

## SECRETS TO LIVING FREE IN CHRIST - III

Romans 6:12-13

Bob Bonner

November 25, 2018

Winter! What a great time to take a cruise to some warm sunny tropical paradise. I have here a travel folder filled with a cruise ship itinerary. In addition, let's just say I have a voucher for an all-expenses paid cruise for two, including airfare to and from the port of departure. And let's just say that I gave this packet to you. What would be necessary for you to do to enjoy the freedom, fun, and relaxation of this gift?

Well, there would be several things. First, you would have to determine whether or not I was on the level or was I playing a practical joke of some kind. Then, if you looked at the tickets and you verified that those tickets and the entire vacation were a legitimate gift, you would have to determine that it was for you, and that you were going to take advantage of this gift. But still, that is not enough. You can get on the plane and fly to the sailing port of departure and have your bags loaded on board the ship, but until you actually walked aboard and allowed the ship to sail you away to the tropical paradise, you could not enjoy the pleasures of that vacation.

The very same thing is true of sailing away with Jesus and enjoying today the real freedom which is ours in Christ. And when I refer to freedom, I'm speaking of freedom from the slavery of sinful habits, addictions, hurts, and hang-ups. But if we are going to experience this freedom and the joy and hope which is ours in Christ, we need to uncover and hold onto three secrets.

For the past two weeks we have looked at **Romans 6:1-11** and uncovered two of those simple secrets. The first is revealed in **verses 1-10**. It speaks to the truth that as Christians, we were given a new nature, a new identity in Christ, the moment we put our confidence in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. The moment we came to Christ and became, as John's Gospel says, born again, our new lives began. We became new creations.

At this point, by way of review, let's look at a couple of passages of Scripture to see how this concept of having a new nature and a new identity is taught. The Greek word translated "**nature**" in English, is only used twice

in the New Testament. In both cases it refers to the core, the key, of who we really are. When you consider the three parts that make up a human, nature refers to your spirit in which lies the control center of your being.

In the New Testament chronology, the first place the term “**nature**” is used to describe what we are and the basis of our identity is in **Ephesians 2:1-3**. Here, it describes our nature before we came to Christ. As we read these verses, you will see that all of the verbs used to describe the Christian before salvation are in the past tense. In other words, they apply to a life that no longer exists. We read:

**<sup>1</sup>And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup>among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**

**Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)**

According to this verse, what was your basic nature before you were born again? We were all “**children of wrath.**” We were spiritually dead, separated from God, and subject to Satan’s power, being driven by sinful lusts and desires.

But the second time this term “**nature**” is used in the New Testament is to describe us after we came to Christ. The Apostle Peter writes:

**<sup>1</sup>Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: [Peter is writing**

to Jewish believers who had become followers of Jesus.] <sup>2</sup>**May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.** <sup>3</sup>**His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence** [When he says that all things have been granted to us that pertain to life and godliness, Peter means, among other things, that you and I have all we need in Christ to live righteously right here in the middle of this world that freely embraces wickedness.], <sup>4</sup>**by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.** **2 Peter 1:1-4 (ESV)**

Notice that Peter declared that the follower of Christ has (in the past tense) **“escaped from the corruption that is in the world.”** He is not saying that we are not affected by the wicked corruption of the world. Other passages of scripture make that obvious. But what we have escaped in our new nature, in our spirits, is the corruption of this world’s absolute control over our spirits.

When you came into spiritual union with God through your new birth, you didn’t add a new divine nature to your old, sinful nature. Your spiritually dead nature was exchanged for your new spiritually alive nature, with Jesus Christ Himself living inside of you, ready to control your life, if you choose to let him, from your spirit. As you allow Him to take control of your spirit, He will transform you from the inside out. He will transform your soul and one day even your body.

