

ILLUSION OF FREEDOM
Romans 6:15-23
01-04-09
ALDERWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

BIG IDEA: SINCE I'M NOT REALLY FREE, I WANT TO CHOOSE THE BEST MASTER.

I. WHY CHOOSE AN EVIL MASTER? (6:19-23)

A. Look What Submitting to Sin Does to People

1. **Verses 20-21**, “20 *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.*

21 *What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!*”

2. What is the harvest of sin? Here’s one example. It’s from the pages of Texas Business magazine: “*We are truly the lost generation, huffing and puffing down the fast track to nowhere, always looking to the dollar sign for direction. That’s the only standard we recognize. We have no built-in beliefs, no ethical boundaries. Cheat on your taxes, just don’t get caught. Cheat on your wife, just don’t get AIDS....*

“*Where did I go wrong?*” is the traditional wail of parents of kids-gone-wrong. The eighties version says, ‘*We gave him everything - clothes, a computer, a car, a college education.*’ Everything but a conscience. We are the products of a high-tech society: *amoral automatons outfitted with calculating brains and sleek casings, just like the computers with which we are so compatible.*

“*But they forgot to give us souls.*” (Brux Austin, June, 1987, p.5)

3. I regret every sin I’ve ever committed. I am ashamed of every sin I’ve ever committed. Every sin I commit diminishes me in some way and it usually diminishes the people around me. Sin makes me want to run and hide from God, just like Adam in the Garden. Sin makes me feel dirty and weak. In the moment of sin I feel like the captain of my soul, but in the aftermath of sin I feel despair at my moral insanity and the weakness of my will.

4. Look at the record of sin! What does it benefit?

- Bodies torn to bits by a bomb in Tel Aviv
- Orphans in Rwanda
- A newborn baby in a dumpster
- Broken marriages
- Family arguments
- Backstabbing at the office
- Addiction to drugs, porn, alcohol, gambling
- Inner turmoil
- The haunted feeling that you’re spiritually compromised, that you’re only half living.

5. So Paul says, “Check it out, Christian! Look the bankruptcy of sin squarely in the face. Why do you want to go back to that?”

B. **SIN BENEFITS CHART**

ON THE OTHER HAND...

II. WHY CHOOSE A BENEVOLENT MASTER?

Look What Living for Jesus Does to People: TWO THINGS

A. Holiness: **Verse 22**, “*the benefit you reap leads to holiness.*”

1. The words holy, saint, sanctify and sanctuary all come from the same root word. And they all have one powerful idea: “exclusively for God.”

2. Holiness is saying to God what a groom promises in a wedding ceremony: “*Do you solemnly promise, before God and these witnesses, that you will love, honor*

and cherish her; and that, forsaking all others for her alone, you will faithfully perform to her all the duties which a husband owes to a wife, so long as you both shall live?"

To which he responds, "I do." And in so doing, he has pledged himself to an exclusive relationship to her. No more dating. No adultery. No divorce.

Martha Stewart would say, "That's a good thing." Ladies in the audience dab at their eyes with tissues. And the bride and groom's hearts are fairly bursting with the intensity of their love for one another. We all hope that they will keep their promises to each other and live happily ever after.

3. "Christian, do you solemnly promise, to God and before these witnesses, that you will love, honor and cherish God; and that, forsaking all others for Him alone, you will faithfully perform to Him all the duties which a Christian owes His God and Savior. Do you so promise?"

4. That's the heart of holiness, and if Martha Stewart doesn't think that's a good thing, she should.

5. What's so good about holiness? Well,

- Do you like the 23rd Psalm?
- Do you like the Beatitudes?
- Do you like the I Corinthians 13 Love Chapter?
- Do you like the story of the incorruptibility of Daniel?
- Do you like the description of marriage in Ephesians 5?
- Do you like the letters to the two churches in Revelation 2 and 3 who received unqualified commendation from Jesus Christ?
- Do you like to go to bed at night with a clear conscience and sleep soundly? All those things are about holiness and its benefits. Who wouldn't approve that list? Even the ungodly do!

6. Merilee and I share a lot of things. Married people generally do that.

- The other day at Red Robin I reached over and stabbed a mushroom off her plate.
- Sometimes I borrow her hairbrush.
- We'll sip from the same Coke as we're driving down the freeway.
- We're in and out of each others cash and checkbooks.
- But we never use each other's toothbrushes. She has herds and I have mine and n'er do the twain meet. Her toothbrush is sanctified to her and my toothbrush is sanctified to me.
- There are some things that are uniquely yours and you never share them with anyone else. It's not that you are stingy; it's just that some things are supposed to be restricted use.

