

Rom 6:6–14 “For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, ⁷ since a person who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, ⁹ because we know that Christ, having been raised from the dead, will not die again. Death no longer rules over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died, he died to sin once for all time; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey^[a] its desires. ¹³ And do not offer any part of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace.”

Introduction: The son of an emancipated slave, **Solomon Northup** was born free where he lived in upstate New York. He was a skilled worker, an accomplished violinist, and a family man. In 1841, two con men offered him lucrative work playing fiddle in a circus, so he traveled with them to Washington, D.C., where he was drugged, kidnapped, and subsequently sold as a slave into the Red River region of Louisiana. For the next twelve years **Solomon Northup** experienced inhumane treatment under various masters, especially under the cruel bondage of slaver, **Edwin Epps**. But in January 1853, Northup was finally freed by Northern allies who came to his rescue. The basis of their case: ***this man is not a slave—his legal status is “free,” he was born free and is not obligated to live in servitude to Epps or anyone else.*** He was restored to his home, his family, and with help he wrote this now famous book *12 Years a Slave* which was later made into a blockbuster movie.

In addition to being an enduring condemnation of chattel bondage, the book is ***a reminder that the institution of slavery, and the subsequent Jim Crowe laws*** was a moral cancer in our culture—epitomizing injustice. And Solomon’s story, like the American story, has a happy ending in this regard.

Today Paul means to tell us, as Christians, that in Christ we are born again to breathe the fresh air of liberty from unrighteousness—*it is for freedom that Christ has set you free.* And we are no longer to be enslaved to sin—the most awful, merciless task-master. In order for the believer to live in this new reality, there are four things Romans chapter 6 will commend us to...

1. We must comprehend the truth (6:1–10, 14). The Christian is emancipated from sin’s tyranny and made alive in Christ. These are the indicatives—this is what *is true* about the NT Christian.

- We were crucified, buried, and made alive with Christ (Rom 1:1–5, 10).
- Sin no longer has the power to enslave us (6, 17, 18, 20).
- We are no longer under the dispensation of the “law” but under the new administration of “grace” (6:14; John 1:17).
John says “For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” One dispensation was the administration of the law which was powerless against sin; the other is grace which saves us from the penalty of sin’s condemnation, but now enables us to say no to ungodly desires, and trains us for righteousness’ sake.

We must have a firm grasp that as believers in Christ we live in a new reality—we have union with Christ who was crucified, died, buried, and raised to life forevermore. And we are baptized *into Christ*, crucified and buried *with Christ*, and alive *to God in Christ*.

We are living saints—those who have been made holy and righteous in Christ.

Now, that was last week.

Paul goes on to say that in addition to knowing *what is true*...

2. We must count it true (6:11) “So, you too *consider yourselves dead to sin* and *alive to God* in Christ Jesus.”

The Christian must *count it as true*. We must *consider it* to be factual for us. Listen, so long as we just think that it’s true theoretically, or abstractly then we will never consider it true for us.

Romans 8:13 that “if you live according to the sinful nature you will die, but if by the Spirit you *put to death* (mortify) the misdeeds of the body you will experience life.”

Col 3:3–6 “*For you died*, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵ Therefore, *put to death what belongs to your earthly nature*: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, God’s wrath is coming upon the disobedient, ⁷ and you once walked in these things when you were living in them.”

Part of our being sanctified in Christ means we mortify, or put to death the misdeeds of the sinful flesh.

Illus. There is a town in Norway where no one is allowed to die. Susannah Keogh, with the *Irish Sun*, wrote: “Long-year-buen, Norway, a tranquil town in the middle of nowhere, is so remote that residents are not allowed to die there. Dying has been banned on the island since 1950, when it was discovered that **bodies in the local cemetery were not decomposing because of the deep frost and the chilly temperatures**. The island’s climate is so arctic that in the 2000’s, scientists ... tested corpses buried there who succumbed to the 1917 influenza virus – and to their amazement, retrieved live samples of the virus. Residents had been living among the deadly virus for decades, without even realizing it. The graveyard no longer takes any new bodies for fear that the disease will spread throughout the island, meaning that even those who’ve lived their whole life on the island, cannot be buried there. Instead, terminally ill residents have to be shipped to the mainland to prepare for death.”