In **Romans 6:1-10**, Paul tells us three times that we must know some facts about our new true nature, our spirit, our new identity in Christ. And those facts have to do with our old nature being dead and gone and our new nature being eternally alive. In **verse 2**, Paul tells us that we are already “**dead to sin.**” It is something that has already happened to us. It happened the moment we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We didn’t do anything. It is something that God did to us. “**Dead to sin**” simply means that no longer can sin master our lives, because it is no longer part of our nature or our identity or our spirit. No Christian can be controlled by sin unless we choose to allow sin to control us. Furthermore, at any time we can break free from sin controlling our lives, because something about us changed when we became Christians. And that which changed is our identity, who we really are, our nature.

In short, we are told that we must know that we are dead to sin and alive to God. “**Dead to sin**” does not mean that we as Christians are no longer responsive to sinful temptations or cannot sin. If that were true, then Paul would not have had to write what is contained in the rest of this chapter and **chapter 7**.

Neither does “**dead to sin**” mean that we have to put sin to death, as if we could. Some people tell us that if we are going to live victoriously in Christ we must crucify the old man or the flesh. Not only will you not find anywhere in the scripture a statement about our crucifying the old man, but that is not what Paul means by “**dead to sin.**”

But just like receiving a free ticket to a tropical paradise vacation, it is one thing to know the facts about that vacation. However, if you actually want to take full advantage of the free gift of the vacation, we learned last week that you must “**consider**” it to be a valid or a true offer. And as we learned last week, that Biblical term “**consider**” is an important word to understand. It does not simply mean to think about. Consider means to act upon what you know to be true. We must take the steps required to get on board with Jesus Christ and allow Him to carry us away to this new life in Him. And that is what Paul says in **verse 11**. We must consider these truths about our new nature, our new identity, to be true of us and to act upon this truth.

That brings us to this morning's passage and the third secret to living free in Christ. Follow along in your Bibles with me, beginning at **Romans 6:12**.

**Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.**

In **verse 12** Paul begins with the word “**therefore.**” Based upon what he has written in the previous verses and what we understand to be true and consider to be true of us, Paul is going to tell us to do something. He is about to give us the final secret to living free in Christ. In **verses 12-13** we are instructed how to relate to sin which indwells us as saints but is not us.

In these two verses Paul commands us to do three things. His first command is, “**Do not let sin reign.**” This simple command suggests that we cannot expect to live free in Christ and remain passive toward sin. We must be intentional and deliberately choose moment by moment how we are going to live. The world, the flesh, and the devil are continually at war against the life of Christ within us. If you sit back and don't deliberately choose not to allow the world, the flesh, and the devil to control your life, one or all will.

As Paul suggests here, sin wants to be a sovereign master who reigns over or rules your life. Sin demands service from those who deliberately do not choose to not serve sin. It is up to you to choose whether you are going to let your body be used for sin or for righteousness. Satan, who is at the root of all sin, will take advantage of anyone who tries to remain neutral. So, you have a choice. Let sin reign, or let Jesus reign. By this we mean you have a choice as to who will control you--someone who has no right to, because you are no longer under his authority, Satan, or someone who has the right to reign over you, Jesus.

So, how do we quit allowing Satan control over our lives? The second command answers that. Paul tells us to quit **“presenting the members of our bodies to sin as instruments of unrighteousness.”**

Note, will you, the word **“instruments.”** Why the translators chose the word **“instruments”** here, when in all the other five places it is used in the New Testament, they translate it as **“weapons”** is beyond me. Those contexts are all concerning spiritual battles with Satan and sin. Clearly, the better translation for this word would be **“weapons.”**

Paul is telling us here that we have a choice: We can present the members of our bodies as **“weapons of righteousness”** or we can present them as **“weapons of wickedness.”** The choice is ours.

Folks, we are at war with a spiritual enemy. Why would we want to hand Satan our bodies to use for wickedness rather than present them or surrender them to our owner Jesus, who can use them for good?

