

Growing in Grace

Lesson # 6

Emancipated? Then Live Like It!

Romans 6:1-23

[Taken from "The Grace Awakening" by Charles Swindoll. (Dallas:Word, 1990)]

Introduction

Slavery was one of the main issues of the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln said of the war in his 2nd inaugural address in 1865 only weeks before his assassination: *"Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained... Each looked for an easier triumph... Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. [How strange it is] that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces."* [Carl Sandburg. Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years, one volume edition (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1982), p. 664. as quoted by Chuck Swindoll, The Grace Awakening (Dallas:Word Publishing, 1990), p.103]

The Emancipation Proclamation was publicly stated on New Year's Day, 1863. It wasn't until December 18, 1865 that the 13th Amendment was officially adopted, abolishing slavery in the United States. However, many slaves continued to live on as slaves.

Shelby Foote, in his three-volume work on the Civil War, documents an unexpected reaction: *"[Most slaves] could repeat, with equal validity, what an Alabama slave had said in 1864 when asked what he thought of the Great Emancipator whose proclamation went into effect that year. 'I don't know nothin' 'bout Abraham Lincoln,' he replied, 'cep they say he sot us free. And I don't know nothin' 'bout that neither."* [Shelby Foote, The Civil War: A Narrative (New York, NY: Random House, 1974), vol. 3, p. 1045. as quoted by Chuck Swindoll, The Grace Awakening (Dallas:Word Publishing, 1990), p.104]

Precious blood was shed on the battlefield to set those slaves free, yet many continued to live on as slaves for fear that free life would be dangerous. Even more disturbing and sad is the fact that the precious blood of Jesus Christ was shed on Calvary to set us free spiritually, but we still remain enslaved. Satan does his best to keep us down through shame, ignorance and intimidation. In this lesson, we want to focus on the Christian's Emancipation Proclamation in Romans 6:1-14.

But before we do, let's examine the preamble to that proclamation: as it is given in Romans 3:10-20

I. REVIEWING SOME THOUGHTS ON SLAVERY

There are Three points to consider about slavery:

1. All of us were born in bondage to sin! (3:10-20)

"As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; (11) There is none who understands: There is none who seeks after God. (12) They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." (13) "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips" (14) "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." (15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; (16) Destruction and misery are in their ways; (17) And the way of peace they have not known." (18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (19) Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

No one is without sin.

No has spiritual understanding.

No worthwhile spiritual achievement.

But because all lost people are in the same position anyone can be saved.

2. A day came when Christ set us free! (see vv. 21,22) *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, (22) even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;"* Paul says, *"There is no difference."* Why? (see Romans 3:23) *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* (NKJV)

3. Many Christians still live as though they are enslaved! Though emancipated by the blood of Christ, many still live like it never happened. They either rationalize it or cover it up or live in defeat.

II. UNDERSTANDING THE THEMES OF LIBERTY

Romans 6 is the Christian's Emancipation Proclamation. It is the foundational document declaring our freedom from Satan's intimidation and sin's dominion. It is where we learn how to live free from fear, guilt, shame and defeat.

Two groups of people are hi-lighted in Romans 6.

1. Those who don't claim their liberty and continue to live like slaves. (vv.1-14) *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (2) Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (3) Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (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 so we also should walk in newness of life.(5) 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. (8) 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 God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12) 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. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

This group nullifies grace. Many of us have died to sin's slavery, but keep it close by, not allowing it to be buried.

(Illustration – J Vernon McGhee)

2. Those who take their freedom too far and take advantage of liberty (vv. 15-23). *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! (16) Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (17) But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (18) And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (19) I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (21) What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (NKJV)

This group abuses grace.

Paul's responds to these two groups of people with :*"Certainly Not!"* (vv. 2,15). Paul is very shocked at these responses to the Gospel of grace and says: *"Perish the thought!"* or *"God forbid!"* "Why would an emancipated slave ever want to stay with a harsh plantation owner?"

III. CLAIMING OUR FREEDOM FROM SIN'S CONTROL

[The point of Romans 6 is that the old sinful nature that once ruled over us has been ousted from office. But we must learn how to keep it from regaining control of our lives. In order to have the power to walk a new kind of life: we must *know* something, we have to *consider* something, and we have to *present* something.

A. Know (vv. 3, 6, 9) *"... do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?"* (v. 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. .. (9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him."*

Baptize (baptizo) – primarily means “identification.” What we see here is that when we are immersed into Christ (water baptism by faith; cf. Mark 16:16), we enter into company with/assimilate spiritually with Christ. This union means that we have been planted together with Christ and our nature changes to His nature. We don’t initiate this union—God does. But when we answer His calling, we submit to Him by being immersed into Him, allowing God to change us into His nature. A victorious walk begins with knowing this fact. Whether we live as a victor or a victim depends upon how well we know it and believe it!

B. Reckon or Consider (v. 11) *“Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

The word, consider, comes from a Greek term meaning *“to calculate, to take into account, to figure.”* It is an accounting term—not just something we acknowledge in our minds, but something we must enter into the “ledger” of our minds. What is it that we are to enter into the ledger?

Since we are in Christ, we are dead to sin’s power. And being in Christ, we are alive with God’s new power! The bottom line is revealed in VERSE 12! *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.”* Romans 6 tells us that we are free from sin: “dead to sin.” We don’t have to sin we choose to do so by yielding.

But it is great to know that when we slip up, Christ is there to forgive us. 1 John 1:9 says – *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* (NIV)

It is even better to know that we don’t HAVE to sin! Both of these two truths are needed—certainly. But a lot of trouble could be avoided by simply considering the fact that you don’t have to sin in the first place.

C. Present (v. 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.”*

Not only must we make intelligent calculations based on the truth we know; we must also make a conscious presentation of ourselves to God. Paul spells this out in two commands—one negatively and one positively. First, Negatively He says —*“Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteous-ness.”* **“STOP YIELDING TO SIN.”** Why? Because we are no longer slaves. We’ve been set free!

Then secondly Positively He says —*“Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead,...as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you.”* **“START YIELDING TO GOD.”** Since our old master has been run off, it’s ludicrous that we should run after him to endure ourselves to his service again. Instead, we should present ourselves to our new Master and embrace Him for the freedom that He has given us!

Conclusion

Taking a Necessary Warning to Heart

1. Despite the fact that slavery was abolished, plantation owners were determined to keep their slaves. This is the same determination Satan has with us.
2. In order for you to leave the security of your old way of life, you need courage to walk in freedom's fields and amber waves of grace. You need to decide that you will no longer live in slavery, never looking back. You will need a grace awakening!
3. You need to KNOW you have been bought out of slavery by Christ.
4. You need to CONSIDER that you are free from sin's slavery.
5. You need to PRESENT yourself as an instrument of righteousness to God.

Shortly after Congress passed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Abraham Lincoln said these words: *"We are like whalers who have been on a long chase. We have, at last, got the harpoon into the monster, but we must now look how we steer, or with one 'flop' of his tail he will send us all into eternity."* [Henry J. Raymond, *The Life, Public Services, and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, NY: Darvy and Miller, 1865), p. 752. as quoted by Chuck Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Dallas:Word Publishing, 1990), p.122]

His proclamation led to an escalation in the Civil War. The impaling of freedom's harpoon brought a flailing response from the whale of the plantation owners. Many of us have just plunged our iron barb into the breaching whale of legalism. Now we know the same feeling of the whalers and of Abraham Lincoln. Defeating legalism is going to be tough—watch out for the tail.