

## Freedom from Sin

Romans 6:1-14

May 1, 2022

We have been skipping around in the Bible following the theme of Freedom and Liberation. With this lesson, we come to the writings of Paul the Apostle: his letter to the Romans. Paul probably wrote this letter in about 53 A.D., most likely from either Ephesus or Corinth. Unlike his other letters, Paul is writing to a church he did not found, a church he has not previously visited. In most of his other letters, Paul is giving advice on various crises and reacting to what has been going on in the world, especially in the letters to Corinth and to the Galatians. So his writing presupposes what he has told members of those churches in person earlier. In Romans, Paul is writing to many who do not know him. That circumstance leads Paul to explain his faith and mission systematically and comprehensively. Thus, Romans came to be a foundational document for the Western understandings of Christianity. The letter has an important place in our New Testament of the Bible.

Here's just a quick review of what Paul has been talking about prior to Chapter 6. (I'm trying to summarize this quickly in my own words, perhaps not being as accurate as you'd like.) In Chapter 1 Paul talks about sin. None of us are guiltless. Without God, humankind is full of malice and other evils. Chapter 2 says that God is not insensitive to this evil. He will judge us. Yes, but the Jews have the Law. That's wonderful if you obey the law, but who really fully obeys the Law? If you break the Law, the Law condemns you. But although none are completely righteous, through faith in God, we can be forgiven and be considered righteous. Chapter 4 offers the example of Abraham. He wasn't saved through the Law, but by faith. In Chapter 5 Paul explains that Jesus died for our sins, and that by faith in him, we are saved. We all inherited sin from Adam, but now can claim freedom through Christ. His sacrifice saves all who believe. That brings us to Chapter 6:

**6 What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> 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.**

**<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**

**<sup>12</sup> Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. <sup>13</sup> No longer present your members to sin as instruments<sup>[a]</sup> 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<sup>[b]</sup> of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.**

- a. [Romans 6:13](#) Or *weapons*
- b. [Romans 6:13](#) Or *weapons*

Verse 6:1 addresses a peculiar problem in the early Church. Paul mentions this issue also in 3:8 – “**Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**” It would seem that this issue has been raised to Paul before. The attitude is that, if God’s grace will cover sin, why not sin broadly and long, for that will show more of God’s grace. This is similar to the idea that one who leads a life of sin, and only repents just before death, gets the best of both worlds – enjoying sin, then enjoying salvation. This attitude ignores the fact, first, that sin typically does not bring joy. Usually it brings pain and suffering in one form or another. Second, one may become so ensnared in sin that repentance never comes. Third, the life after accepting God’s grace means freedom and joy that cannot be had on the path of sin. Jesus liberates us from slavery to sin. Why not enjoy that form of life from the earliest moment possible?

In Verse 2 Paul completely repudiates this idea of sinning so grace may abound. “**By no means!**” he says. He asks a very good question: “**How can we who died to sin go on living in it?**” How can we renounce sin and yet embrace

it? Salvation through faith in Jesus changes us. Paul likens it to the old self dying that the new self might live. Here he draws on the symbolism of baptism.

I (John) happen to be an anabaptist – I was baptized twice. Once as a Presbyterian child, and a second time, along with my mother and father, when we joined the Baptist church there where we lived in Richmond. For Baptists, submersion in the water represents death to the old self. Rising out of the water represents a reborn life in Christ. The sins of the old life are washed away. Verses 3 to 6 follow this idea. Now, as Paul was traveling around teaching about Christ and Christianity, there were no children who had been baptized into the Church as infants. Baptism was being performed on adults. That's who was joining the church. Baptism of infants came later. The Church ultimately had to deal with the issue of the status children before God, but when Paul was writing this letter.

In verse 8, we read “**8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.**” As I read that, what springs into my mind are the words from the hymn that we sing at Easter, “Christ the Lord is Risen Today,” especially the final verses:

3 Love's redeeming work is done / Fought the fight, the battle won / death in vain forbids him rise / Christ hath opened Paradise.

4 Soar we now where Christ has led / Following our exalted head / Made like Him, like Him we rise, / Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

(That's an older version from when I was young; our hymnbook has different words now.) At Easter, we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, knowing that is not just Him, but with Him, us as well.

Paul was a very practical apostle. He founded, and continued to supervise and advise, numerous churches. His faith and theology were constantly being tested and challenged by events and problems that came up in both his life and the lives of those churches. So, in Verse 12, Paul turns from the issue of death to sin and salvation in Christ, to the practical matter of what we do about it. What does that amount to? Yes, “Don't yield to sin.” That may sound simple, but Paul knows that it is not. He wrestles with this problem himself! As he will later write in Chapter 7:

**7: 14 For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.<sup>[a]</sup> 15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I**

that do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.**

a. [Romans 7:14](#) Gk *sold under sin*

We all struggle with this issue, even Paul himself. But Paul tells us that the grace we have in Jesus frees us from that sin. We can live without fear. Yes, we may do bad things sometimes, and there will be consequences. But God's grace means that we are not under sentence. He writes in Chapter 6:

**<sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.**

It is important that the verb is future tense: "For sin **will have** no dominion over you." Yes, we are troubled by sin now, and bear the consequences of our own and others' sins. We struggle as Paul struggled. But we do so with the promise of freedom, that allows us to maintain faith in God and remain children of the promise. God loves us still, and He will be with us. We will ultimately be with Him where there is no more sin or fear or death. For, Christ is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

Prayer: *God of new life, help us grow into the freedom that comes from being your children. Amen.*

**P.S.** This was shorter than normal this week as I prepare to go out of town for a few days, returning Saturday. There is much more that could be said. I'm looking forward to our class Sunday, were we can explore this scripture more fully.