

May 23, 2021 - Dave Stough

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Preacher: Dave Stough

[0 : 00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. We're going to be in the last half of Romans chapter 6.

And you can open up your Bible or your cell phone, whatever you got, to verse 15. We'll read it in a little bit. There was a British man named Frederick Hanley Page.

Seems like the British always like to use three names. He was a pioneer in aviation. He was renowned for designing aircraft. He did it for both world wars and he flew in.

When he was a young man, he was flying over Arabia. And while on a scheduled stop when he landed, unknown to him, a huge rat liked the smell of some food that was put in his plane behind the cockpit.

And that rat managed to get on board the aircraft. On the next leg of his flight, Page heard this sickening sound of gnawing coming from behind him.

[1 : 24] He could tell it was a rodent. Now his heart began to pound quickly because he realized that rat could easily chew through the things that he was using to fly the plane.

All the different cables and mechanisms. So what was he to do? He could crash. He was on his own. There was no autopilot in those days.

So what was he going to do? So he remembered something he learned in school years before. He knew that rats could not breathe at high altitudes.

For some reason, he learned that. And so he pulled back the stick and he went high, as high as he could get to where it was even hard for him to breathe. And finally, the gnawing stopped.

That rat died. So when he arrived to his next destination, he found that rat lying dead behind him in the cockpit. Many of us have the rat of sin gnawing at our lives.

[2 : 33] We are in danger of crashing. But there is something that can be done. We, like him, can climb to a higher altitude, us in Christ, to ward off the deeds of the flesh.

And Romans 6 tells us how we can do that. So don't temptations seem to spring up at the most surprising times in your life?

I mean, you can answer that to yourself. I know it's true, because it happens to me, and we have a very cunning enemy. That his whole goal is to deceive and to ultimately destroy us.

You've heard the phrase, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. Well, that's a bad verse for evangelism, but it's true, nonetheless. God does love us, and he does have a wonderful plan for our life.

And the opposite is true. Satan hates us. He wants to destroy us. It says in Scripture, he walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour.

[3 : 45] Satan and the world seem to be relentless in their attempts to allure the sin nature inside of us into sinning.

Paul and Galatians frame the battle we are in this way, said the flesh wars against the soul. I'm sorry, against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

The sin nature still in us is bent on doing evil, and it wars against the new persons we are in Christ. Every one of us who are saved personally knows of this battle.

So if you're here today and you're thinking, well, no one knows the struggle I have with sin. I used to think that. Well, actually, the opposite is true.

Every one of us knows the struggle you have with sin because every one of us has it in one fashion or another. Right? It's a battle that doesn't stop until we're in glory.

[4 : 51] It's a battle we all want to win, and actually it's a battle we must win. The intent of today's message and my prayer for me and all of us is that we will, each one of us, the Holy Spirit will show us in his own way through his word how we can better overcome sin in our lives.

I was pointed out by Frank three weeks ago how important the teachings of the Bible or sound doctrine, how important they are for us to have an established life.

The truth of God's word does establish us. Just as a good foundation keeps a building in place for a long time, even though there's turbulent storms and whatever, so does sound doctrine establish us. Establishes us in the faith. Especially these truths laid out for us here in Romans, right? If you recall Romans 1, 16 and 17, I looked at it, and you can too, it's really kind of like a summary statement of what's in the entire book of Romans.

Obviously there's a lot more to it, but it's like a summary statement. In a nutshell, it says, basically it declares that the gospel is the power of God.

[6 : 14] It declares in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, and that the righteous person shall live by faith. The portion of what we're in today in Romans 6 is an ongoing example of how the righteousness of God is revealed by faith, and how we appropriate the power of God practically in our lives as believers.

Now if you are not a believer and you're sitting here today, this will sound odd to you in some ways. Romans 6 is the beginning of the discussion of how the gospel works in our sanctification.

It shows us how the crucifixion of Christ gives us the ability to be free from sin today, right now, in the here and now.

It's like ground zero for God's will in our life. Thessalonians says, This is the will of God for your life, your sanctification. This is where the bolts and nuts of it, this is where you learn what you need to know to be sanctified.

