

## Romans, Part 31 2-12-23

### Old Man Gone

We continue to mine the riches of the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. I have been asked about the title of today's message – and I want to assure you that it has nothing to do with the announcement I made last Sunday. Indeed, I am still here. In our last two studies in Romans we have hung out in the first four verses of chapter 6 which are all about our union with the Lord Jesus – a union that is brought to pass by the Holy Spirit and results in our sharing in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to the end that we might know and experience a whole new life. Some of you who have been married for some time probably think of your adult life in two main divisions – your life as a single person and your life as a married person. As someone married for over forty-three years I can hardly remember what life was like in my single days. Uniting with Beth involved for me the beginning of a new life. It was a big change, but you know what? That change, for me or for you, is nothing compared to the change that occurs when we are united with Jesus. Scripture says we become new creations. We are born-again. Union with Jesus dramatically changes my status, but it also has the effect of changing my very nature. Jesus says, *Behold, I make all things new*. And, I am eternally grateful that I am one of those “all things.” But note – He is the one who does this. The gospel is not a self-help plan. It is about the Savior's plan to redeem us and re-make us but joining us with himself. I Corinthians 1:30 is a very important verse. **30** *By His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption. 30a* *By His doing you are in Christ Jesus.* Listen to how the NLT puts it – **30** *God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.* Give me some of that. That is the gospel brothers and sisters.

Today we get to move on in the instruction of Romans 6 to discover what is meant by and how to understand the old man or the old self and the body of sin, terms Paul uses that easily confuse us. But then we get to bask in the glorious saving purpose of our savior and his promise to set the captives free. 6:**1-8** *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might*

walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, <sup>6</sup>knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; <sup>7</sup>for he who has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

You may know that sometimes preachers take Scripture passages out of context in order to make a point they want to make. One classic example of this would be the pastor who wanted to preach on the Christian life and he started by reading in the King James Version the story from Genesis, when Joseph revealed himself to his eleven brothers who had come to Egypt. And, early in the conversation, Joseph inquired about his father, Jacob, and whether he had died. In the King James the question came out this way: *Is the old man still alive?* That cracks me up. But it is a question we can ask as we read Romans 6. Our passage references being dead to sin in verse two. It mentions being baptized, joined with Jesus in his death there in verse 3. Verse 5 says again we are united with Jesus in the likeness of his death. Then in verse 6, the old self is crucified with Christ. The King James Version used the term, *the old man*. What Paul wants us to get is that when Christ died believers died with Him. And they died to sin. What does that mean? It means their relationship with sin was cut off. Death, in Scripture, means separation. Where once sin had power over you, in Christ, it no longer does. It is like the day you quit your job and the authority of your boss is gone.

To be clear – when we speak of the old man, the old self, we are talking about your pre-Christian identity as one who is living for self, not for Christ. It is your corrupt, degenerate nature. It is who you are in Adam, before joining with Jesus. The NLT refers to the old self as the “old sinful self.” Great news! The old man has been crucified. Has died. That is what Paul is saying here as he does in other places. Colossians 3:9 *Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.* Galatians 5:24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* You will see in these verses as in Romans 6, the death of the old self is spoken of as a done-deal. It is not something we are waiting for, working for or hoping for. It has happened, but the exhortation now is to remember that reality and live according to it. Turn to your neighbor now and say, “Old man gone.” Say it with enthusiasm – *Old man gone!* Now believers are commanded to be in practice what they are in Christ. That is why Paul will go on to say in 6:11 *Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.* 6:13 (NLT) *Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to*

*serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life.* Paul doesn't assume that since the old self is gone and its power is broken that you no longer can or will sin. Instead he exhorts you to live out what you are. Don't live in sin anymore. The New Testament does not suggest that means your life is going to be perfect, but it does mean you have changed your connection and your direction. You are connected with Jesus and your direction is righteousness. Remember where this chapter started? With the inquiry about whether salvation changes a person or just their destiny. The answer is YES, it changes us mightily. It is a transformation, not just a transaction. Our status is altered – yes. But so too is our heart. In all these ways you are new and therefore who you were before Christ is no longer relevant for your walk with God. Old man gone. Forget him and step out into your new life

