
ROMANS

PART 5: FREEDOM IN CHRIST, PART 1

ROMANS 5:1-6:23

ROMANS OVERVIEW

PROLOGUE (ROMANS 1:1-17)

1. **“THE WRATH OF GOD” (ROMANS 1:18-3:20)**
2. **“THE GRACE OF GOD” (ROMANS 3:21-4:25)**
3. **“FREEDOM IN CHRIST” (ROMANS 5:1-8:39)**
 - a. Freedom to Hope (5:1-21) ← We are here
 - b. Freedom from Sin (6:1-6:23) ←
 - c. Freedom from the Law (7:1-25)
 - d. Freedom in the Spirit (8:1-39)
4. **“BUT WHAT ABOUT THE ISRAELITES?” (ROMANS 9:1-11:36)**
5. **“THE GOSPEL IN EVERYDAY LIFE” (ROMANS 12:1-15:33)**

CLOSING (ROMANS 16:1-27)

PART 5 OVERVIEW

- Freedom to Hope (5:1-21)
- Freedom from Sin (6:1-23)
- Application: Stand Firm in Your Freedom

FREEDOM TO HOPE:

ROMANS 5:1-21

REMEMBERING WHERE WE'VE BEEN: ROMANS 1-4

- Romans 1-4 marks a major unit in the book of Romans. Paul began this unit by talking about the sad plight of mankind: because of our sin, we are deserving of God's wrath. But then Paul tells us that God has created a way for us to be made "right" with Him: by believing in Jesus—who God put forward as a sacrifice for our sins—we can now experience salvation. It is faith in Jesus that grants us our salvation.
- In a sense, Romans could have ended with Romans 4 (or even Romans 3): if all Paul was concerned about was how to "get saved," he has given us his answer.
- Paul is not content, however, just to leave it at that: he wants to make it clear that the grace that we have received also has a transforming effect on the life of the believer. A believer now lives a certain way because of God's grace in their life. (Note: It is not that we are *saved* by how we live. We are saved by grace through faith.)
- One of the key concepts in Romans 5-8 is "freedom": because of God's "free" grace in our life, we are now given "freedom" in several different areas. We have:
 - Freedom to Hope (Romans 5:1-21)
 - Freedom from Sin (Romans 6:1-23)
 - Freedom from the Law (Romans 7:1-25)
 - Freedom in the Spirit (Romans 8:1-39).
- This session, we will deal with "freedom to hope" and "freedom from sin." Next session, we'll talk about "freedom from the law" and "freedom in the Spirit."

"IT'S THE HOPE THAT KILLS YOU"

- There's a phrase that is used in British "football": "it's the hope that kills you." The idea behind this phrase is that the more that you "hope" that your team will win, the more crushing the defeat is when your team doesn't end up victorious.
- That's an interesting thing about hope. Hope is almost vital to human existence. And yet sometimes what we "hope" will happen won't come true.
- Can the same be said about our Christian existence? We are "hoping" to be with God at the end of time, but how can we be assured of that? What if God changes His mind? What if our sins are not really forgiven? How can we be sure that God will save those who believe in Jesus at the end of time? This is exactly what Paul deals with in Romans 5.

FREEDOM TO HOPE: ROMANS 5:1-21

“IT’S THE HOPE THAT SAVES YOU!”

- Paul wants to make it clear in this section that our “hope of salvation” is not some wishful-thinking—it’s something we can be certain of:

*¹ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and **we celebrate in hope of the glory of God...** ⁵ **and hope does not disappoint.** because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. – ROMANS 3:1-2, 5*

- Once again, Paul is probably motivated here by his Jewish background: in Jewish thinking, one couldn’t know whether they were truly “saved”—and whether they would be found “right” with God—until the very end of time. It wasn’t until judgment day that God’s verdict on a person’s life would be made known. The radical message of the cross is that the moment someone believes in God, they are declared “right” with God, and that verdict cannot be undone: God declares in the present the verdict that He will announce in the future.
- Therefore, while in a sense we are living in “hope” of what we will receive at the end of time, this is not like a “normal” hope that may not come true: “and hope does not disappoint,” Paul writes (Romans 5:5).
- Paul makes it clear that this “verdict” that God declares over us does not mean that we won’t suffer in this life, but even suffering has a purpose—to instill within us the character that makes us more like Christ, leading to even more hope:

*³ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, **hope**; ⁵ and hope does not disappoint.... – ROMANS 5:3-5A*

- But how can we be sure that this hope “won’t disappoint”? How can we be sure that God won’t decide to change His mind at the end of time? Paul answers this question in two ways:

1. If God sent Jesus to die for His enemies, how much more will He save those who have decided to believe in Jesus? (Romans 5:6-11).

- Paul discusses this in Romans 5:6-11, with the key verse being Romans 5:10:

*⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ **For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.** – ROMANS 5:6-10*

- The point Paul is making here might be paraphrased like this:

“If God did something really good for us when we were on His “bad side” [God sent Jesus to die for us while we were His enemies], how much more can we trust that God will do something good for us now that we are on His “good side” [allow us into heaven at the end of time]?”

