

(Romans) Romans 6:1-23

by Zac Poonen

The Gospel teaches us that we have died with Christ and are no longer slaves to sin, and that we can live a life that is pleasing to God by reckoning on the facts revealed in God's word.

Duration: 47:29

Scripture: Matthew 1:21, Romans 3:23-24, Romans 6:1, Romans 6:15, Romans 6:18-19, Romans 6:22

Topics: "Sinful Nature", "Spiritual Freedom"

Description

In this sermon on Romans Chapter 6, the preacher explains how the Gospel addresses the problem of our sinful nature even after our past sins are forgiven. He uses two illustrations to convey this message: the first is the idea of dying to sin and being alive to God, and the second is the concept of being slaves to two different masters. The preacher emphasizes that through the death and resurrection of Christ, we are freed from the power of sin and no longer have to be slaves to it. He encourages the listeners to understand that sin is like a cruel master, but through Christ, we can be delivered from its control.

Transcript

Today we will turn to Romans chapter 6. In our previous studies, we were seeing how Paul explains the Gospel here in Romans. First of all, by describing man's fallen condition and sin. And starting from that zero point, he shows how first of all God forgives us of all our sins, blots out our past.

And he justifies us, he declares us righteous, he looks at us. As though we have never sinned in our whole life. Now the next problem that you and I face is that even though our past is forgiven, we still have this problem of a nature within us which is always making us sin.

Does the Gospel have an answer for this problem? Because if the Gospel only solves the problem of blotting out our past guilt, and does not solve the problem of our continuing to live in sin in the future because of our sinful nature, it would be a very poor Gospel indeed. It would not be good news at all. You know there is a difference between forgiveness and salvation.

Jesus came not only to forgive us, but to save us. To use an example, if my little boy was playing near a big ditch on the roadside, and I warned him saying, don't go anywhere near that because that's a deep eight foot pit, they are digging there, you can fall in. And let's say he disobeys me and falls into that pit.

And cries out saying, daddy, daddy, help me. And I go to the pit and I see him at the bottom of the pit. And I say, son, what happened? He says, I'm sorry dad, I disobeyed you.

And will you please forgive me? I say, sure son, you're forgiven. And I walk away. Have I forgiven him? Yes.

Have I saved him? No. What did Jesus come to do? Just to forgive us or also to save us? The Bible says in Matthew 1 and verse 21, the very first promise in the New Testament. Do you know what that is? You will call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

Not just forgive them, he will save them. Do you now understand the difference between being forgiven and being saved? Up to the end of Romans chapter 5, he's only dealing with being forgiven. Now in chapter 6, he goes on to how we are to be saved from the power of sin.

We could say up to now it was being saved from the guilt or the penalty or the punishment of sin. But now he goes on to the second problem of being saved from the power of sin. So what do we see here? Romans chapter 6 verse 1. What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be.

How shall we who died to sin still live in it? The question is, if grace is so wonderful that it forgives, blots out our past and no matter how great our sin, God is ready to forgive us, then the question that some people can have is, well, in that case it doesn't matter whether we sin or not. We can continue in sin. Not at all.

That's a wrong understanding. It's not just a question of taking advantage of God's goodness, but more than that. What's the answer to this question? What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? Is the answer, no, we shouldn't take advantage of God's goodness? No, that's not the answer.

That could be an answer, that we don't take advantage of God's forgiveness, but there's a higher reason than even that. He says, may it never be. How shall we who died to sin live in it any longer? You see, what happened on the cross of Calvary, and this is what he explains in Romans chapter 6 more clearly than it is explained in any other portion of Scripture.

That is, that when Christ died on the cross, we died with Him. It's not only our sins that Jesus took upon Himself on the cross. He took us.

He took the guilt of our sins so that we wouldn't have to pay that penalty, but He took us also into Himself. Now, this is a mystery. Don't ask me to explain it.

I don't think we can explain many things in Scripture. We believe, and those who believe enjoy the benefit of it, even if we can't understand it. For example, you may not know how your digestive system works, but your digestive system still works when you eat food.

You may not be able to explain it like a doctor. The important thing is not whether you can explain it or not. The important thing is, does it work? It's the same thing here in Romans 6. He goes on to say that you have died to sin.