And when I was preparing this message, I found out it's really hard to talk about the last half of Romans, which we're in without actually going back over the first part of it somewhat.

[7 : 38] It's nearly impossible, it seems like. So there's two questions in Romans that Paul asks, and those questions are in verse 1 of chapter 6 and verse 15.

Verse 1 says, Shall I continue in sin, or shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? And verse 15 says, Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?

Now, as you recall in the previous chapters leading up to this, the magnitude of God's grace was explained in detail. And towards the end of chapter 5, it says, Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.

It super abounded. So, in light of that, Paul asks these questions. Now, I understand he's under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but I think he's asking the question that our flesh wants to naturally ask, our fallen flesh.

And isn't it the tendency of the sin nature inside of us to ask, in light of God's grace, how much can I sin? Isn't that our fallen nature?

[9 : 04] So, Paul, like our Lord Jesus often did, starts his answers out with a question. In the first part of the chapter, verse 2, he says, How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Or don't you know that we who are baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? That's his answer there in verse 1 to the first question.

And really, the main point for the first half of Romans 6 is as believers, the sin nature inside of us has been defeated by being put to death on the cross.

So, when a person believes the gospel, they're born again, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place.

And what happened 2,000 years ago at the cross is placed inside of them. What do I mean by that? Well, your old self, the one that you were before you were saved, that self, that sin nature, it's still in us, it says it was actually crucified with Christ.

[10 : 24] The person inside of you who was ruled by the flesh's passions and desires, it was nailed to the cross. Now, I used to really confuse me because I thought, well, if something's dead, it's no longer around.

But actually, what the text is saying, its rule, its dominion over you is gone. It's done away with. And it's not the boss anymore.

That's the difference, right? It's still there, but it ain't the boss anymore. We have a new boss. So, it's a very practical thing to be telling ourselves in the shower or wherever, you know, when you're working, just remind yourself, this is a spiritual reality because I'm born again, I am dead to sin, and I'm alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Before that, you were dead to God and alive to sin. Things changed, right? And it's all based on what happened at the cross. So, I mentioned earlier the baptism of the Spirit, right? It's not a water baptism here. It's a spiritual baptism. All right? And throughout Scripture, the term baptism seems to hold with it what you, like, the idea is like you identify with this.

[11:53] Okay? Jesus says, do you want to be baptized with the baptism that I'm going to be baptized? He was talking about his death. He was getting ready to enter into his death. So, it was a part of what he was, who he is and what he was doing.

So, you became a new person the day you believed the gospel. You got a new identity. And this is, this is good doctrine to remember practically this, this, not only did you get new desires inside of you that want to please God, but you also got the Holy Spirit who took up residence to actually live inside of you.

You are the temple of God. So, there's a new identity here. That's, that's why Paul could say later in chapter 7 when he's talking about his struggle with sin in chapter 7, he's, he's trying to walk with the Lord in the power of his flesh, it seems like, in that chapter.

And he says, but he still knows his identity and he says, it's no longer I, but sin that dwells in me.

So, in other words, he realized he was a new person and that's, but that's not, that's sin, it's not me anymore.

Even though I'm having issues, that's not me. So, this baptism of the Spirit is a new identity we have. And so, you don't have to sin anymore, it's a spiritual truth that's actually part of the package of salvation.

[13:12] So, my encouragement is let this truth from the first half of the chapter renew your mind. Now, the flesh, it will continue to attempt to lie to us, to shame us, but if you take hold of this truth, it really does change your life.

And, this is a foundational doctrine that we are commanded by God to take hold of. So, the second question arising, from the flesh that Paul writes about under the Holy Spirit, is in our text for the day. So, let's go ahead and read our text. You got your Bibles there. Let's read Romans 6, 15 to the end of the chapter. What then? Shall we sin because we're not under law but under grace?

