

The Freedom of God

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. And as Glenn said before, it's the way that you primarily speak to us. And so, Father, we pray that you would help us to have ears to hear, minds to understand, and hearts that would seek to obey. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I wonder if you can guess who this person is. He was born in 1941 as Robert Alan Zimmerman. No? Okay. He's a famous musician, perhaps famous for the fact that he cannot sing very well.

Got it already, yeah. He wrote songs such as Blowing in the Wind and The Times They Are Changing. He became known as Robert Dylan, or rather Bob Dylan. Here's the next slide, a picture of him. And even he admits he can't sing.

But there's another song that Dylan wrote called You're Gonna Have to Serve Somebody. Our next slide are the words. And just have a listen. So if you click the sound thing.

You may be a state trooper, it might be a young turd. You may be the head of some bigger TV network. You may be rich or poor. You may be blind or lame.

[1 : 1 5] Maybe living in another country under another name. But you're gonna have to serve somebody. Yes, you are. You're gonna have to serve somebody.

Serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil. Or it may be the Lord. But you're gonna have to serve somebody. Serve somebody.

Amen. I love the chiming in at the end. You know, it's very kind of head moving. But if you just go back to that slide, he's kind of picked up something that's in our passage today.

I mean, apart from the dubious rhyming of Turk and network. He's got a truth there, hasn't he? You see, there are all different people we serve today, whether a boss at work or a boss at home, a parent if you're a child, a doctor if you're a patient.

We all serve and obey someone in life. But according to Romans 6 and Dylan, actually, there are ultimately two bosses we all serve. Dylan says the Lord or the devil, but Romans 6 puts it like sin or God.

[2 : 2 3] They're the two options. We all serve either one or the other. And in Romans 6 today, Paul's big point is this. If you are a Christian, then you've been freed from serving sin to serve God.

So serve God. That's it. That's the big point, the big idea. And to drive it home, he actually makes this point twice, though in slightly different ways.

So if you've got an outline in your bulletin, that'll be helpful. So pull it out for a moment. Let me show you. Hopefully you've got the right outline. It says judges up the top, then you've probably got the wrong outline. We're on Romans. But there's two columns.

And the passage splits in half, which I've represented in two columns. And at the top of each column are the verses 1 to 14 and 15 to 23. And you'll see that each column follows the same pattern.

So down the left-hand side, there's a question and answer, followed by the reason, followed by some application and encouragement. Both halves of the chapter or the two columns follow the same pattern because he's making the same point twice.

[3 : 27] And the answer is because some people thought that his gospel message actually encouraged people to sin.

You see, if you look at verse 20 of chapter 5, just above there in your Bibles, Paul has just said that where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

And so if we sin more, God will actually graciously forgive us more. That's the great news of the Christian message, the gospel. But for some people listening to Paul, this message then seems to promote sin.

They say, well, we should actually sin more so that God's grace, which is a good thing, will increase more. Shouldn't we? Do you see their logic there? You know, if God's grace is going to increase when we sin, so let's just sin some more then.

Doesn't your message, Paul, promote sinning more? You see the question in verse 1? What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

[4 : 39] You can see their logic, can't you? If God will increase his grace or generosity to forgive us, then why not sin more so that God's grace will increase more? Make God look even more gracious.

Make God look even better. Now, there is a sense of logic to it. But it's a perverse kind of logic. It would be like saying, well, back in 2009, when we had the bushfires here in Victoria, the firefighters did such a great job.

Let's light some more bushfires so they can continue to do a great job. That's the same kind of logic. It's logical, but it's perverse. It's evil. And so Paul's answer in verse 2 is by no means.

No way, Jose, not a chance. Don't be ridiculous. We don't go on sinning to increase grace. Not just because it's a perverse kind of logic, but because we've actually died to sin.

That's the fundamental reason Paul gives next in verse 2.2. He says, we are those who have died to sin. So how can we live in it any longer? We've died to it.

[5 : 45] He says, we're finished with sin. We're no longer in a relationship with sin. Now, you may never have thought you were in a relationship with sin to start with. You know, you never asked it out on a date. Never stayed up late talking about life, gazing to the stars together.