If we are going to quit allowing sin to reign in our lives, we must stop presenting our bodies to our spiritual enemy as weapons of wickedness. The apostle Peter makes a similar appeal to us in **1 Peter 2:9, 11**. He says, **“You are a chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession. . . . I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”**

Paul continues in **Romans**, **“But present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”** Instead of presenting yourself to Satan, present yourself to God as weapons of righteousness. Since sin, our old task master, has been run off from our spirit, the control center of our being, it is ludicrous that we should run after our previous sin master and submit ourselves to his service and sin. Instead, we are to present ourselves to our new master, Jesus Christ, and embrace the freedom from sin He has given us.

To illustrate, suppose I ask if I can borrow your car to deliver food baskets to the needy, and a thief also asks to use it to rob a bank. It’s your car, and you can decide to lend it to whomever you choose to be used for good or evil.

Which would you choose? There should be no question! Neither is there any question as to who should be given mastery over our bodies.

Your body is yours to use to serve either God and righteousness or sin and Satan, but the choice is up to you. Notice that Paul is telling us that it is through our “**bodies**” that sin tries to take control of our lives. Our bodies are the channel through which sin attacks our lives. Let me prove this to you in several ways.

The first is how our stomachs react to food. When you sit down to a table to eat, you are going to satisfy a normal appetite of the body. But when we find that there is more food presented than is necessary, something within makes us want to eat too much, to go beyond what our body needs to be full. We can respond to what our body wants and become overfilled and stretch the size of our stomachs. The “**flesh**,” or the propensity that is part of our physical body that wants us to do everything that is the opposite of what God says is right is the thing, causes us to disregard what we know to be best. Many, not all, but many people think they have a weight problem, but in reality, it is a sin problem attacking their lives through the body. You might not think that I have this problem. But I do! I’m in training right now, and my trainer has set me on a nutrition plan. I’m continually battling with not just what to eat, but how much. An additional point is that it’s not what people look like physically on the outside that reveals the truth about their inner struggle with sin in the body.

The body requires rest. That is normal. But sin enters the channel of the body when we over indulge and rest too much or work our bodies too hard and don’t rest enough.

The brain is a fabulous creative mechanism which allows us to deduce things and produce a variety of helpful inventions. Yet, the mind can easily rationalize evil to good, and we can sin in our minds. Through our brains we are tempted to do wrong and produce evil inventions.

Our glands and hormones are another neutral part of our body through which sin can attack. Glands can be used for good when danger arises and we need adrenaline to flow so that we can quickly react to life-threatening situations. Sexual hormones awaken us to the qualities and pleasures of the opposite sex

in marriage and move us toward procreation. But these adrenal glands and sexual hormones can also be used for evil. For instance, when we get angry and want revenge and desire to strike back, adrenaline flows and pushes us toward evil. Our sexual glands likewise can be stimulated by the world's culture and that which is evil and lead us into lust and infidelity and promiscuity.

So it is through the body, which is controlled by the mind, that sin attacks our lives. Our bodies are neutral, and there is nothing wrong with them. They are simply the channel through which sin tries to control us. Whether or not sin is successful is dependent upon our mind's choices. The options are Jesus and Satan.

So how do we present our bodies to God to be used as weapons of righteousness? Simple. One body part at a time.

For instance, let's start with the most important part of the body that daily needs to be presented to God as an instrument of righteousness, your mind. Look at **Romans 12:1-2** with me for a minute. Beginning with **chapter 12**, Paul moves from the theological portion of **Romans** to the practical. I find it interesting that the very first application he makes is what we are finding in his first section of the book that gives us commands to do something, **Romans 6**. Paul pleads with us as believers here, because he knows that this is the only way we will survive in this sinful world. He says:

**I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [logical/reasonable] service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.**

Notice that he says that it all begins with the "**mind**." Paul said in the beginning of **chapter 6** that if you are going to find freedom in Christ, then you must "**know**" something. It begins in your mind.