FREEDOM TO HOPE: ROMANS 5:1-21

“God, Paul is arguing, has already done the harder thing: taken rebellious sinners and brought them back into relationship with himself. We can, for that reason, be quite confident that he will accomplish the easier thing: vindicate on the last day those whom he has justified and reconciled.”

- Douglas Moo, *Encountering Romans*

2. Jesus' life, death and resurrection has reversed (in the believer) the sentence of death because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21).

- The second way that Paul proves that our hope will “not be disappointed” is much more theological in tone: Christ's death and resurrection has the effect of undoing the inherited sin and punishment we received because of Adam.
- One of the things that the Bible makes clear is that we have—in some way, shape or form—“inherited sin” that we have received from our common ancestor, Adam. It is this inherited sin that both...
 - causes us all to sin (we have a “sin nature”) and
 - brings physical (as well as spiritual) death.
- This sin, then, has served as a “death sentence” on all of us: though we come into this world physically alive, we, in a sense, live as “dead men walking.”

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned.... – ROMANS 5:12

- What Paul makes clear in Romans 5:12-21, however, is that Jesus' death and resurrection has enabled those who believe in Jesus to no longer live under the sentence of death. Jesus, not Adam, becomes the representative for those who have put their faith in Jesus.

¹⁵ But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶ And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ¹⁷ For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

- ROMANS 5:15-19 NLT

- Within this passage, Paul shows how Jesus has undone (for those who believe) the “curse” that we have received because of Adam.

FREEDOM TO HOPE: ROMANS 5:1-21

- This “undoing” is clearly shown through a series of “just as” / “so also” phrases:

v. 18	Just as Adam brought condemnation	So also Christ brought justification and life
v. 19	Just as Adam made many sinners	So also Christ made many righteous
v. 21	Just as sin reigned in death	So also grace reigns, leading to life

“As sons and daughters of Adam we enter the world spiritually dead and sinners. But God, in his grace, has reversed the baleful results of Adam’s sin by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us. Such an imputation is an act of grace; it is totally undeserved.”

- Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*

- The outcome of all of this is assurance: God wants us to live in this life assured that He will save us at the end of time! Therefore, we are free to hope!

FREEDOM FROM SIN

ROMANS 6:1-23

THE QUESTION (6:1)

- Paul has repeatedly talked in the book of Romans about how amazing God's grace is—how in need we are of it, and how the grace of God is one of God's most amazing qualities. But that raises an interesting thought: if God's grace is so amazing and so worthy to be praised, and if every time a Christian sins, God gives that Christian His grace, then shouldn't we sin as much as possible to highlight more of God's grace? This is the question that Paul asks in Romans 6:1:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? – ROMANS 6:1

- This isn't the first time Paul has dealt with this topic. He did it once before, though very briefly:

And why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), "Let us do evil that good may come"? Their condemnation is just. – ROMANS 3:8

- From this, it appears as though this may have been a common objection people had about the gospel message that Paul preached. It appears as though people accused Paul of teaching "lawlessness": if we don't need God's law to be right with God, and if God gives us grace for our sin, then what's to stop a person from just doing whatever they want?
- So what is Paul's response to this thought? Does the grace of God give us the freedom to now sin as much as we like?

THE ANSWER (6:2-11)

- Paul's response is one of the strongest repudiations possible in the Greek language:

¹ *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?"* ² **May it never be!**
– ROMANS 6:1-2A

- The reason that Paul gives is interesting:
 - Paul doesn't deny that God will forgive a sinner for as much sin as they have committed. (God's grace, is, indeed, unlimited!)
 - Instead, Paul makes it clear that it doesn't make sense for someone who has put their faith in Jesus to continue to live a sinful lifestyle, since because of our faith in Jesus we have "died" to that way of life!

FREEDOM FROM SIN: ROMANS 6:1-23

- This is what Paul says in Romans 6:2 in its entirety:

*May it never be! **How shall we who died to sin still live in it?** – ROMANS 6:2*

- Paul is not saying here that a Christian will never sin in this life. “Sin” here doesn’t refer to individual *sins* (notice “sin” is not plural), but instead it refers to a **life lived for self and not for God** (see Romans 14:23 – “whatever is not from faith is sin”). What Paul is saying is that **before we were a Christian, all we could do was “sin,” since we could never live for God. Thus sin was our “master.”** Now, that we are a Christian, however, we have “died” to that life and are to live for God—which to Paul is a much better existence. **Why would you continue to live a lifestyle that you have “died” to and been set free from?**

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. ⁶ We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. . . . ¹¹ So you should also consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. – ROMANS 6:5-7, 11

- The end result of this, Paul says, is that God has enabled us to live a new life that is no longer dominated by selfish and self-serving thoughts. A new era has dawned in the life of every believer since they are now, by the power of the Spirit (who Paul will talk about in Romans 8), able to live for God (6:11)!