So what relationship? Well, the one we were all born into. Do you remember chapter 5? Because of the first Adam, we were all born sinful, sinners.

We were born with a sinful nature, which meant we were all born as slaves to sin, you see. And sin had a certain power over us such that we actually naturally wanted to please ourselves rather than God, like Cain did, really.

And as I said a couple of weeks ago, you don't have to teach children to be sinful. It just comes naturally. But it's not just children. It's adults, too. I mean, do people in general normally follow God or themselves, left to their own devices?

Themselves, isn't it? But that's effectively serving sin. Sin is not just doing bad things. It's doing anything other than what God wants. That's why I like to write sin on this next slide with a capital I.

[7 : 00] Because it's about ignoring God. Doing what I want instead of what God wants. Sin is doing anything other than what God wants.

And so whenever we ignore God, whether it's to follow ourselves or someone else or the world, we're actually serving sin. Serving anything but God means we're serving sin.

Instead, there's only the two options, you see. People think being free means doing whatever we want, whenever we want. But doing what we want instead of what God wants, well, that's actually serving sin.

And so whether we realize it or not, we are slaves to sin. Whether we realize it or not, sin was our boss and we quite happily obeyed him. But Paul says in verse 2 here, you've now died to that relationship to sin.

You're not in a relationship with it where it's your boss who has power over you anymore. So why act as though you are? Why live in this relationship any longer? But the question is, how exactly have we died to sin?

[8 : 04] Well, Paul explains in verses 3 to 5. He says, Well, don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.

In order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. And verse 5, For if we have been united with him in a death like his, he will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Here, Paul starts off by talking about, don't you remember what happened when you were baptized? Because it's really a shorthand way of saying, you know, when you became a Christian. And he's saying, when you became a Christian, don't you know what happened to you?

You were united with Jesus. When you believed in him, it's as though you died with him. How? I mean, I wasn't hung on a cross. How does that work?

Well, it works by being united with Christ, as verse 5 puts it. Let me see if I can illustrate. I was very excited about marrying Michelle. Some 17, 18, something.

[9 : 09] Is she here? I don't know. No. 17 years ago, I think it was. I was looking forward to doing it. But she also had several thousands of dollars in her bank account.

And I was at uni. I was a poor uni student. And so I was quite excited. Because I knew the day that our wedding came, the day, the moment the minister declared us husband and wife, we would be united in God's sight.

And what was hers? Was now mine. And what was mine, \$15.25, would be hers.

Of course, it's not really why I married her. In fact, she spent it all on an overseas trip she'd been planning before she even met me. Not that I'm bitter about it. The point is, when you are united in marriage, what's theirs becomes yours and vice versa.

And it's the same when we become Christians. When we believe in Jesus, God unites us to him in his sight. So that he gets the punishment for our sin. And we get all that is his.

[10 : 09] His righteousness. His inheritance. And his achievements. Like his death. His burial. His resurrection. God credits these things to us as well.

That's what I was saying a couple of weeks ago with like the Australian cricket team. You know, when Australia lost the ashes, we have to unfortunately say we lost. Even though we didn't play cricket.

Why? Because we are united with them as Australians. And so they act on our behalf as our representatives. Well, so too does Christ, you see. When we are united with Christ as Christians, he becomes our representative who acted on our behalf such that we can say we have died to sin with him.

We have been buried with him. We have even been raised to new life with him. But the question, of course, is why did we need to die to sin in the first place?

Well, because it's the only way to be free from that relationship. Because sin not only has the power to incline our hearts to ignore God, but the penalty of sin is death.

[11 : 16] Verse 23 will say the wages or payment of sin is death. And so if we want to be free from sin and its rule over us, then the cost is our death. That's the debt we owe.

The price of our freedom from sin. But because we have died with Christ, then his death counts as our death. Such that our debt is now paid.

We are free to go from sin's rule. That's what Paul is getting at in verses 6 and 7. Do you see there? He says, You see the logic there?

In fact, verse 7 on the next side literally says, Anyone who has died has been justified from sin. In the US, I think it was, when a criminal was hung for his crimes, they used to write in the record books, John Smith was justified today.