7. This idea of uniqueness is pretty important to God. The concept of unique restricted use is deeply embedded in the words for holiness and sanctification.

8. UNPACKING THE VOCABULARY

- HOLY=Hagios
- HOLINESS= Hagiasmos
- SANTIFICATION=Hagiasmos
- MAIN IDEA
 - SET-APART-NESS
 - UNIQUENESS

9. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES:

- **Leviticus 20:26** *You are to be holy to me [Man's Part] because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own. [God's Part]*
- **1 Peter 1:15-16** *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." [Man's Part]*

- **1 Corinthians 6:11** *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. [God’s Part]*
- **1 Thessalonians 4:3** *It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; [Man’s Part]*

B. Eternal Life: **Verse 22**, “and the result is eternal life.”

1. A lot of people **hope** they’re going to make it to heaven. Some **think** they are. But the Christian **knows** he is. **I John 5:13**, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know that you have eternal life.**”
2. That means heaven someday for sure but it means more. Notice that John says , “you **have eternal life**” not “**will have...**” If you are a Christian, you are **right now** an eternal being.
3. Your soul is already married to God. Getting to Heaven will just notch you a bit closer, that’s all. Your body is already ticketed for Heaven, you’ll just have a brief layover at the grave.
4. Whenever I pass crushed metal and flashing emergency lights along I-5, I sniff death. It gives me a brief thrill of fear as I ponder that the body under the white cloth could be me. That I could have been the one that didn’t reach his 8:30 a.m. appointment in Seattle. The guy on the gurney got up just like I did. He showered and shaved. He dressed nicely. He had his cup of coffee. He started his engine...but he never turned it off. And he won’t be going home in the northbound lanes.
5. It never fails to sober me. But it also never fails to remind me that my real destination isn’t Seattle, it’s Heaven. The most important and exciting appointment of my life is when I meet Jesus face to face. God has made us with powerful survival instincts and we’re pretty good at avoiding fatal accidents, but when the time comes, we Christians know that the real party begins. The Bible says, “*absent from the body...present with the Lord...far better.*” (II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23)

C. **HOLINESS BENEFITS CHART**

POINT OF HONESTY here—You would think all this living holy stuff would get easier the older we get, wouldn’t you? Maybe in some ways it does. But maybe in some ways it doesn’t.

- A. *The closer I get to heaven the more aware of hell I become.—Billy Graham*
- B. The Growing Self-Awareness of Paul¹

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- ¹ *In fact, there is a paradox in the salvation process. We may think that as we grow closer to Christ’s likeness, sin decreases and our need for the gospel also decreases, but that assumption is wrong. While it may be true that our life of obedience sees actual acts of sin on the decrease, at the same time we should become more aware of sin and the grip it has had on our lives. We should thus develop a more dependent attitude toward our Savior, His sacrifice and His ongoing ministry in our lives.*

It is interesting to see Paul’s self-awareness change over time. In his earlier writings he refers to himself as equal to the most eminent of apostles (2 Cor. 12:11). Later, he writes that he is the least of the saints (Eph. 3:8). In one of his last writings he calls himself the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Was his sin and disobedience actually increasing over that time? Of course not. He was getting closer to his Lord and thus becoming more aware of his own weaknesses in the light of Jesus’ perfection. He knew his need for the gospel better at the end of his life than he did at the beginning. Neil Cole,

- II Cor. 12:11, I am not in the least inferior to the "super-apostles." [A.D. 55]
- Eph. 3:8, I am less than the least of all God's people. [A.D. 60]
- I Tim 1:15, I am the worst sinner. [A.D. 63-65]

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- C. If you became a Christian today, how would you be a different person tomorrow?
- **33 things** that happen that instant
 - Indwelling of the HS
 - Christ IN you, the hope of glory²
 - Justification, Redemption, Sanctification, Adoption, etc.
 - New nature birthed and empowered/Old sin nature disempowered
 - Died—**POSITIONAL TRUTH**
 - **Romans 6:6** *For 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--*
 - But also says to "take off"—**PRACTICAL TRUTH**
 - **Ephesians 4:22** *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;*
 - Getting saved sounds easy—it is.—it is. Getting sanctified sounds hard
 - Salvation will cost you nothing—discipleship will cost you everything
 - When it comes to living the Christian life—is it really any different than any other religion? Is Salvation by grace, but sanctification by sweat? GRIFFITH THOMAS QUOTE
 - What does Jesus have to do with it?