Certainly not. Do you not know to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one slaves whom you obey, whether of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness. But God, be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form a doctrine in which you were entrusted. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

[14:34] righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh, for just as you presented the parts of your body, some of your translations say your members, just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to uncleanness and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present the parts of your body as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

For when you were slaves to sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

But now, having been set free from sin and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness and the outcome eternal life.

for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Shall we sin because we are no longer under law but under grace?

In light of the truth in the first part of the chapter of being free from sin's power, I think that question could maybe even be asked this way. Can I sin anyway even though I know I don't have to?

[16:04] Right? Be honest, have you asked yourself that question? I have. It's a bad question. It assumes that there is some kind of benefit derived from sin.

sin. It assumes that there is some kind of freedom in sin. Isn't the flesh always holding itself out as the one with the answers?

It's the way it presents itself. The assumptions of the sin nature, they are deceitful. That's what we understand from Jeremiah. The heart, in that instance that word is used, is deceitful above all else and desperately wicked.

Now, to make this a bit more relatable, I heard this example, let me repeat it to you. Pretend that you changed jobs.

You went out and got a new one. So, when you get up in the morning and you get ready for work, think of, instead of going to your new job and your new boss, you get on the phone and you call up

your old boss and ask him what he wants you to do for that day.

[17 : 24] That's, in essence, what we're doing when we sin. We wouldn't do that at work. It's ridiculous. Well, it's the same thing. We have a new boss now.

We have a new master. In this text here, in this half that we're reading, there's that word present. It's there three times. And, it's said here, do you not know to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey?

You are that one's slaves whom you obey. That word means to offer. Like, in the Old Testament, when somebody would take their animal, their blood sacrifice, and present it to God through the priest, they would offer it.

It's the same word. When you offer yourselves, okay? And so, there is an attitude of worship in what we offer ourselves to.

So, when we present ourselves to a master, we are placing at the disposal of the master our body parts for the master to do with as the master pleases.

[18 : 40] That's like, that's just the plain truth. That's what you do when you serve God. That's what you do when you sin. So, it's given up by you and put into the hands of the master.

Being a slave to God gives you the freedom to not sin. God has made it. I think it's that God has made it that we don't really have, feel, or know of any fulfilling purpose in life apart from being in union with him.

It just isn't there. As much as we might want to try different things, it's just not there. So, we, in light of that, in light of him and what he's done at the cross, we have to trust him enough to yield ourselves to him as the boss when we're tempted.

Because that's where we find freedom and that's where we find life. When we offer it to sin, we offer ourselves to deeds that lead to death, it says in our text.

Being a slave is a good illustration to the point that we're all going to have to serve someone. So, when I was getting this ready, this, I can't help myself sometimes, this old song popped in my brain from the 70s.

[20 : 20] And it's my before Christ days. this was, you know, sometimes the world actually either accidentally or somehow just observes a truth that's right.

and this is a song from somewhere in the 70s by Bob Dillon. It's called Everybody is Serving Somebody. I just want to read a few lyrics of it.

You may be a construction worker working on a home. You may be living in a mansion or you could even be living in a dome. You might own guns.

You might even own tanks. You might even, I'm sorry, you might be somebody's landlord. You might even own banks. But you're going to have to serve somebody.

Yes, indeed, you're going to have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody.

[21 : 24] That's just the way it is, right? So, whoever thought Bob Dillon would be a good illustration. Truth is the truth.

Verse 17 and 18 say, But God bethanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine in which you were entrusted.

I'm talking about the gospel here. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. Point one from the text, you became the servant of whatever you become the servant of whatever or whoever you offer yourself to.

The second point today that we need to understand to walk with the Lord, to be at the higher altitude, food. The second point is, the law of sin and death is only overcome by the gift of God.

Verse 23, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Often quoted in evangelism, right?

[22 : 43] But you can see from the text here, its primary focus and purpose is on the believer's sanctification, being set apart from sin, sanctification.

Paul is talking about a spiritual reality here. We only have life through the death of Christ. The gift of God, it's a package deal.

Like I was saying before, it's part of the gospel. This part of the package gives us the ability to die to sin and self through Christ.

Christ. Pardon me. Excuse me.