He had a debt to society for his crimes. And now that he had died, he had paid his debt. And so he's now justified, free to go. Of course, he was hung.

[12 : 41] So he couldn't go anywhere. But with Jesus, our debt has been paid. We've been justified, free to go. Free from sin's penalty, which demanded our death.

Free from sin's power, which inclined our hearts to ignore God. Free from serving sin so that we can now serve God. Now, of course, this does not mean we're free from sin altogether.

We still battle with temptation, don't we? I think someone asked a question on this a couple of weeks ago. We still battle with particular sins. Everyone has their own particular sins.

Sin is still knocking at the door, as it did with Cain. But the thing is, we don't have to answer it. We can actually say no, because God has enabled us to say no. Sin is no longer our boss, whom we must obey.

Instead, God is our boss, and he has given us his spirit, who works in our conscience. Like a voice in our heads, incline our hearts to obey not sin anymore, but God.

[13 : 43] But Paul's point here is that because we have died with Christ to sin, we have been set free from serving sin. It's no longer our boss, no longer has any claim over us.

And just as Christ rose to new life to God, so too have we been raised to new life to serve God. And just skip down to verse 10 and 11, where Paul summarizes this point for us.

He says, the death Jesus died, he died to sin once for all. But the life he lives, he lives to God. And so in the same way, count yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in or with Christ Jesus.

Do you see what he's saying? Because we are with Christ, because we are united with Jesus, just as he died to sin and lives for God, so too we are to count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God.

And so we must serve God, which is exactly what he says next, verse 12. He says, therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

[14 : 54] No, no. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.

And offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness, of right living. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Verse 14, there is like Paul's encouragement. Sin shall no longer be your master. You've been freed from its rule and from its penalty of death. And so the application is resist sin and serve God.

In fact, serve God with every fiber of our being. We use every part of our body, our minds, our hands, our heads, our hearts, our feet, our mouths, to please God.

For he has set us free from sin to serve him. That's the application. Of course, instead of doing the hard work of resisting temptation and sin, it's just easy to think, well, God will forgive me anyway, won't he?

[16 : 04] And that's the second question, verse 15. We'll look at this section much more quickly. Verse 15, what then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? You're saying, well, if we're under grace, if we're going to be forgiven anyway, then why not just sin?

I've actually had people say this to me. Well, it doesn't matter if we sin, we're going to be forgiven. But again, Paul's answer is by no means. No way, Jose. Don't be ridiculous. Why not?

Well, he's just said that we are united to Christ. And so we've died to sin and live to God. And he says a similar thing here, but only he uses a different picture. This time it's a picture of slavery.

So verse 16, he says, Here, Paul says, If you keep obeying someone, acting as though you are their slave, then guess what?

You're their slave. If we keep deliberately sinning, we end up as slaves to sin again. But that's not who we are anymore. Do you see verse 17? But thanks be to God that though you used to be this slaves to sin, you've come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching.

[17 : 23] That is the gospel that has now claimed your allegiance. You've been set free from sin and have become slaves of God to righteousness, to live rightly. You see what he's saying?

We've heard the gospel, the message of Jesus. We've believed. And so we've been set free from serving one master now to serve another master, to live right lives, to do good.

And so we cannot keep deliberately sinning because we're no longer slaves to sin. And we've been set free to be slaves of God, to live his way, to please him, to live rightly, to do good.

And so Paul says, do it. Verse 19. He says, I'm using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations.

But here it is. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.

[18 : 24] See what he's saying? You're no longer slaves to sin, everyone. So don't act like it. You're slaves to God. So now act like that. Serve him with every part of your being.

Now, of course, it might not sound all that great going from slaves of sin to slaves of God. I mean, we're still slaves. But there's an eternity of difference between the two. And so Paul finishes the chapter with an encouragement that highlights the two types of slavery, the two ways to live.

Do you see verse 20? When we were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? The answer is nothing.

In fact, those things result in death. That's one type of slavery. Verse 22. But now that you've been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness.

And the result is eternal life. The slavery to sin was of no benefit to us. It only led to doing shameful things. And the result was death.