That was on the cross. And then, if so, how can you live anymore to sin? If a man dies and is buried to this world and he moves on to another world, how can he live in this world any longer? Our death to sin is just as real as our death to this world, if we die and leave this world. It's exactly the same.

But many Christians, even those who are born again, whose sins are forgiven, have not seen this great truth. Jesus said, when you know the truth, the truth will set you free. Here is one of the most important truths in Scripture.

Here in Romans 6. And then he goes on to say, when you took water baptism, what were you testifying to when you were immersed in the water and when you were brought up from the water? All of us who have been baptized, verse 3, into Christ Jesus, have been baptized into His death. The word baptism means immersion. And we were immersed into His death.

It was a symbol of our death when we went under the water. And when we came out, it was a symbol of our being raised with Christ from the dead. It's not just that we died with Christ on the cross and we were buried with Him in His grave, but we came out of that grave with Him also.

And that's what it says in verse 4. We have been buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For, then he goes on to say, if, and there's a big if there, if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we will also be with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. I have to choose to die with Christ before I can live with Him.

In other words, if I want to be raised up with Christ and live in resurrection power, I have to first be willing to die with Him, to choose it. Just like you choose to receive the forgiveness of sins which God offers you, in the same way you have to choose to die with Christ. It was done on the cross, but it doesn't become real in your life till you choose it, till you accept it, till you believe it.

Just like forgiveness of sins. Christ died for the sins of the whole world. But there are lots of people whose sins are not forgiven.

For what reason? They don't believe it. It's not because Christ didn't die for their sins. It's because they don't believe it.

Until you believe, you cannot receive anything from God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Christ may have done many things for you, but it will not become yours till you believe it.

You know, the promise of God is like a check. If somebody sends you a check, and you keep that check at home, or keep it inside your Bible, or frame it up and hang it up on the wall, you don't get any money. A lot of God's promises are like that.

People keep it in the Bible, people frame it and hang it up on the wall, and they don't get the benefit of it. But if you want to get the benefit of God's promises, you have to believe them. Believing is like going to the bank and cashing the check.

What happened? We were united with Christ in the likeness of His death. That's Scripture. This book, the Word of God, is the only book in the world which is 100% reliable.

If we were united with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall certainly be with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. What do we see here? This old man refers to my old mind which wanted to sin, which wanted to please myself and live for myself.

That is dead with Christ. It was crucified with Christ on the cross. And the purpose of that was, that this body which we have used for sinning might be done away with, its power taken away, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

The passions in this body which ruled me, don't have to rule me anymore. I'm not a slave. I'm free.

Because, verse 7, he who has died is freed from sin. Think of a master who is torturing a slave, day after day after day after day after day. And then the slave dies.

The slave is free from his master. Think of sin as a master that made you lose your temper, tell lies, lust, do so many things, and then you die. Sin cannot rule you anymore.

That is the way of deliverance. So what do you need to do? You need to believe that when Jesus died, you died with Him. Ask God to open your eyes to see this truth.

Lord, when Jesus died on the cross, I died with Him. And when Jesus was buried, I was buried with Him. When He rose up from the dead, I rose up from the dead too.

I believe, and I believe, that I will be free from sin's power. Make this real in my life, I pray. Amen.

We were looking in our last study about our being crucified with Christ, Romans chapter 6 and verse 6, where we have this wonderful truth that our old man was crucified with Christ. This is one of those truths that is very rarely preached from Christian pulpits. And this is the main reason why Christians remain defeated in sin, because they have not been taught this wonderful truth.

And so we need to spend a little time trying to understand this. The death of our old man, our self, was as real as the death of Christ on Calvary. None of you doubt that Christ died on Calvary 2,000 years ago, approximately.

How do you know that? None of us were there. We never saw Him dying. How do you know that Christ died on the cross? Your only proof for that is the revelation of God in His word in the Bible.

There is no other way that we can know that. And how do you know what He died for? How do you know that He died for your sins? How do you know that all your sins were taken away? Your only proof is the Bible. How do you know whether He rose up from the dead? Or whether that's just a story that the apostles made up? Your only proof is the word of God.