THE TAKEAWAY: WE ARE "POTENTIATED"

- ***Christ puts the wind in our sails—In fact he outfits us with sails and gives us the strength to raise them.***

Cultivating a Life for God (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999), 82

² **Morris:** *Paul speaks of all this as being in Christ Jesus. This is the first use in Romans of being "in Christ" (3:24 is not quite the same), which is one of Paul's great concepts and one that he keeps on using (the number of occurrences is variously estimated according as "in him" and the like are included, and how one estimates the authorship of certain writings; Deissmann spoke of 164 passages and A. M. Hunter of about 200). Paul never explains what he means by the expression, but clearly it points to the close tie that unites believers to their Lord....at least we can say that it emphasizes the closeness of the tie between the saved and the Saviour and that it also indicates something of the unity that binds all Christ's own.*



Wheelchair user taken on 50-mph ride

Chair becomes lodged on semitrailer's grille, travels 4 miles on highway

The Associated Press

Updated: 3:36 p.m. PT June 7, 2007

PAW PAW, Mich. - Ben Carpenter [21 years old, of nearby Kalamazoo, muscular dystrophy] got the ride of a lifetime when his electric wheelchair became lodged in the grille of a semitrailer and was accidentally pushed down a highway for several miles at about 50 mph. He said his son had started to cross Wednesday afternoon at an intersection in Paw Paw, about 140 miles west of Detroit, where the truck had stopped for a red light. The light changed to green while Carpenter was still in front of the semi, which started moving forward.

The truck bumped into the side of the wheelchair, which then started turning forward, its handles becoming lodged in the grille, the father said. The wild ride had started.

The bizarre sight caught the attention of motorists, many of whom called 911 on their cell phones. A pair of undercover police officers who happened to be driving in the opposite direction at the time saw what was happening, did a quick U-turn, followed the truck to its business and informed the disbelieving driver, Donald Carpenter said.

The father said being pushed down the road by the truck burned most of the rubber off the tires of the wheelchair, but otherwise didn't damage it.³

- Without God, I am moving at the speed of arm power. But with God I'm stuck in the grill of something a whole lot bigger than I am.
 - **John 15:5** *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*
 - **Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

CHART: GOD'S PART /MY PART—NEITHER “LET GO AND LET GOD,” NOR BOOTSTRAP CHRISTIANITY

GOD'S PART—GOD IS ACTIVE IN SAVING ME. BUT IS HE ACTIVE IN SANCTIFYING ME?

- The vine
- Will and to do his good pleasure. Eph 2:10
- All things thru Christ who strengthens me
- Perfected by the flesh—Gal 3:1ff
- Gal 5:16-17
- Titus 2:11-13
- Fruit of the Spirit

MY PART

- Know who I am and how I am now different
- Fall in love with Christ—*The love of Christ controls us.*

³ URL: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19088976/from/ET/> Accessed 061107, MSNBC website.

- Faith that God will show up—*Be it to you according to your faith.*
- Pray Paul’s prayers for myself
- Crisis dedication
- Daily dying and crucifixion
- Scripture—by the renewing of your mind.
- Armor of God—to stand

CONCLUSION:

- A. *Is Jesus’ desire to be the Lord of our lives some little fetish of his? Why is it so important to him? Why should we want him to have control of our lives? Besides the fact that he deserves it because of who he is, he knows he is the only one in the universe who can control us without destroying us. No one will ever love you like Jesus.... And the great and joyful paradox is that while he totally transforms us, he makes us more ourselves than ever before.*⁴
- B. In his autobiography, Timebends, Athur Miller tells of his marriage to Marilyn Monroe. She was deeply depressed and coping with barbiturates. She slept by injections given her by the doctor. Watching her drug induced sleep one night, Arthur reflected, “I found myself straining to imagine miracles. What if she were to wake and I were able to say, ‘God loves you, darling,’ and she were able to believe it! How I wish I still had my religion and she hers.” (Harper and Row, 1987, p.482, quoted in The Trivialization of God by Donald W. McCullough, NavPress, 1995, pp. 19-20)
- C. HERE’S A PARABLE OF HOW GOD MOVES PEOPLE: Ruth Graham: *When I was in college, the Wheaton Men’s Glee Club had a special number they saved for an encore that went like this:*
If a nest of wild hornets
Were left in this room
And the creatures allowed to go free;
They would not compel you to go ‘gainst your will,
They’d just make you willing to flee.

BUT BEYOND MOVING PEOPLE, HE EMPOWERS PEOPLE...

--TIMOTHY G. WALTON

⁴ Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Salt Shaker and into the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, , 1999), 54.