We may know and understand that in Christ we have been crucified, buried—that we are dead to sin. But in order for the mortification process of our old nature to take effect in sanctification we must *count and consider ourselves dead to sin and allow the process of sanctification to put to death the misdeeds of the body*. We must allow ourselves to die to sinful patterns and habits.

Paul says, in addition to comprehending the truth, counting it to be true for us...

3. We must conform our lives to the truth (6:12–13) “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. 13 And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.”

Knowing what is true, and considering it true for us, we must now comport our lives with the truth. Whereas vv. 1–10 gave us the *indicatives*—presenting the believer’s new reality; vv. 12–13 give us the *imperatives*—challenging us to active resistance against sin and unrighteousness. Offering the parts of our body and our entire selves to God as instruments in this ongoing war between the forces of death and Christ’s life; between light and darkness; between sin and righteousness.

Question: If all of this is true, then how is it even possible for believers to sin at all? Wouldn’t a genuine Christian just never be tempted with sin? To answer this, we must understand the nature of God’s Kingdom reign in the world.

Eph 1:22 “And **he subjected everything under his feet** and appointed him as **head over everything** for the church.” Christ has ascended and been exalted to his throne.

Heb 2:8 “For in **subjecting everything** to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. As it is, we **do not yet see everything subjected** to him.” Yet, his inaugurated Kingdom awaits a final consummation and full realization.

The already-but-not-yet-Kingdom: We must understand that Christ’s Kingdom (the domain of his sovereign reign of grace) has already come (inaugurated and announced in the gospel), and it is present in the heart and life of every person who confesses Jesus as Lord and every church that gathers around his Word—the symbol of his presence; the table—the symbol of his covenant; and the water—the symbol of his grave now defeated and left forever empty.

Heb 2:14–18 “Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he does not reach out to help angels, but to help Abraham’s offspring. ¹⁷ Therefore, he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in matters pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For since he himself has suffered when he was tempted, **he is able to help those who are tempted.**” Having defeated sin, death, and hell—Jesus lives to make intercession for his followers who daily fight the good fight against sin, death, and hell. We are actively engaged in war for control over our lives. And the believer has an advocate with the Father—our High Priest who represents us, resupplies us (in the trenches and on the frontlines of war), and who reforms us (remaking us in the image of the holy righteous Son).

Here's the point: we need help. As we conform our lives to this settled belief that this is true and it's true for us—the Spirit transforms us by fits and starts, from glory to glory, one step and one day at a time.

Paul says the Christian who is saved by grace through faith must comprehend the truth of their emancipation, consider it true for themselves, as they conform their lives to the truth of it with the help of Christ who intercedes for us; and lastly...

4. We must contemplate the alternatives (6:20–23) “For when you were slaves of sin, *you were free regarding righteousness*.²¹ So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is **death**.²² But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in **sanctification**—and the outcome is eternal **life**!²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

As believers we must reflect on the life that sin produced—*death*. And reflecting on the “fruit” produced by righteous living—a sanctified life projecting into eternal life with God.

“you were free regarding righteousness”—yeah, see? That’s what everybody in the culture thinks. Free to be ME! Free to throw off the shackles of God’s Word and his authority. Liberated from old-fashioned “morality” because it’s all just a “social construct.”

And what has this freedom from righteousness gotten us? What fruit has it produced in our culture?

- **A decline in our national mental health through hedonism:** Dr. Anna Lembke, of Stanford University studies the problem of addiction and what it does to the brain and the body. She found that the normal functioning of the human brain to process pleasurable experiences (you eat a piece of chocolate, get some good news, play a video game) is being disrupted in our society due to the repeated exposure to pleasure and the avoidance of necessary pain through self-discipline (what Paul refers to as “dying to self”). When you have a culture where there is the universal access to highly potent, massive quantities of dopamine, we’re bombarding our dopamine pathways with way more pleasurable experiences than our biology can process leading to a sharp increase in insomnia, dysphoria, irritability, chronic anxiety, cravings that we can’t shut off, severe depression and suicide. We’re literally making ourselves miserable through hedonism and pleasure seeking. She says, “The richest countries in the world have the highest incidents of suicide, anxiety, depression and deteriorating health.” Our brains were designed by God for moderation and we live in a world of extreme excess.

