sin's tyranny. Liberty from the reign of sin occurs only when a person turns to Christ by faith. Our response to this liberation and new life in Christ should produce obedience to the word of God in our everyday living.

Alive in Christ (Rom. 6:8-11) • Believers are to consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ

Jesus voluntarily experienced death to break sin's dominion(power and control). But this one-time event opened a way of life to all who would trust in Him. We know that Christ died on the cross and was buried. He was raised from the dead and He is alive. Death has no power over Christ. Paul says now we know for sure that physical death is not the end. Death will never have the last word over our lives and because God raised Jesus, God will raise us! We are no longer the walking dead being lorded over by sin. We are truly, fully alive and we will live in eternity with God only because of what Jesus did for us! We have died to sin, and we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. We must consider that truth as reality and live in it. It is the responsibility of believers to cooperate in sanctification by letting the Holy Spirit do His work on the heart. He is molding us, leading and guiding us, making us holy. Sanctification is progressive. It is going to take a lifetime for the Holy Spirit to complete His work. The first step is to realize that you are dead to sin and alive in God in Christ Jesus. True believers should hate sin and want to be delivered from their sins. To be "in Christ" means to live out our new identity as He lives in us, reshaping our character, priorities, and purpose. We are joined to Christ. He is the head of the body (the church). God has empowered us, the church, to walk in victory by the power of the His Spirit.

Instruments of Righteousness (Rom. 6:12-14) • Believers are to offer themselves to God for the accomplishment of His righteous purpose.

Considering ourselves dead to sin and alive to God doesn't come naturally. Your spirit knows, believes and desires to be dead to sin but your mortal body still wants to yield to temptations and ungodly desires. Paul highlighted a second command that makes it possible. The key to this life-and-death scenario is refusing to *let sin reign in your mortal body*. Paul portrayed sin as a cruel taskmaster. Sin dominates and enslaves those who live under its authority. But everything changes in Christ. Not letting sin reign in our bodies involves an exercise of the will. Romans 6:12 is a command, indicating believers have a choice and a responsibility. We are dead to sin, but we still need to reject sin's temptations and influence. We need to replace the desire for sin with a passion for obeying God and being used by Him to fulfill His purposes in our lives and in the world. "*Little children (believers, dear ones), you are in God and you belong to Him and have (already) overcome them (the agents of the antichrist): because He who is in you is greater than he (satan) who is in the world (of sinful man)*". (1 John 4:4 Amp) Thank God for His gift of salvation and ask Him for the strength to abstain from sin and to follow Christ in obedience. Walk in your new life, don't turn back to your old ways!

Next week: session 6 "Struggle" Romans 7