

Romans VIII

Introduction

This year I went to see the film Abraham Lincoln? What an amazing film and actor. On September 22 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation **on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord 1896, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of the State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.** The Union had to fight for many months before the slaves in the south could claim their precious freedom. After the final surrender of the Confederacy, the assassination of the president, the Thirteen Amendment was ratified, which officially abolished slavery in America. On December 18, 1865 the news was officially proclaimed- slaves are free. This was known as the Emancipation. However the practicality of freedom from slavery was another matter.

Once all the celebrations were over, they now had to work out how to live as free people. Though they were officially free to go anywhere, little changed for them practically. Turning their legal status into actual experience required an inward transformation. A number of people found this so daunting that they went back to their old masters and worked on the land as *sharecroppers*.

We are going to look at Romans 6 today to look at the subject of **dying to live or dead to sin, alive to God.**

What passes today, as worldly wisdom is usually bad theology. The world operates to a different system since the fall with Adam and Eve.

Romans 6:1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* Paul had encountered challenges to the message of **grace** from Jews so he wrote to the church in Rome in a way that would put his opponents to **grace** on the spot. They argued that **if sin brings grace, and lots of sin brings a lot more grace, shouldn't we sin as much as possible in order to keep grace flowing?** They used this argument to say that Paul's teaching was false. They understood grace from a twisted perspective.

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In Romans 6:2 Paul responded to this faulty perspective with *Certainly not! No way, may it never be!* Then he put two more questions before his readers, each containing a monumental Christian truth. *How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?* Paul highlighted the truth that Christians no longer serve their old master. We were enslaved to sin because our old nature found it irresistible. But death has freed us from the bondage of sin. How tragic it would have been if the freed slaves in America continued to live in slavery when they could have left it behind.

Paul then continued with the second question in Romans 6:3 *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?* Paul taught that all who have put their trust in Jesus have been baptized with Him. The context here is not water baptism. This is something all Jews especially would understand. The Greek word used here is baptize, meaning to *immerse or submerge*. To be baptized into something is to be completely enveloped (surrounded, encircled, encased) by it. The primary purpose of baptism was identity.

In the OT male converts to Judaism were baptized into God's covenant by circumcision, and this act identified them as Jews. When we place our trust in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin, we are then enveloped by Him in a spiritual sense. Our identity becomes united with His and so His experience becomes ours. He died and we died with Him. He rose and so shall we. By virtue of our identification with Jesus Christ, His death, and His resurrection, we have been emancipated from the bondage of sin. Identify with Christ began with belief in Him, but is an ongoing process.

In Romans Chapter 3:21- 5:21 we learnt we identified with Jesus Christ when He suffered punishment on our behalf and He paid the legal penalty for our sin in our place. God then credited His Son's righteousness to us lives and we receive this grace through faith. But Grace doesn't stop there.

Romans 6:4 *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even*

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so we also should walk in newness of life. Emancipation legally releases a person from involuntary bondage, but it doesn't guarantee they will experience freedom. The person must first know that they are released. Then they can walk in a newness of life.

Romans 6:5-7 *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin.* An outcome of our identification with Christ in His death (His dying in our place) is that we will be identified with Him in His resurrection. In eternity our bodies will be like His, no longer subject to pain, suffering, weakness or temptation. However, in the meantime, while we live in these bodies, we can now walk in a new way.

We know that our body is a vehicle of our old sinful nature. It is a part of this fallen world and therefore subject to temptation. In a spiritual sense, when we gave our lives to Jesus, we died to our old self. Dead bodies don't respond to temptation. Dead bodies don't choose to do wrong. Temptation and sin have no power over corpses. And when we get to heaven we will experience this in a physical way. In the meantime we have the opportunity to experience this truth.

The first step is to **know** (knowledge and understanding) that *our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.* In other words **we are under new management.** We are now subject to God's authority rather than that of sin. We are now no longer obligated to choose sin. When we died with Christ, our bodies were released from submission to sin.