Have you ever really stopped to think carefully about what you do with your mind on a daily basis? If you fill your mind with the products of our secular culture, you will remain secular and sinful. If you fill your head with trashy pop novels, you will begin to live like the trashy heroes and heroines whose illicit romances you read about. On the other hand, you must get in the scriptures and follow what Paul says in **Philippians 4:8-9**:

**Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.**

With your mind cleansed from unrighteous thoughts and attitudes, you will be more apt to experience God's power at work in your "**instruments of righteousness**," the other physical members of your body.

Next, consider your eyes and ears and how they can be presented to God as weapons of righteousness. We receive so many impressions through our eyes and ears. These too must be surrendered to God. Do you remember Achan, back in the book of **Joshua**? He allowed his eyes to see and covet that which was not his to take. By his own admission, after he was caught stealing that which belonged to God, he said, "**When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylon, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them.**" **Joshua 7:21**. It is no different today. Twenty years ago, Sociologists told us that by the age of 21, the average young person has been bombarded by 300,000 commercials messages from the TV, the radio, and newspapers, all of which target our personal gratification as the goal in life. 300,000! And that was before the days of the internet!

I am not suggesting that we hole up in a monastery somewhere to avoid commercials. But rather, daily make an offering of our eyes and ears to the Lord and ask him to make us sensitive to what we see and hear, to help us notice what we need to see or listen to, to avoid looking at or viewing that which is evil, and to avoid hearing or listening to that which is evil.

Next, consider that little piece of flesh called the tongue. It can be used for cursing or blessing. When the spirit controls it, we bless. When the flesh controls it, we sin. We can use our tongues as a tool by which we can affirm and encourage others, or we can use our tongues to put down or slander others. We choose who stays in the driver's seat. And who we choose to sit in the driver's seat is determined by who we think we are or how we perceive ourselves. We are either holy saints and ambassadors for Christ, bought and purchased with His blood, or we are slaves to sin and our tongues are foul-mouthed gutter dwellers. If you find yourself or Christian friends speaking with a foul tongue, ask yourself or them, "Is that how Jesus talks? I know he lives in me and you, and that certainly isn't him talking!" I must confess I have work to do here in my own life.

Our hands and feet are another part of our bodies that we can daily offer up to the Lord. They determine where we go and what we do. **I Thessalonians 4:11-12** tells us to use our hands profitably so that we might be self-supporting. In contrast, **Ephesians 4:28** warns us against using our hands to steal instead of to work hard. Our feet take us places every day through our world as ambassadors for Christ. **Romans 10:14** says, "**How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.**" The good news is how to find freedom in Christ!

How do you use your hands? For good or for evil? Where do your feet take you? Do you allow them to take you to places where sin is openly practiced, without any desire to reach out to others in the name of Christ?

One final obvious part of our bodies that needs to be mentioned in this hedonist culture in which we live is our sexual parts. The most powerful sexual member of a woman's body is her mind! For a man, it is his eyes. Long before the other male and female parts get stirred, the mind and the eyes begin the process.

When you run across a sexually explicit program on TV, do you linger and watch it, or do you turn away from it? Are you sexually promiscuous? Do you allow illicit fantasies to be played out in your mind? Or, are you offering up your whole body in a holy manner before the Lord? Paul says, in **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**:

**Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification [that is, your soulish transformation]; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.**

The bottom line is that Paul is saying that daily or moment by moment we are to surrender or present our bodies to the Lord as instruments for Him to use, since He lives in us and is the Lord over our bodies. Every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to bed, it would be a good practice to turn over individual parts of your body to Christ, especially those that are most troublesome for you at the time. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** says, **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”** Then again, in **Galatians 5:13-13**, Paul says, **“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”**

Because of Jesus Christ's victory over sin, you are completely free to choose not to give yourself to obey sin as your master. It is your responsibility not to let sin gain mastery over your body.