Social media accelerates it: In a hyper-prosperity, low-self-discipline age, where we were made for seasons of deprivation and a few embodied, intimate relationships—now we have everything all the time and we replace intimacy with masses of

disembodied, curated “profiles”—sure, you’re going to have some problems. That’s why young folks, when you turn 18 it is so vital that you stay connected to a local church, planting your life in the fellowship of Christ’s body.

The next effect I see of people declaring themselves “emancipated” from God’s Word and the reign of his grace is...

- **A sharp decline in the moral fabric of our society through dehumanization:** We have a generation that has been repeatedly lied to and *indoctrinated that a human identity is fluid, and malleable*—such that biological men can claim to be women, that a child can walk into the Boston Children’s Hospital (or any number of transition clinics), claim to be a male trapped in a female body—and walk out with a double mastectomy and a prescription for Testosterone hormones that permanently sterilize that young girl, making it impossible for her to de-transition. The sharp increase in de-transitioning youth who realize they were confused and needed wise counsel, not gender-affirming surgery. Now that industry is bracing for a flood of lawsuits. Where do the repentant turn? The culture has turned them away and dealt harshly and brutally with them. As we tell them the truth of the Gospel, we must show them mercy, compassion and grace.

Our so-called emancipation from God and his righteousness has also led to...

- **We’ve aborted an entire generation of precious babies:** A cold-hearted, brutal, merciless and godless generation snuffing out precious life made in the image of God as a system of birth control. While nations like China, Russia, Germany are facing population collapse—they literally don’t have the people to replace the jobs left open by dying and retiring Boomers; we’ve aborted the same number of people that comprises Gen. X. And where do these young women turn who are carrying around the guilt and anxiety induced by taking a human life? As the church we must extend Jesus’ grace and his mercy and show them the compassion and care that they were promised in the world and can never there.
- **Bible believing churches are now persecuted openly and brazenly in the public square:** Meet the Press, hosted by Chuck Todd, did a scathing hit piece on Pastor Doug Wilson in Moscow, ID this last week. Because Doug lives in a super woke and town, and because his church believes the gospel and shares it with the community (Bible believing evangelicals), he is not only experiencing the daily insults, reviling, and persecution of his town, but the MTP crew essentially painted him as some crazy intolerant cult leader. The right to freedom of expression in religious belief stops the cultural majority from using the state’s power to impose their beliefs on others. 350,000 congregations operate schools, pregnancy resource centers, soup kitchens, drug addiction programs, homeless shelters, counseling services, and adoption agencies. And they are feeling a sharp uptick in pressure to conform to the cultural story: *the individual is the decisive arbiter of truth about their own identity and therefore not answerable or subject to any transcendent authority.* And if that’s true then the people who live, preach, and persuade others to live according to God’s Word will become increasingly marginalized and mistreated.

What has our “freedom from righteousness” gotten us exactly?

Here's what Paul asks—it's a simple question: So, what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? What was the outcome? How is our commitment to hyper-self-indulgence, abortion on demand, mutilation of children, marginalizing of the Church and God's Word—how has that worked out for us? A culture that is addicted, depressed, anxious, factionalized and in a constant state of war, STD's rampant, and an emasculated oversexualized culture—what did that pattern of teaching produce in us? ***Death.*** The outcome of those things is death.

²² But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **And those are the two choices before us today. Life and death.**

Listen, for everything that is going haywire in our society, ***the bill is coming due.*** And the cost is death.

But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus and this, my friends, is our appeal today. **BE RECONCILED TO GOD. BE RECONCILED TO THE GOD WHO MADE YOU, WHO LOVES YOU, WHO GAVE HIMSELF TO DIE FOR YOU—AND NOW INVITES YOU TO THE ABUNDANCE OF RESURRECTION LIFE IN PLACE OF YOUR DEATH.**

Prayer: God we thank you that it is a fact we have been buried with Christ in baptism, having died to sin—we *count this as true for us.* And we conform our lives to the pattern of teaching in Christ, and renounce and repent of the things which lead to death in this world. And if ever we are tempted to leave Christ behind we just consider the alternative to a life of righteousness and peace with God—the world's system is in opposition to God and produces death. Amen.