Romans 6:8-11 *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to*

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God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Once we know the truth that we are released to walk in a newness of life, once we know God's gift is available, we must claim it. **If we died with Him, we believe we will also live with Him.** Live with Him **now!** We don't have to wait until we get to heaven. We can enjoy the benefits of what Jesus has done for us **today.** We need to act upon it now! Paul is saying **consider yourselves to be dead to sin. Claim the truth as a reality. Count on it and live it out.**

Romans 6:12-13 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.* ¹³ *And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* Once we know about our emancipation from slavery and have considered ourselves to be freed from the bondage of sin, we are to present ourselves to our new master (Jesus Christ) to enjoy the benefits of life. Slaves do the bidding of their master. Before emancipation, we could not refuse sin's authority, but now we do not have to obey its commands. Rather than allowing our physical bodies to be instruments of sin's desire, **unrighteousness**, we must now present our bodies to our new master to accomplish His desire, **righteousness**. The Greek word **instrument** frequently refers to weapons of war. We are no longer to present our bodies as weapons to be used by sin to accomplish evil ends, but to become foot soldiers in the interest of righteousness.

Paul concluded his point by saying, Romans 6:14, *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.* Because you have been freed from the bondage of sin, laws have no application. The purpose of the law is to point out transgression; therefore those who have no involvement of sin are not subject to laws.

Illustration from Charles Swindoll – I have never been tempted to take illegal drugs. They have nothing to offer me, if they suddenly didn't exist then, nothing about my life would be any different. So if the laws of selling or possession of them changed, I would not be affected. They have no place in my life, so they are irrelevant. In other words I am not **under** those laws.

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Imagining that someone's nature is so transformed once they give their life to Jesus that they have lost the desire to do anything sinful. They would no longer be subject to those laws.

Because grace is so foreign to the depraved mind, it is not easy sometimes for a newly restored mind to adjust to. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of the Dallas Theological Seminary said these words **I have spent all my life studying the grace of God and I am just now beginning to understand a little of it, and it's magnificent!**

With the wonderful help of the Holy Spirit, He will help transform us from within. Until we get into heaven we are works in progress. While the Holy Spirit is able to do the work of transformation we are invited to participate in the process. We have a genuine stake in determining the quality of life we enjoy here and now. The degree in which we participate either helps or hinders our progress.

First, know the truth, Romans 6:3-10; in this case it is our spiritual condition that we are dead to sin. Before we knew Christ we were enslaved to sin. We did not possess the power to stop our wrongdoing. Now sin has only one weapon – deception. Satan wants you to think that obligation to sin cannot be broken. But the truth is we are free!

Next, consider truth, Romans 6:11. Once we encounter the truth, we must discard our old manner of thinking and replace it with this new understanding. That's not easy. We have been conditioned to behave a certain way and are emotionally attached to our old way of living. Habits are tough to break. We need to consider divine truth, that is decide it is true.

Finally, present our bodies to truth, Romans 6:12-13. Having decided something is true we must change our behavior accordingly. Paul talked about our mind controlling our bodies, so we have to take command and make our body operate in agreement with what you have accepted as true.

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Imagine that a billionaire informed you that for no other reason than kindness, he deposited a hundred million pounds into your account. No strings attached.

What would you do?

First know the truth. Go online and check my bank account.

Next, consider the truth. Keep checking my account on-line.

Finally, present my body to the truth. Once I made a substantial donation to OCC I would start spending some of it to enjoy the benefits now, While I am alive on this earth to enjoy it. I might struggle to accept the wealth.

If you presently struggle with a particular repetitive or compulsive sin, it may be you think that it will never loosen its grip on you. Transformation is never easy! But if you are a believer, if you have accepted God's free gift of eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus, you have spiritual riches beyond your imagination. The power to overcome evil lies within you; with Christ living in you!

So don't wait, start now. It's never too late to start doing what is right.