John Stott offers this illustration of how things are for us. He says, *suppose there is a man called John Jones, an elderly Christian believer, who is looking back upon his long life. His career is divided by his conversion into two parts, the old self – John Jones before his conversion – and the new self – John Jones after his conversion. The old self and the new self (or the old man and the new man) are not John Jones' two natures; they are the two halves of his life, separated by the new birth. At conversion, signified in baptism, John Jones, the old self, died through union with Christ, the penalty of his sin borne. At the same time, John Jones rose again from death, a new man, to live a new life to God. Stott goes on later – Our biography is written in two volumes. Volume one is the story of the old man, the old self, of me, before my conversion. Volume two is the story of the new man, my biography ended with the judicial death of the old self. I was a sinner. I deserved to die. I did die. I received my deserts in my Substitute with whom I have become one. Volume two of my biography opened with my resurrection. My old life having finished, a new life to God has begun.*

Alright then – old man gone – but if that is the case, with what are we doing battle. It seems that the Scriptures speak of us actively fighting against some evil force within us. And yes, that is correct. In our passage, Paul refers to that with the phrase, *body of sin*. You see in verse 6 that the old self is crucified, which is a change of status, but then he says *in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin*. This latter portion refers to our experience and our practice. I should not before I go on that the translation that says “that our body of sin be done away with” is best understood as saying “that our body of sin be rendered ineffective.” Indeed, the NLT translates it **6** *We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its*

*power in our lives.* I don't believe it is ever properly understood as completely going away. The body of sin then is human nature apart from grace. Consider this - Once we are in Christ we have a new soul. But, we don't get a new body. It is the same old body of sin, of fallenness. And it is through that old body that the devil does his best work. The body is sort of the beachhead by which the enemy invades. Indeed, once you are free from your body there will be no temptation to sin. That is the point in verse 7 *He who has died is freed from sin.* That is talking about literal, physical death there and how sin's grip is certainly broken at that point.

But for now, the battle is very real and very physical. Look at how Paul writes in Romans 6:**12-13** *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,* <sup>13</sup>*and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.* In Romans 8:13 Paul writes **13** *If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* I don't know about you, but when I am tempted to sin in certain ways, my body usually votes in favor of sinning. It promotes gluttony, and lust and laziness and greed. My body favors all of that. It is my mind and my soul that stands in opposition and hopefully wins the day. You think of the things that are so dominant in our society and bring people into bondage. Most of them are linked to some physical appetite that has been co-opted by the enemy. You think of the obsession we have with food and with sex. It is really an astounding testimony to how broken we are.

This is why we must come to appreciate the death of the old self and our freedom from captivity to the futile ways of the world. You don't have to live like everyone else. You don't have to live like you used to. You are free from all of that. Granted, you can still listen to it. After you move out of your parents' house and are not under them any longer you may still hear their voices in your head and be influenced by that. Maybe you can picture the devil as being evicted from your house, but he rents across the street and continues to talk to you as you come and go and work in your yard. It is up to you whether you pay attention or not. The challenge again is to live in this freedom. Paul's focus is often on holiness of body. We see it in I Corinthians 6:**13** *The body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.* He then argues that you can't be linked to a prostitute because of the spiritual adultery that involves, the unfaithfulness to Jesus because your body belongs to Him. I Corinthians 6:**17** *The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.* Later in this same letter Paul will say I Corinthians 9:**27** *I*

*discipline my body and make it my slave.* Most people live in the opposite arrangement, but we can do better. Then too you may know Romans 12 which I hope to get to someday. Romans 12:1 *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.* This is the essence of Christian devotion. We say, *Lord, I am yours, body, mind and soul. And I will live for you, not my appetites.*

Okay, take a breath and let's get back to our text in Romans 6. Next thing to grasp is not only that we have died with Christ, but that we are raised up with him. 8 *Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.* This is not a promise that is entirely in the future. Paul speaks of this as both a present reality and a future hope. We are presently now spiritually alive with Christ. In the future we will be physically alive with him as well. Our bodies will be redeemed. So, part of the promise is ours today. Other parts we look forward to when the Lord returns. Philippians 3:20-21a *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup>who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.* So, united with Christ we have died with him. United with Christ we live with him and the fruit of these things are with us today, while the full promise is yet ahead.