I get so dry sometimes. So, this is what I thought was interesting about this part of scripture. This passage contains in it spiritual laws that actually run contrary to natural laws.

[23 : 45] in the natural realm, slavery is bondage, right? In the spiritual realm, slavery to God is freedom.

It's life. In the natural realm, life comes by being born and we avoid death as long as possible, right? In the spiritual realm, life comes by dying.

Jesus illustrated this truth in John chapter 12, verse 24. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it produces much grain. And in Luke 9, 23 and 24, he said, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross, their death instrument, daily, and follow me.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. When we sin as believers, we embrace our enemy.

[25 : 04] God is calling us to die to the things that bring us death. death. Let me say it again. God is calling us to die to the things that bring us death.

Still, sin, even now, wants to perpetuate itself in our lives as believers and to inflict somewhat of a death process in our relationship with God.

sin. As Christians, we can't fall into sin without it having some kind of poison effect on us.

If we sin, it destroys fellowship with God. It takes the power out of your prayer life. The joy is gone. And until there's repentance and confession, just getting before the Lord and being honest, there's this issue going on with sin.

[26 : 10] Now, God is not wanting to shame us. That's not the gospel. The provision to defeat sin never goes away because he never goes away.

He's faithful. He's always there, guaranteed, because of what he did at the cross. And he even tells us to come with boldness to his throne of grace to find mercy and help in time of need.

All right? So those are the encouraging things to remember if you do fall in sin. I need to remember those pretty regular. Can you see that the Almighty is searching hearts of believers to find someone who's willing to die to themselves so that he can right now give us more of a taste of the eternal, his life flowing through us?

My encouragement is let's show by our gratefulness, our gratitude, our thanksgiving, the appreciation for the gift he's given us.

Today we're going to close a little differently. I'm not going to sing a song, but we have a video where somebody here gives a little testimony and sings a song that I think drives these truths home.

[27 : 37] Johnny Erickson Tata is a quadriplegic. I think she's now 70 years old. At the age of 17, about the time Bob Dylan was popular, she became paralyzed.

She dove off a dock into a shallow area and actually snapped her neck. And she almost drowned. She was able to float to the surface and she says, I was hoping that my sister see me because I couldn't move.

She was actually instantly paralyzed, face down in the water. So, when they got her to the hospital, they actually for weeks expected her to die, but the doctors, by the grace of God, were able to fuse her cervical vertebrae together and she lived.

And, however, though, she's paralyzed. The only muscles she has control over are in her head, like in her neck, shoulder area, and her biceps.

The rest of her, you know, she can't use her muscles. And for the first year of being a quadriplegic, she couldn't even use those. She laid in a hospital bed totally helpless.

[28 : 58] Her whole existence changed. Think about it. She went from being a hopeful young 17 year old who used to ride horses, had thoughts of marriage with a boyfriend, and going to college, and all that, to a person who got placed in a bed that had to be rotated for her so she wouldn't get bed sores.

Wow, what a change, huh? So she was a born-again believer, but despairing for her life at this point. She said in her early days of her injury, depression and anger sent this black cloud over her to the point where she even wanted to commit suicide.

But she couldn't even do that. She couldn't even do that by herself. So she asked a friend to take her life. Cut my wrist, give me pills. I don't know.

I don't know why I get that way sometimes, but it's pretty moving testimony.

Have you ever felt that way? So she later wrote, I was so sick and tired of the despair and the feelings of self-pity, I cried out, God, if I can't die, show me how to live.

[30 : 41] And I'm not kidding, she says, the next morning I woke up a different person. So God answered her prayer, even though she still wakes up to write another day of quadriplegia.

Think about it, she has to have somebody take her to the bathroom every day, brush her teeth, do all these kinds of things every day. She doesn't like it, but she dies to herself daily.

And she has learned the art of doing that and being thankful for the gift of God. Sorry about that.

Let's pray.

Lord, none of us deserve your grace, and yet we know that you willingly gave yourself for us. Help us to understand that as we look to you to overcome sin in our lives.

Help us understand that in a very personal way this week. Thank you for all that you do. Amen. Jeg

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