

FREEDOM FROM SIN

Romans 6:1-23
Key Verse: 6:5,6

Lesson 6

"If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."

In chapter 5, Paul said that the law did not solve the problem of sin. In fact, according to 5:20, "The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more..." Our sin problem can only be solved by God's grace, and our gracious God is ready to pour out his abundant grace on sinners who come to him with repentant hearts and faith in Jesus. Jesus makes it clear that a disciple of Jesus cannot compromise with sin. There is no middle ground between sin and righteousness.

But for legalistic people who are looking for a loophole that will give them an excuse to sin freely, this statement in 5:20 raises two important questions: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (6:1) and "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" (6:15) These questions do not come from a desire to please God; they come from a desire to keep on sinning. One who thinks he can misuse God's grace and continue in his life of sin does not understand the meaning of grace and does not know what it means to be a Christian. In dealing with these questions, Paul has a chance to explain what being a Christian really means.

When we become Christians, we are no longer in Adam. We are in Christ. We are united with Christ and become a part of the new humanity which began with him. Chapter 6 shows us how this union with Christ frees us from sin and death. In this new freedom we may grow in holiness, that is, grow in the image of Jesus.

1. Baptized into his death

When Jesus' disciples asked him for seats beside him in glory, he asked them, "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" When they said, 'Yes,' Jesus said, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with..." (Mk 10:38,39) Jesus was talking about his cup of suffering and his baptism of death. Romans 6:3 says, "...Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" Becoming a Christian means being baptized into his death, that is, dying with Jesus. Paul said in Gal 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave

himself for me." To die with Jesus means to repent sincerely; it means nailing sin and self to the cross with Jesus. God casts our sins in the depth of the ocean. When I died with Jesus, my old self was crucified with him. I am no longer a slave of sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. If we die with Jesus, then we will rise with him to live a new life.

John the Baptist announced Jesus' arrival with the words, 'I baptize with water but he will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' The water baptism of John was a symbol of repentance. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit which Jesus gives that unites us with Jesus in his death and in his resurrection. It is the Holy Spirit who applies the gospel to my life. He is the one who gives me new birth and enables me to live a new life as a child of God and a citizen of God's kingdom.

2. Instruments of righteousness (11-14)

When we become Christians we are no longer in Adam; we are in Christ. We are set free from sin. This is God's grace. This does not mean, however, that the spiritual battle has ended. The battle has just begun. It is not the time to relax, or be fooled by our feelings. He tells us that we must claim the victory by counting ourselves dead to sin but alive to God In Christ. (11)

Even though we are in Christ and sin and death have no power over us, Satan tells us lies and seeks to draw us back into slavery. Jesus calls him the "ruler of this world." We must know that we are living in enemy territory. The victory which we have in Christ does not mean that we have no battle to fight. Verse 12 says, "... Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.." This verse makes it clear that we still have mortal bodies; we still have passions which make sinful demands. There would be no need for such a command if there were no battle with sin left to be fought.

How then do we claim the victory that Jesus promises? Paul says, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness." (13) (The Korean Bible translates the word, "instruments" as "weapons.") This makes it clear that we are in a war. No one can live in neutral territory. We must actively give our minds and hearts, our hands and feet to God to be used by him as instruments of righteousness. This means that we must make a decision of faith to live positively as servants of God.

3. Servants of God (15-23)

In verses 15-23 the word 'slave' is repeated. A slave belongs to another. We don't like to think of ourselves as slaves, but as a matter of fact, we are slaves of

whoever we obey. (16) If we obey the demands of our sinful natures, we are slaves of sin. If we obey God and keep his laws, we are slaves of righteousness, slaves of God. The only truly free person is one who is a slave of God.

Verse 17 says, 'But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obey the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.' This means that we are set free from our slavery to sin. Our slavish natures are changed and with our whole hearts we may love and obey Jesus. We become like the servants at the wedding feast in Cana who filled the water jars to the brim, wholeheartedly obeying Jesus. We are free, and we joyfully use our freedom to serve God.

No one stays still; either sin is making increasingly greater demands on us and we find ourselves caught in a life of ever increasing wickedness, or we are yielding ourselves to God and growing in holiness. When we make a positive decision of faith to offer ourselves to God, he works in us by his grace to purify our hearts and lives and help us to grow in the image of Jesus. The outcome of the life of slavery to sin is ever-increasing wickedness which leads to death; the outcome of the decision to give ourselves and our members to God for his use is that we grow in holiness and grow in Jesus and the outcome is eternal life. We must make a choice. We cannot just ignore the spiritual battle and go about our own worldly business, living our own selfish lives. To do so is to become a slave again of Satan.

Paul had lived under the law and had tried to serve God. He discovered that he could only serve sin. God's grace was wonderful. God's grace changed him from a servant of sin into a servant of righteousness. We are not under the law, but under grace. So we may serve God with thankful hearts and obey the gospel with our whole hearts. When we were in Adam, we gradually slipped deeper and deeper into sin until the fruit of death came. But in Christ, we have been set free to grow in holiness and righteousness. As we offer ourselves to God as his slaves, we reap the fruit of holiness and receive as a gift, eternal life. We are alive in Christ, so we must grow and bear fruit.