So, just think of this. The only way that you know that Christ died and was buried and rose up is the word of God. Now, the same word of God says that when Christ died on the cross and was crucified, you also were crucified with Him.

How is that possible? Because in God's mind you existed even before the foundation of the world. The Bible says that God chose us in Christ before He created the worlds. God knows the end from the beginning.

He knows the future. We can't understand that because we can't see the future. We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

But God who sees the whole future way back in eternity, He knew everything that was going to happen all the way through the thousands of years of time. And He knew you. And He knew me.

And He knew that we were going to respond to the Gospel. And He picked us out. He chose us according to His foreknowledge, the Bible says.

And He put us in Christ when Christ died on the cross. You did not exist. I did not exist at that time.

But in God's mind we did. And so He put us into Christ on the cross. And so we are going to finish with this person on the cross.

And you were finished with on the cross. Now when you accept that, you will experience the reality of being delivered from sin as much and as certainly as you receive forgiveness of sins when you believed that Christ took your sins on the cross. But everything is dependent on faith.

But when we know this, and it's important to know it. Our old man was crucified that the body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin because he who has died is freed from sin. Now, verse 8. If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

Knowing that Christ having been raised from the dead is never to die again. Death no longer is master over Him. See, death has got no power over Jesus now.

He's conquered death and come out of it. And in the same way, if we have died with Christ, we will live with Him. But I have to choose that first part.

The death that He died, verse 10. He died to sin. Once for all.

But the life that He lives, He now lives to God. In Jesus' life on earth, we can say that principle mentioned in verse 10 was true all through His life. Inwardly, He lived to God all the time.

From the time He was born as He grew up, He lived only for His Father. His relationship to sin in a world of sin in which He lived, His relationship to sin was one of being dead to it. You go to a cemetery and look at all those graves and there were people there whose bodies are lying there turned into dust now.

But they were people who were living once and had a very real contact with the world once upon a time. But none of those people have any contact with this world right now. Their contact with the world broke the day they died.

They have absolutely no connection with the world now. Our debt to sin is just as real. Jesus lived on earth just like those cemeteries, those bodies in those cemeteries with no contact in the world.

Jesus had no contact with sin. He died. His attitude was one of death.

And inwardly He lived in another realm just like those people in the grave are now in another world. Jesus inwardly lived in another realm to God. In exactly the same way He says in Romans 6.11 You also must consider yourself to be dead to sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Just like Jesus lived with no contact with this world and sin but alive unto God because I have been crucified with Christ. I also live unto God and reckon myself to be dead to sin. This is one of the wonderful things that Christ did for us on the cross.

He united us with Himself so that sin's power over us might be broken through death. So that the mastery of sin over the slave of sin, that's you and me, would be broken. See, we were born with a sinful nature.

Jesus never had a sinful nature. Jesus was never a slave to sin. Sin was never His master.

But He saw us under the slavery of sin and came to deliver us from it. Not only forgive our past sins but to deliver us from sin's power. To deliver us from our anger, from our bitterness, from lusting with our eyes, from the love of money, from all types of things that ruin us.

From cheating and jealousy and every possible thing. And He came to set us free. And the only way He could set us free is by uniting us with Himself in His death.

That's why we see His love. It's not just our sins He took upon Himself. He took us and broke the power of sin upon us by dying and we dying with Him.

So that now we are free. And that's what Jesus meant when He said in John 8.36 If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. How were we freed? Romans 6.7 He who has died is freed from sin.

And therefore now it goes on to say that sin cannot rule over us. Now if we don't understand this, it doesn't matter. We just got to accept it.

We believe this is true. I was in Christ. God put me in Christ before the foundation of the world.

And when He died on that cross of Calvary, I died with Him. When He rose up from the dead, I rose up with Him. And now I consider this to be true.

Now consider is not a word which is like imagine. God's not saying imagine that you're dead. You know, if I imagine that I'm the president of India.

He doesn't make me the president of India. Or if I imagine that I'm a multi-millionaire, that doesn't make me a multi-millionaire. If I'm sick and I'm imagined that I'm healthy, that doesn't make me healthy.

