

Romans Session 83

Free From Sin 4

Romans 6:18-22 (NASB)

¹⁸ *and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

¹⁹ *I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

²⁰ *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

²¹ *Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.*

²² *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*

Paul has been speaking of the new life of the believer in Christ since being brought into the family of God and into His Kingdom.

He is giving us three aspects of this new life. The first being our position in Christ.

Because of trust in Him, the new man is saved from sin. And now in his life there flows streams of living water, as the Spirit moves in him. Out of his life flows obedience to the word of God. His relationship to sin has changed. He is no longer a slave to sin, but has become a slave to righteousness.

Sin no longer is his master. He now has a new master and that master is righteousness. Christ being the embodiment of that righteousness.

So, Paul clearly speaks of the new position we have in Christ. But he goes on to the next two aspects of this new life and speaks of;

1. The practice of this life
2. And the promise of this life.

THE PRACTICE

¹⁹ *I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.*

It is difficult to put divine principles and truth into terms that finite human minds can comprehend.

In saying, *I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh*, Paul meant that the analogy of masters and slaves was used as an accommodation to his reader's humanness.

Flesh is here used as a synonym for humanness, or mortality, and is equivalent to the "members of your body" in verse 13 and **members** at the end of verse 19.

The **flesh** is the human faculty influenced by sin, and, as long as believers remain in their mortal bodies, sin still has a beachhead, a place to launch its attacks.

That is why Paul admonishes believers to present their bodies before God;

Romans 12:1 (NASB)

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Although the inner person of a believer has been transformed into the likeness of Christ, the outer person, represented by **the flesh**, is still subject to the defilement of sin.

Paul here changes the focus from position to practice, admonishing believers to make their living correspond to their new natures.

Although it is still possible for Christians to sin, they no longer are bound by sin.

Now they are free not to sin, and they should exercise that divinely provided ability in obedience to their new Lord and Master.

Before salvation believers were like the rest of fallen mankind, having no other desire, or ability, but to follow their natural bent to **impurity and to lawlessness**.

Those two terms refer, respectively, to inward and outward sin.

The unregenerate person is both internally and externally sinful, and as he lives out his sinfulness it results in still **further lawlessness**. Like a cancer that reproduces itself until the whole body is destroyed, sin reproduces itself until the whole person is destroyed.

After the brilliant writer Oscar Wilde's homosexuality and other deviant behavior was made public, he wrote, "*I forgot that what a man is in secret he will someday shout aloud from the housetop.*"

Another famous writer, Sinclair Lewis, was the toast of the literary world and received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1930. To mock what he considered the hypocrisy of Christianity, he wrote *Elmer Gantry*, the fictitious story of a Bible-pounding evangelist who was secretly an alcoholic, a fornicator, and a thief. Few people knew however, that Lewis himself died an alcoholic in a third-rate clinic outside Rome, a devastated victim of his own sinful life-style.

Because it is possible for them to resist sin and to live righteously, believers should **now present their members as slaves to righteousness**.

And just as the life of sin leads to further sin, so the life of righteousness leads to further righteousness, whose ultimate end is complete sanctification.

The late Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote. "*As you go on living this righteous life and practicing it with all your might and energy, and all your time, you will find that the process that went on before, in which you went on from bad to worse and became viler and viler, is entirely reversed. You will become cleaner and cleaner, and purer and purer, and holier and holier, and more and more conformed unto the image of the Son of God (Romans: An Exposition of Chapter Six [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972], pp. 268-69).*

No one stands still morally and spiritually. Just as unbeliever's progress from sinfulness to greater sinfulness, a believer who is not growing in righteousness, though never falling back altogether out of righteousness, will slip further and further back into sin.

God's purpose in redeeming men from sin is not to give them freedom to do as they please but freedom to do as He pleases, which is to live righteously.

When God commanded Pharaoh to let His people go, He also made clear His purpose for their deliverance;

Exodus 7:16b (NASB)

¹⁶ ***"Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness. "***

God delivers men from enslavement to sin for the sole purpose of their becoming enslaved to Him and to His righteousness.

That is to be the practice of the new Christian's life for his lifetime.

That brings us to;

THE PROMISE

Romans 6:20-22 (NASB)

²⁰ ***For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.***

²¹ ***Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.***

²² ***But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.***

Unsaved persons, who are **slaves of sin**, are **free, in regard, to righteousness**. That is, they have no connection to righteousness; it can make no demands on them since they possess neither the desire nor the ability to meet its requirements.

They are controlled and ruled by sin, the master whom they are bound to serve.

In that sense, they have no responsibility to righteousness, because they are powerless to meet its standards and demands.

That is why it is foolishness to preach reformation to sinners.

They cannot reform their living until God transforms their lives.

Many unsaved people, of course, do not think their lives need reformation, much less transformation.

The world is full of people who are decent, honest, law-abiding, helpful, and often very religious, who think their lives are exemplary.

But Paul declares that apart from salvation through Jesus Christ, *all* people are **slaves of sin** and are **free in regard to**, that is, totally separated from and unrelated to God's standard of righteousness.

Paul describes his own good works and religious accomplishments before salvation as rubbish, or dung (**Phil 3:8**)

In God's sight, there is absolutely no **benefit** that men can derive from **the things** they do apart from salvation, things of which after salvation they become ashamed.

The only possible **outcome of those things is death**, the second death, which is spiritual death and eternal torment in hell.

One of the marks of true salvation is a sense of being **ashamed** of one's life before coming to Christ.

Whether the previous life was marked by sordid immorality or great propriety, by heinous crimes or sacrificial service to others, by extreme selfishness or extreme generosity, it is a life about which the true believer can be nothing but ashamed.

No matter how it may appear before the world, the life apart from God is a life apart from righteousness.

John Calvin wrote.

As soon as the godly begin to be enlightened by the Spirit of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, they freely acknowledge that the whole of their past life, which they lived without Christ, is worthy of condemnation. So far from trying to excuse it, they are in fact ashamed of themselves. Indeed, they go farther, and continually bear their disgrace in mind, so that the shame of it may make them more truly and willingly humble before God

(The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians [Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1960], p 135)

So, for those who have **been freed from sin and enslaved to God** through faith in Jesus Christ, the **benefit** is **sanctification** and the **outcome** is **eternal life**.

In salvation God not only frees us from sin's ultimate penalty but frees us from its present tyranny.

Freed from sin does not mean that a believer is no longer capable of sinning but that he is no longer enslaved to sin, no longer its helpless subject.

The freedom from sin that Paul is speaking about here is not a long-range objective or an ultimate ideal but an already accomplished fact.

Without exception, every person who trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is **freed from sin and enslaved to God**.

Obviously, some believers are more faithful and obedient than others, but Christians are equally **freed from** bondage to **sin** and equally **enslaved to God**, equally granted **sanctification** and equally granted **eternal life**.

Now that brings us to the absolute; which we will consider next time together.