[19 : 29] Eternal death. Hell. But slavery to God gives us the benefit of right living that leads to holiness. And the result is life eternal. Heaven. And in the end, slavery to God is actually true freedom.

For we are living as we were created to live. As God's people, loved by him, who seek to serve him. This is a slight tangent, but I think it's helpful because we've misunderstood freedom.

So have a think about this. On the next slide is a train. Now, is this train free when it's on its rails or when it's off its rails? Is it free when it's on the rails as it was created to run or when it's off the rails?

So we have this idea of freedom where we have to be, you know, out of all bounds of control, off the rails, doing whatever we want to be free. But hang on a second. That's actually not how we were designed to live. True freedom is not about being outside of God's control.

No, true freedom is living as we were created to live. As his people. Slaves even. But slaves who have a loving master who gives and gives.

[20 : 41] Do you see verse 23? The difference between the masters? For the wages of sin is death. That's what sin gives us. Great master. But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

See the difference in the masters? Sin gives us death gladly. And that's what we deserve. But God gives us what we don't deserve. A gift.

Not only does he adopt us, us slaves as his precious children, but he gives us the amazing gift of eternal life. You can't buy that. But God did. He bought it at the great cost of his own son.

As it says, the gift of God is eternal life in, through, by Christ Jesus our Lord. And so, which master are you serving? As Bob Dylan wrote, you're going to have to serve somebody.

And the Bible says it's either sin that results in death, or it's God that results in life. So, which master are you serving?

[21 : 47] If you want to serve God and find eternal life, then trust in Jesus. Believe that it really is through Jesus that God forgives and gives life eternal.

Turn to Jesus and believe in him, and God will set you free from slavery with the result of eternal death. And for us who have trusted in Jesus, then are we serving him with every fiber of our being, with every part of our body, our thoughts, our speech?

Are they right? Are we doing good? Are we honoring God? Do we do good with our hands and our feet? Do we seek to please God and do good with our words, the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our minds, what we watch with our eyes?

Yesterday, we had the basketball grand final for my son. Last season, his team lost every single game. This season, they won the grand finals.

It was very exciting. And Tim even scored the final two points of the game to seal the victory. I don't know who was more excited, Tim or his parents. But during the game, the coach of the other team was using his body, his mouth and hands in particular, in a way that was not righteous.

[23 : 06] But at the end of the game, one kid from our team, he didn't celebrate with his mates straight away. No, immediately he went across to shake hands with that other coach and say thanks.

And then with every member of the team before even celebrating. Now, it may seem like a little thing, but he was a Christian kid using his body to serve God by doing good.

Whatever it looks like for you, we are to use our bodies, our minds, mouths, our entire bodies to serve God who freed us from slavery to sin.

Let me close with a true story I once heard. I was back in the days of the slave trade in America. And it was a very big and strong Negro slave who was put up for auction.

And because he was so strong and well built, many bidders gathered to bid for him as their slave. But just before the auction started, he yelled out in a loud voice, whoever buys me that man, I will kill.

[24 : 11] Needless to say, many bidders pulled out at that point. But a number didn't, despite the man continuing to say, the man who buys me, I will kill. Well, the price continued to go up and up until finally the slave was sold to a man for a very high price.

And as this slave stood before his new master, he gritted his teeth and said, I told you the man who buys me, I will kill. And at that, the new master said to the guards, take off his chains.

And they did. And the new master then said to his new slave, you're free. And the slave stared back in disbelief. So the man said it again, you're free.

You're free to go. Free to live. And according to the story, the freed slave then fell to his knees, took the hand of the man who had set him free and said, I will serve you for the rest of my life.

You see, that is what has happened to us in Christ. We've been set free from slavery to sin to serve Christ at an astronomically high price.

[25 : 21] The blood of Christ. And so will you serve him for the rest of your life? Let's pray that we would. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you that although we were slaves, we were slaves to sin and naturally ignored you living our own way.

You gave your only son to pay the price of our freedom. So that we could be freed from sin and death. Give a new life to serve you.

So father, help us to do this. We pray to serve you with every fiber of our being. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.