Life Before Christ

Life under the “rule” of sin:
we did not know God and could not live for
God, and so life was dominated by sin

Life After Christ

Life under the “rule” of Jesus:
We know God and now can live for Him,
and so life now becomes about pleasing Him

- One more thing needs to be pointed out: when talking about our “death” to sin, Paul actually tells us something significant: he tells us that **when Christ died, we died too:**

³ Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. . . . – ROMANS 6:3-4

- There is a lot of debate as to what “baptism” Paul is referring to. Whatever it is, the point Paul is making is clear—if mysterious: we actually died with Christ on the cross: Christ didn’t just die *for* us—He also died *with* us!

“By trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we were, by an unfathomable divine miracle, taken back 2,000 years, as it were, and made to participate in our Savior’s death and to be buried with Him, burial being the proof of death. The purpose of that divine act of bringing us through death (which paid the penalty for our sin) and resurrection with Christ was to enable us henceforth to walk in newness of life.”

- John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*

FREEDOM FROM SIN: ROMANS 6:1-23

THE IMPLICATION: LIVE OUT YOUR FREEDOM (6:12-23)

- Having established that Christians are now dead to sin and alive to a new way of life in Jesus Christ, Paul makes it clear that we have a responsibility: to live out our newfound freedom from sin.
- This is a theme that we find throughout Paul’s writings. After talking about what God has done for us, Paul makes it clear that we now have a responsibility to live that out: we have to “appropriate” for ourselves what God has given us.
- Interestingly, Paul does make it clear that a Christian could continue to live in sin, if they chose:

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness... – ROMANS 6:12-13

- But to Paul, it doesn’t make sense why anyone would choose that way of life: why would you continue to “live” for something that you have “died” to? Or, asked another way, why would you want to become a “slave” to an old way of life when you can now become a “slave” to God’s new life for you?

17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 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. – ROMANS 6:17-19

- It only makes sense to live in this new way because the outcome of being “slaves” to righteousness is eternal life, whereas the outcome of being “slaves” to sin was eternal death:

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. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – ROMANS 6:20-23

- What Paul says in Romans 6:20-23 can be represented in chart form:

	Status	Result	Outcome
Before we were Christians (v. 20-21, 23a)	slaves of sin, free from righteousness	fruit bringing shame	death
Now that we are Christians (v. 22, 23b)	free from sin; slaves of God	fruit bringing sanctification	life

- For Paul, the choice is clear—and it should be for us as well!

APPLICATION:

“STAND FIRM IN YOUR FREEDOM”

1. God has given us an amazing gift by setting us “free” from sin and enabling us to live for Him.
2. This is a theme repeated throughout Scripture: God has enabled us to fully and completely obey Him:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. – 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

3. But Paul makes it clear that there will continue to be a temptation to follow our old “master”: the temptation of sin is always around us.
4. Part of living holy lives, therefore, is learning to listen to God’s voice and to ignore the voice of that master.
5. There are two steps to this:
 - Becoming more and more filled with God’s voice through the studying of God’s Word, prayer, and Christian fellowship.
 - Removing ourselves from environments where our old master’s voice is especially strong.
6. Through this “renewing of our mind” (Romans 12:2), we increasingly learn which voice to follow and experience the *life* that comes from it!

Where do you need to distance yourself from your old “master’s” voice?
How can you fill yourself with Jesus’ voice?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What's an example you have of the "hope that kills you"? When have you hoped for something that came to reality?¹
2. Read Romans 5:6-11. Observe in this passage the **past, present and future** work of God: according to Paul what *did* God do for us, what *does* God do for us, and what *will* God do for us? How can we know that God will for sure accept those who believe in Jesus into His presence at the end of time?
3. Read Romans 5:21. How do we see "sin reigning in death" in the world around us? Where do we see examples of "grace reigning"?
4. In Romans 6:1, we see this issue that comes out of Paul's teaching on grace: if our salvation is all of grace, then there is a fear is that nothing will motivate godly behavior.
 - a. An example of this teaching today is what is called "cheap grace": since Jesus forgives us, we can do whatever we want to do as a Christian. Where have you seen examples of this teaching in Christians or in the church today?
 - b. Paul's response this idea of "sinning so that grace might increase" is found in Romans 6:2-10. According to Paul, why doesn't God's grace lead to more sin? Put Paul's response into your own words. What surprises you about what Paul says? What he doesn't say?
5. Read Romans 6:12-13. What would it look like to daily "present" the members of our body "as instruments of righteousness to God"? Get very practical and concrete. What could you do daily in this area to make sure you are serving God and not sin?
6. In Romans 6:23, Paul famously says that the "wages of sin is death." Sin is deceiving; though we think it will bring us "life," it often leaves us "dead." Sin never (ultimately) brings us what we think it will. The Apostle Peter puts it like this, "Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11). How have you seen sin "wage war" against your own soul in periods of your life? What helped you finally recognize this so that you could overcome your sin?
7. Read the six points on page 54. Where do you need to distance yourself from your old master's voice? How can you fill yourself with Jesus' voice?

¹ Some questions in this section adapted from N.T. Wright, *Romans (N.T. Wright Bible Studies for Everyone)*.