Imagination is different from reckoning or considering on the basis of fact. If you're a college student and your father has put ten thousand rupees into your bank account, and you haven't gone to the bank to check up, but your father has telephoned you and told you, son, I've deposited ten thousand rupees into your bank account. You don't need to go to the bank to check up.

If your father is a trustworthy person, you believe it without seeing it. Why do you believe it? Because your father is a trustworthy person. You don't have to see it.

You don't have to go and get your passbook filled up in the bank to see whether the money is there or not. You reckon it's there. And without seeing what money is in the bank, without entering it in your, getting it entered in your passbook, you would still sign a cheque.

You can sign cheques up to ten thousand rupees. Purely on the basis of that telephone call from your father. On faith in your father's word without seeing anything.

That is what it means to consider that the money is already there. It's not imagination. Supposing you sit and imagine that your father has put ten thousand rupees into your bank account and write cheques for that.

They'll all bounce. Because you're imagining something which is not true. Here he's not telling us to imagine something that's not true.

He's telling us to believe what is true. That you have died with Christ. You have risen with him.

God already did it. That is more certain than the fact that the earth goes round the sun. We all know the earth goes round the sun.

But this is even more true that when Christ died, I died with him. God's word says so. So if you believe this, you consider yourself now onwards to be dead to sin.

In a particular situation now, when we're tempted, what are we to do? We're to say Lord, though I live in this world and I'm being tempted and pulled by this terrible sin right now, I'm not going to yield to it. I live unto God. I have died with Christ more than 1900 years ago when he died on the cross.

I died with him. And now I live unto God. I consider myself to be dead to this temptation.

Of course, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to do that reckoning and that considering. And he goes on to speak about the Holy Spirit's power in chapter 8. But first of all, he's establishing these facts as to what the Lord has accomplished on the cross so that we can base our faith on the facts revealed in God's word. We don't have to base our faith on imaginary things.

Our faith is always based on facts. So I want to encourage you to believe this wonderful truth, even if you're hearing it for the very first time. Believe that you died with Christ and you're living only for Him from now on.

Amen. We want to continue our study today in Romans and chapter 6, where we were seeing in our previous study about the fact that we have died with Christ. And since we have died with Christ, sin need not have any power over us.

That's the point. Christ came into the world not only to forgive our sins, but also to deliver us from sin's hold upon our life. So, the only way He could do that was by taking us into Himself when He died on the cross.

God, who knew the future, knew that we would respond to the gospel. He chose us in Christ before the worlds were created. And put us in Christ when Christ died on the cross, more than 1900 years ago.

And there I died with Him. Today, we're told to consider ourselves, Romans 6.11, to be dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. Then it says, therefore, since this is true, don't let sin ever again rule over your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.

Sin has ruled in our body for so many years. And He says now, don't let it rule you anymore. You have been delivered.

It's like a country where people were slaves and where they were liberated and now they need not be slaves anymore. More than 100 years ago, they used to have slavery in the United States of America. And

the President Abraham Lincoln one day proclaimed a proclamation of emancipation and deliverance, freedom for all slaves.

But a lot of slaves never knew about it. And a lot of those black slaves never knew about it and so remained slaves for many decades and years. Because their masters never allowed them to know that there had been such a proclamation of emancipation for all slaves, of freedom for all slaves.

And Satan certainly doesn't want you to know that there's been a proclamation of freedom for all slaves when Jesus died and rose again from the dead. But once you know that, think of those slaves in those days who knew it. They could go to their masters and say the government is now on our side and has set us free.

And today we can go to sin and to the devil and say well I've died to all of you and now I'm free once I was your slave but no longer. That is the boldness you can have when you believe the word of God. Don't let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it anymore.

Once upon a time you were a slave you had to obey it but no more. And so don't go on presenting your members, the members of your body to sin as instruments of righteousness when your old master calls you and says come and do this, you don't have to do it anymore. Think of that black slave who's been freed from slavery and the master who called him yesterday and he had to jump to obey him.

Today the master calls him and the slave just lies down there and says I don't have to listen to you anymore because I'm not your slave. And that makes the master furious but the government was on the side of the slave. It set him free.

And if the master touches him, the master is going to be punished. So it's the same here. It's just as real our deliverance from the power of sin.

