

Psalm 19:12-14 (Opening)

- 12** *Who can discern his errors?
 Declare me innocent from hidden faults.*
- 13** *Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;
 let them not have dominion over me!
Then I shall be blameless,
 and innocent of great transgression.*
- 14** *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
 be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

Introduction

Have you ever heard of Juneteenth?

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the U.S. The history behind it goes something like this.

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger, commander of the post-Civil War Department of Texas, declared the institution of slavery dead in the state of Texas. In part, General Order number 3 stated:

"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

If you're a student of history, you probably noticed that June 1865 was two and a half years after the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation, the presidential Executive Order that freed all the slaves in those states that were in rebellion.

There are several stories as to why it took a year and a half for the news to make it to Texas, ranging between murder and political intrigue. Whatever the reason, there was a huge delay, and the news didn't reach Galveston Texas until two months after the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Court House.

We're not really much different than those slaves in Texas back in 1865. We have our freedom, but so many of us don't even know it, or choose to ignore the fact that we can just walk away and not worry about our slavery anymore. Some may have never heard the news of our emancipation from sin.

Dead to sin

We're continuing our study of Romans, and this week we begin in Romans chapter 6. We'll be looking at Romans 6:1-14, but I'm going to

break the reading up into the three paragraphs that are in the English Standard Version.

Romans 6:1-4

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Paul just finished saying that where sin increases, grace increases more. He starts here in chapter 6 with a common sense question. Since grace increases to always be more than sin, why shouldn't we keep sinning? That way there'd be more grace!

That's not how it works. Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that they were dead to sin, so they shouldn't be living in sin anymore.

"But that's hard! I can't stop sinning!"

Yes, you're right. We'll always be sinning until we die, but the point is we shouldn't be living in sin. We should be living by grace, and working to not sin. Peter puts it like this in 1 Peter 2:24.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Peter plays on the differences. He points out that since we're baptized into Christ, and He died bearing our sins, we don't have to carry them anymore. We, in effect, are dead with regard to our sins, and only live in His righteousness. Because He was wounded and died for our sins, we are healed, no longer open to attack from sin.

Back in Romans, Paul says that since we were immersed into Christ, we were immersed into, or participate with Him in His death. When it comes to the effects of sin, we died on the cross with Christ, if we are immersed into His death.

That sounds kind of strange and confusing. “Immersed into His death.” It almost sounds like a slasher movie. The point Paul is making is that when we die, sin has no effect on us anymore, so if we are included in Christ’s death, by being immersed into His death, sin no longer has its hold on us.

Let’s take a look at baptism. The word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek word baptize, which means to cleanse by immersing or submerging in water. I won’t get into the details of why the Bible translations we usually use don’t just say immerse, since that’s a valid translation of the word. Let’s just say it would offend some large organizations, so it’s safer just to transliterate rather than translate the word.

Baptism, or immersion, is a reenactment of the good news that we have in Christ. The good news is that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That’s the good news, because of the sacrifice that His death was for our sins. So, immersion is a symbolic reenactment of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection. When we’re immersed, we die to sin, and are raised to a new life.

Paul explains what we should be like after our immersion in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Alive to Christ

So after our immersion we're a new creation. We're a baby in Christ. We're sinless, because all our sins were removed from us during the immersion into Christ's death. We died with Christ, so past sin has no hold on us anymore.

Let's flip back to Romans 6 and pick back up in verse 5.

Romans 6:5-11

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Paul says we're no longer enslaved to sin.

I know what you're thinking: "But I still sin!"

Yup. So do I. That's human nature. But the thing is we're not **controlled** by it anymore. Before immersion, we lived for sin. Maybe we did good things, but sin was what controlled our lives. After immersion, we live for Christ, so our outlook is turned around 180 degrees!

Paul always emphasizes the new person who comes out of immersion. There is a change; it's not always dramatic, but there's a change. In Ephesians 4:20-24 Paul says this:

Ephesians 4:20-24

²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ! — ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul talks about the change after immersion like changing your clothes. You put off the old self, the old behaviors, and put on new, Godly behaviors. Yes, sometimes we slip up and put on those old, comfortable, sin-slippers. But we don't wear them all the time, and the more we grow in our understanding of God and how we're supposed to behave, the less we put them on.

Paul shares the best truth of the gospel with Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

2 Timothy 2:11-13

¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for:

- ¹² If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*
- if we endure, we will also reign with him;*
- if we deny him, he also will deny us;*
- ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—*

for he cannot deny himself.

We if we participate in His death, burial, and resurrection through immersion, we died with Him and we live with Him. Even if we're faithless He remains faithful. We are dead to sin, and alive in Christ, so sin has no hold over us.

Free from slavery to sin

Sin is like slavery. If you don't know any better, you don't know that life can be better. Or maybe life is so bad you just give up hope of it getting any better. The best and final part of the good news that Paul is talking about here in Romans 6 is that sin isn't in charge anymore.

Romans 6:12-14

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Since we're no longer bound to sin, because we've died and been buried through immersion, we can now chose to turn away from sin completely. We didn't have that choice before. In fact, it's our **responsibility** to turn away from sin, because, since God hates sin, we should, too. And since we're now bound to God instead of sin, we should be doing the things that God wants us to do.

Amazingly, the prophet Micah, around 700 years before Jesus, understood that God was going to do this; that He would actually forgive sins, not just cover them with the blood of cows and goats.

Micah 7:18-20

*¹⁸ Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity
and passing over transgression
for the remnant of his inheritance?
He does not retain his anger forever,
because he delights in steadfast love.*

*¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us;
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.
You will cast all our sins*

into the depths of the sea.
20 *You will show faithfulness to Jacob
and steadfast love to Abraham,
as you have sworn to our fathers
from the days of old.*

“He will cast our sins into the depths of the sea.” That’s pretty far away, and if my sins are at the bottom of the sea, I’m not going after them anymore. They can stay there.

Paul talks about sin not having dominion anymore over us. That’s pretty amazing. Think of it in terms of those slaves in Texas back on June 19th, 1865. Sin isn’t in charge anymore. We’re free, and by God’s power and righteousness we can do good things, and follow His will. Don’t allow parts of you to do what’s wrong, because God’s in charge of you now, not sin, so do God’s will.

Conclusion

Even though we supposedly abolished slavery here in the U.S more than a hundred and fifty years ago, slavery is still a major problem. Now it has a nicer sounding name: human trafficking. Human trafficking is most closely associated with pornography and prostitution, but is also still the same old slavery from centuries ago; forced labor. It’s basically the same as it was; no change.

No matter what we do, as long as there’s sin in the world, there will be slavery; slaves to sin, and slaves to sinners. That’s why the gospel is so important. We need to share the good news that we have; the good news that we don’t need to be slaves anymore. We should be yelling it in the streets! You can be free from whatever is keeping you as a slave.

Sin is a horrible thing, and it keeps us from really enjoying life. But God’s plan doesn’t include sin; in fact, it includes getting rid of sin,

taking our sin as far away from us as possible and throwing it to the bottom of the sea.

We don't have to be controlled by sin, because Jesus makes that freedom available to us. We can have our sins removed, washed away by being immersed into Christ's death, and then being raised as a new person, sinless and free.

Does that sound like a good deal?

John 8:34-36 (Closing)

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”