

Romans 6:1-11

¹What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We 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.

⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Do you know what happened on January 1st, 1863? On this day President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This document said that all slaves who lived in Union controlled areas were free. This was the beginning of the end of slavery in the United States. This leads me to my 2nd Question. What happened on January 31st, 1865? It was on this day the 13th Amendment was ratified which abolished slavery in all the United States. This meant the complete freedom for the many slaves in our entire country. All of these events which I just talked about wouldn't have happened if it were not for the fighting of the Civil War. In this war which eventually helped move this issue of freedom for the slaves to the forefront, approximately 500,000 soldiers gave their lives for this freedom. In fact, in the war at Gettysburg alone over 25,000 men lost their lives.

In this country Freedom is a big deal. Among the truths that we the people hold to be self-evident is that we are endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights one of them being Liberty or freedom. It is this freedom that motivates our foreign and domestic policy. Our sons and daughters have fought and died to secure, preserve, and maintain this freedom. So today our theme will talk about true freedom at a time it seems almost all Americans seem to be discussing the word freedom.

Theme: We Are Set Free!

- 1. By Jesus' death and resurrection**
- 2. To live for the God who saved us**

Freedom is also a big deal for Lutherans. How many of us know in some part these words from Ephesians 2:8, **“For it is by grace you have been saved.”** We cling to the grace of God because in the grace of God we find freedom. In the grace of God we find freedom from the devil and a world that

tries to ruin or cloud this beautiful teaching from God's Word. In the grace of God we find freedom from Churches who try to appeal to an emotional decision for Christ and burden us with guilt when we don't feel what he calls a personal relationship with Jesus. In the grace of God we are free. And how was this freedom won? Not by hundreds of thousands of soldiers giving their lives on a battlefield. No, it was by the death of one man named Jesus who was also the very Son of God. Jesus has suffered and died in our place. On the cross our debt of sin has been paid in full. As a result, forgiveness is free, forgiveness is without limit, and forgiveness is for all. There is nothing we need to do to get this forgiveness - no act of piety is required, no meritorious work is needed. **"For it is by grace you have been saved."**

There are some who say you cannot teach such liberty to people. They say if people are taught that there is nothing they need to do to be forgiven, well then they will see such a teaching as an open invitation to live in sin. They say that people will live sinful lives on purpose knowing they are already forgiven. They use this type of logic, "If God is ready to forgive all sins through Christ," they reason, "then there is no fear left to motivate people to follow God's commands." To such people Saint Paul writes his own Emancipation Proclamation or 13th Amendment, **"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"** With these words Paul responds to such concerns by reminding us that it is not fear but freedom that motivates us to live a life for Jesus.

It might help to be reminded who the slave master really is. Because I think some people and sometimes we also forget. Satan causes us to see religion as nothing more than a set of rules and regulations with all its commandments and creeds. Satan wants us to view the church as the entity that enforces those rules and regulations. Satan wants us to see God as the slave master and The Church as His whip.

But it is not God who has enslaved us. God created us to be free. It is sin that enslaves us. Later in this letter Paul writes, **"the sinful mind...does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."** (Romans 8:7-8) Sin does not allow you to do what you were created to do; what, in perfection, you want to do. In frustration Paul says, **"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."** (Romans 7:18) We cry out, "Sin won't let me be the Christian I want to be!" And then finally In John 8:34 Jesus sets the record straight when He says, **"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."** It is sin that seeks to enslave us.

Having set the record straight, Paul explains our emancipation from sin. He speaks not of a president's signature but of the Sacrament of Baptism. In verse 4 he writes, **"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."** Our baptism connects us to Christ. His death, the one that paid for our sins, becomes our death. The chains that sin used to bind us were forged in the guilt of our own actions. But Jesus' death on the cross has paid for our sin; it has broken those chains, it has taken our guilt away. The chains of sin no longer bind us. Paul explains in verse 6, **"our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."** Through baptism we are connected to Jesus' death that frees us from the chains of sin.

Paul continues his explanation of our emancipation from sin in verse 8. **“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”** Our baptism does not only connect us to the cross, it also connects us to the empty tomb. It not only connects us to Jesus’ death, but it also connects us to Jesus’ life. That means not only have we been released from the chains of guilt, but also we have been equipped, empowered, enabled to do good or things that please God. Your baptism connects you to Jesus’ life. Paul expounds on that life in verse 10 when he writes, **“the life he lives, he lives to God.”** Through baptism we are connected to Jesus’ life that allows us to live a life for God.

2. To live for the God who saved us

Now you might be thinking, “that is all fine and good pastor. You have presented us with Paul’s emancipation proclamation and it is a sound explanation of this wonderful teaching. I already know that through our baptism, we who were once slaves to sin are now free in Christ. But what does that mean for me in my daily life? How does this wonderful teaching affect me?”

Fair question. Let me ask you, is there a sin that you find yourself struggling with. Do you find yourself losing your temper on a regular basis? Are obscenities part of your normal vocabulary? Is your mouth too often full of bitterness and gossip? Is your heart filled with jealousy, greed or lust? Is there a sin that you find yourself doing over and over and over? - A sin that you told yourself you would stop doing, a sin that you promised God you would not do anymore... and yet a sin that you do again and again and again. If there is, for you, such a sin, then you know what it is like to be a slave to sin. You know what it is like to be controlled, to be unable to do the good you want to do, to be forced to do the evil you do not want to do. You know what it is like to be a slave to sin!

So you ask me, “how does this great teaching of Jesus’ freedom from sin affect you!?” It affects you more than you can ever imagine. You ask me, “What does it mean for my daily life?” Oh, it means everything. Firstly it means, you are not a slave to sin. The sin that you struggle with is not your master. You are not a slave to sin. You can deny your temper. You are not a slave to sin. Obscenities do not control you. You are not a slave to sin. Bitterness and gossip do not lead you. You are not a slave to sin. Bad desires cannot imprison you. You are not a slave to sin. Jealousy does not own you. You are not a slave to sin.

Secondly, it means you are free. You are free to let your gentleness be evident to all. You are free to let praises flow from your mouth. You are free to be kind and compassionate to one another. You are free to be content with what God has given you. You are free to forgive as God has forgiven you. You are free to be the Christian God created you to be. You are free.

Freedom is a big deal in our country, it is a big deal for Lutherans, it is a big deal for the members of St. Luke’s, but most importantly by the grace of God freedom is a big deal for you. Through baptism you have been connected to Jesus in his death and you have been connected to Jesus for life. You who were once enslaved by sin are now free in Christ. To understand the Christian faith you need to understand what it means to be free. Because it is not fear that motivates you to live an upright life it is the freedom Jesus won for us and so freely shared with us in our Baptism. Amen