And so why do you go now and present the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to your old master's sin? Don't do it. You don't have to listen. When he calls you, you say I'm not your slave anymore.

I've died with Christ. I'm dead. A dead man does not respond to the commands of his old master.

Instead, present yourself now to your new master that's God so that when he calls you, you jump out of bed and do what he says. That is obedience. That is the new life.

Life and resurrection power. You present your members as instruments of righteousness to God because sin will not be master over you anymore. For you're not under law but under grace.

This is the difference between law and grace. Law was what Moses brought. Grace is what Jesus brought.

Moses couldn't bring people this deliverance from sin. David in the Old Testament Psalm 103 could say bless the Lord who forgives all my sins but he couldn't say bless the Lord who frees me from sins power. No, he couldn't experience that.

Nobody in the Old Testament could. Their sins could be forgiven on the basis of their faith in the future death of Christ on the cross expressed in offering a lamb and his blood on the altar but they couldn't get deliverance from sins power till Christ had actually died and grace came through the Holy Spirit. So now, here's this wonderful promise, one of the most wonderful promises in the entire New Testament.

Sin cannot rule you anymore. Why? Because you're not under law. The law gave you commandments which you could not keep.

Grace gives you even a higher standard than the law does but it gives you the power to keep it. It's like that old jingle goes that run John the law commands but gives us neither feet nor hands better news the gospel brings it bids us fly and gives us wings. The law told us to run but didn't give us feet or hands.

The gospel commands us to fly and gives us wings. The standard is higher. You heard it said, Jesus said that under the law you should not kill but I say to you don't even be angry.

Under the law don't commit adultery but I say don't even lust with your eyes. The standard is higher. Under the law it was love your neighbor, today it's love your enemies.

The standard is higher but grace gives us power. It's something like saying if your company sends you to go and buy something from the market for ten thousand rupees and doesn't give you the money. How in the world are you going to do it if you don't have that money? That's how people try to keep the law.

They just couldn't keep it. You just can't buy that thing from the market when there's nothing in your pocket. And now the company sends you not to buy something worth ten thousand rupees but ten million rupees.

What gives you ten million rupees? Which is easier? Is it easier to buy something for your company worth ten million rupees if the company gives you that money or is it easier to buy something for your company for ten thousand rupees when they give you nothing? You know the answer. That's the difference between law and grace. In law the standard was lower but it didn't give you any power.

In grace the standard is much higher but you get power. The power of the Holy Spirit. So sin will not be able to rule over you because you're not under law now.

You're not being given commands that you're not given power to keep. You're now given the power to obey this higher standard that God calls you to. So, if we misunderstand grace, then we think oh, shall we sin because we're not under law, verse 15, but under grace may it never be.

See there's a difference between verse 1 and verse 15. Though they sound similar. In verse 1 it's talking about continuing to sin.

Shall we continue sinning so that grace might increase? In verse 15 the question is phrased slightly differently. Shall we sin even once? Do you know what the New Testament standard is? That our aim should be to not even sin once. It's like a placard that I saw in an automobile manufacturing company.

It said our aim is zero defect. Now, when your aim is zero defect, the car may not be perfect, nothing on earth is perfect, but you come pretty close to it. And when our aim is that we don't even want to sin once, we may not be able to live such a life on this earth, but we'll come pretty close to it.

But on the other hand, the aim of the believer, if a believer has an aim like this, if his feeling is that, well, I'll keep on sinning naturally, then he's going to live a very low level of life. So the question is, shall we sin even once? Because we're not under law, but under grace, may it never be. And he goes on to say, don't you know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to the one you obey.

If you obey sin, it'll result in death, but if you obey God, it'll result in righteousness. So, you can choose. And he says to the Roman Christians, but thanks be to God, that though you were slaves of sin once upon a time, you have now become obedient to God, not just externally.

The law asked for external obedience, but here it speaks of an obedience from the heart. That's what grace asks for. You know that's what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, as I just said? Not just don't murder, but don't get angry.

Not just don't commit adultery, but not even in the heart. You became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching or doctrine to which you were committed. And how do you know that a particular doctrine or teaching is true? If it is the truth, it'll set you free.