Let's wrap up today with a word about purpose and then about freedom. Notice please the purpose clauses in our passage for today. Look for the words "so" or "that." Verse four has one 4c *so we too might walk in newness of life.* The purpose of Christ's deliverance is not just so we can live with him in heaven, but that we can live a new life now. He comes that we might have abundant life. There are so many such statements in the New Testament it makes my head explode when I hear preachers suggest that a changed life is a nice thing, but not part of the basic package Jesus gives us. Is Jesus successful in his mission to save us? He says his goal is us walking in a new and better way. And there's more right here. 6b *in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.* Again, the practical purpose of Jesus is clear. Holiness of life. This is what He is after for us. This is where grace takes us. So many, sadly, promote a notion of grace that only comforts us in our carnality rather than freeing us to live a godly and pure life. I quoted recently a book entitled, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* Good question – Part of the New Testament answer is that it frees us from sin. But part of the book suggests the opposite. There is a whole chapter about a man, let's call him Abner who, in mid-life, divorced his wife to join up with his same-sex lover, while remaining a leader in the church and a writer on spiritual matters.

The book doesn't condone those choices but doesn't treat them as incompatible with true faith either. Brothers, sisters –what Abner was doing, indifferent to his sexual orientation, is called *living in sin*. He isn't repenting of sin. He is enjoying it and planning to enjoy it again tomorrow and the next day. Sure, real believers slip up, commit sin, hurt others and themselves, but they also repent and pursue a godly freedom from sin. They don't celebrate their debauchery and lead others into the same. If Abner is a person saved by Jesus I ask, *saved from what?* And I must conclude that Jesus has failed, because He tells me His goal is to free us from sin, not leave us feeling better about our captivity.

Okay, we have slipped into the final theme on freedom. Personal freedom is an important topic. Everyone is in favor of it, but folks define it very, very differently don't they? How does your typical American college-student think of freedom? Away from parents and other confining authorities. *Look at me baby - Now, I can use profanity, I can smoke the weed, I can get drunk, I can pursue erotic delights. I am free!* And, like the prodigal son, many will feel good about this for quite a while. Is that freedom? Listen to the word of God. Peter writes about the servants of Satan. 2 Peter 2:**18-19** *They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With an appeal to twisted sexual desires, they lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception.* <sup>19</sup>*They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you.* Curiously, the very things unbelievers think display or prove their freedom do the opposite. They are the most enslaving things in the world! 2 Timothy 2:**25-26** (NLT) *Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will learn the truth.* <sup>26</sup>*Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.* Romans 6 may be the most thorough on this matter. So, we aren't done with this them. Romans 6:**16-18** *Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?* <sup>17</sup>*But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.* Think back to the Old Testament for a moment. The Exodus paradigm. What is depicted in that story? The children of Israel in bondage. God comes to deliver, to rescue. He redeems them, frees them. And then once they are out of Pharaoh's grasp what does he say to them? *Now, this is how you are to live*

*as servants of mine.* He gives the commandments. They are not contrary to freedom. Our freedom makes a life of purity and obedience possible.

Then Paul takes us back to the very physical, bodily, battleground. Romans 6:**19** *For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.* Who wants to be free? Pick your freedom. The freedom from Jesus and his word that the world offers, or the freedom from sin and its death which is offered in the gospel and by a gracious Savior who stands ready to also be a very loving and liberating Lord.