Jesus said you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. So, if you received a doctrine which has not set you free from sin's power, that's obviously not the truth, or certainly not the full truth. Because it says here, you became obedient from the heart, verse 17 of Romans 6, to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and you have become free from sin.

And you become slaves of righteousness. So what happened when they accepted this particular doctrine? They became free. And they became slaves of righteousness.

Imagine that we who were once slaves of sin, obeying sin in everything, can now not only be free from the slavery to sin, but go to the other side, and become slaves of righteousness, and when God tells us to do good, we do good. When God tells us to be pure, we're pure. When God tells us to be humble, we're humble.

This is the amazing power of the Gospel. Open your heart to it, and say, Lord, I want this with all my heart. Today we would like to turn to Romans chapter 6, and continue our study in this wonderful chapter, which deals with deliverance from sin's power.

Not deliverance from the penalty of sin, which is already dealt with in chapter 3, 4, and 5, but we go one step further to deliverance from sin's power, as we've been considering in our last three studies. Now we come to Romans 6 and verse 19. Paul says here, the Holy Spirit through Paul, I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.

He says, I'm using this illustration of death and resurrection because that's the best way to understand it. Or I'm using this example of being a slave to one master and a slave to another master, to explain to you, there are two pictures Paul uses in Romans chapter 6. One is the picture of dying to something, to one world, and being, becoming alive in another world. That's what he says in the first part of the chapter, where we're dead to sin, which is the world we lived in, and we become alive to God.

The other picture he uses in the latter part of Romans 6 is the picture of being slaves to two different masters. The first master is sin, the second master is God. And he says, in the olden days, when you tried to keep God's laws, you were always a slave, you couldn't overcome sin.

But now, you've come under grace, you can overcome sin, and you can be free from the power of sin in your life because you've now got a new master. See, in the days of when this was written in the first century, slavery was a very common thing. There were slave markets, just like there are food markets today.

You can go to a shop and buy furniture. In those days, you could go to a marketplace and buy a slave, just like you bought furniture. And that slave would be your property, just like a sofa would be your property if you bought it.

And if you got a sofa at home, you could paint it black or blue or break it up, nobody could question you, it was yours. And if you got a slave at home, you could ill-treat that slave, you could kill that slave, and nobody would question you, it was just as much your property. So, when a person was a slave to X, Mr. Y could go to X and pay the money and buy a slave, just like you can go to somebody's house and buy second-hand furniture that he's selling.

You could go and buy a slave from somebody else. Now, this is how Jesus bought us on the cross. That's what the Bible says.

The word redemption means purchased. And Jesus purchased us from the slave market of sin. We were slaves to sin, all of us, all humanity, the entire human race.

Jesus paid the price and bought us. Now, once a slave is bought from his old master X, Y has bought him. Why does this slave have to go back to X's house to serve him anymore? I mean, that's stupid.

He's now been bought by Y. Y has paid the price. But Y is such a good master that he doesn't force the slave to serve him like the former master X. See, God is not like sin. God doesn't force us to serve him.

He wants us to serve him freely, happily. That's why he gives us freedom. Sin is not like that.

Sin doesn't give you the freedom to serve God. Sin says, you just got to obey me. The old master X is a tyrant.

But the new master Y, he's a very gracious, loving man. God is a good God. He's a loving father.

He paid the price and he bought us. He says, now, I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, your old master, Romans 6.19, resulting in further lawlessness.

Even so, just like you served that old master for so many years and obeyed the promptings of that master immediately, now, present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. So, the more you present your members, the members of your body, for holiness and obedience, the more sanctification will come in your life. For, when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

In the days when you served X, did you do any service for Y? Nothing. Not even one thing. Even the righteous things that we think we did in our unconverted days.

Do you know that they're all filthy rags in God's eyes? They're filthy rags because they are polluted by sin. You can take a beautiful new apple and hold it with dirty hands full of germs and immediately those germs go into that apple. And even though the apple was sterilized and clean, the moment you hold it with dirty hands and put it in your mouth, the germs go into your mouth.

Because the hand that holds the apple is dirty. That's how it is. When you and I did righteous things in our old days, unconverted days, the heart that did those righteous things was dirty.

Filthy. Filthy with germs worse than AIDS. Germs.

And we were offering them to God. God says, no, I don't want it. You see, that's the thing.

That sin polluted even our righteous deeds. We never did anything for God, really. So now He says, you've been purchased from that slave market.

Why do you want to go back and serve that old master again? Verse 20. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Now He says, consider another thing.

Verse 21. What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? That master didn't pay you. He didn't care for you.

Your life was miserable. You lived in a dungeon. Has sin blessed any of you? Think of it, my friend.

You've committed so many sins. Did you ever get blessed by any of those sins? Maybe you made money by telling lies. And you say, well, I did get some benefit.

But that's because you still haven't paid the price for your cheating. Some people get paid the price for their cheating by being caught here on earth. But most people get caught and punished for their cheating only when God comes again to judge the world.

And then you'll realize, sin never pays. Sin never pays. No sin ever pays.

You will suffer far more than all the comfort you got by cheating and telling lies when you stand before God. Sin never pays. What benefit did you derive from the things of which you are now ashamed? You're ashamed of all those things.

You got no benefit from them. The outcome of those things is death. The outcome is death.

But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you know, when a person is free from sin, he mustn't wander around doing nothing. Jesus once spoke about a man who was delivered from a demon and he just kept his heart empty instead of allowing it to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And the result was that that demon went and brought seven other demons and he finally got possessed by eight demons.

First he had only one. Now he had eight. What is the reason? Because after the spirit was cast out, he kept his... after the demon was cast out, he kept his heart empty.

So, when we are freed from sin, if you don't do anything else, you'll go back into sin again and probably sin much worse. You got to allow God to become your master, be enslaved to God. In practical terms, that means, for example, supposing you're a complaining, murmuring type of person all your life.

And now you've died to that and you just stop murmuring and complaining. And you discipline yourself to stop murmuring and complaining. The chances are, after a while, you will go into that sin even more.

Because you didn't replace that murmuring and complaining spirit with a thankful spirit. So, when we finish with murmuring and complaining, we must replace that emptiness in our heart with a spirit of thankfulness and gratitude to God for all that He's done for us. Then the spirit of murmuring and complaining can never come back.

So, when we are freed from sin, we're to be enslaved to God, then we do get a benefit. What is that benefit? Sanctification. That means increasing holiness in our life.

And the outcome? Eternal life. Eternal life is another phrase for God's nature. See, eternal life doesn't mean a life that never ends, because then even people who go to that, a life that never ends.

But eternal life means a life that never had a beginning and never had an end. That's the life of God. It's a phrase for divine nature.

And that's the ultimate benefit we get through obeying God. You know, eternal life is given to us as a gift. But as we obey God, we partake more and more of God's nature.

And He says in verse 23, there's a difference between death and eternal life. Death was a salary that sin gave you. You worked for sin and sin gave you a salary of death.

It's like saying you worked for this terrible master and he gave you a salary of so many whippings and so many tortures. That was a salary he gave you. Nothing to benefit you.

But when you come to this new master, God, He gives you a free gift of His nature. The greatest gift that God can ever give a person is His own nature. Eternal life refers to His nature.

Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's the gift of God. When we come in Christ, God gives us not only forgiveness of sins, which is one gift, but through the Holy Spirit He makes us partakers of His nature.

So we're not people who are trying to imitate Christ. The imitation of Christ is not what the Bible teaches. But partaking of Christ's nature is not a pig trying to act like a cat.

A pig acting like a cat can't last very long. Imitating Christ won't take you too far. But when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, if the pig's nature could be changed and the pig became a cat, then it would act like a cat because it has got a cat's nature.

And that's what God does. He doesn't say act like Christ. He says, I'll give you Christ's nature inside, eternal life.

And it's a free gift. You don't pay for it. You receive it freely.

But just like forgiveness of sins, you've got to open your heart and in faith and ask God to give it to you. This is the gift of the Holy Spirit to make us partake of God's nature. It's a free gift.

As you open yourself to it, God will give you that free gift, just like He gave you forgiveness of sins. Open your heart to be filled with the Holy Spirit to partake of more and more of God's nature. That eternal life that came into you when you were born again, to receive more and more of God's nature.

That's God's will for you.

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