Romans 6-7 FREEDOM

We have been justified by faith!

I hope you have been hearing that message loud and clear these last few weeks.

We have been made right with God!

We have peace with God!

It is not down to us – it is not something we can boast about.

It is a free gift of God.

We stand in the grace of God.

Paul has reminded his audience – and us – that though sin abounds, grace abounds even more.

This leads to Paul's question at the start of chapter 6.

6:1

What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?

If, according to Romans 1-5, salvation is sorted regardless of my sin, does it really matter if I go on sinning? If I am forgiven no matter what, what's the harm of a few guilty pleasures?

If you preach grace correctly, it should lead to these kinds of questions!

"In posing this dilemma, Paul is double-checking that we've grasped the radical implications of God's grace." Andrew Ollerton

The answer that Paul gives to his rhetorical question: "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" is:

"No way Jose!" By no means! (NIV) Certainly not! (NKJV) What a ghastly thought! (J.B.Phillips)

If we start to think like this, we have not understood the nature of grace, or what grace is for.

It is for freedom! We are granted freedom from sin! And freedom to live for Christ!

It was for freedom that Christ set us free!

Don't you love that scene in the Braveheart movie with Mel Gibson playing William Wallace when he challenges his soldiers to fight for their freedom.

"You have come to fight as free men, and free men you are! What will you do with that freedom?"

That is what Paul is asking.

You are free! What will you do with that freedom?!

Last week – we looked at objective truth and reality – the facts.

And we looked at our lived experience – how we live in light of the facts – the objective truth of who we are and our position in Christ.

This week we will do the same. Paul wants us to know who we are – theologically – he wants us to see ourselves as God sees us – our true identity in Christ.

And then he wants us to live in light of that fact – to live out practically what is true of us theologically.

Matt Redman sings a song about singing as though we are saved.

"I'm gonna sing like I'm saved."

Today we are going to talk about living like we are free.

"I'm gonna live like I'm free!"

If you are in Christ – if you are justified by faith – free men and free women you are! What will you do with that freedom?!

When Paul wants to help people change, he turns to something we need to know before anything we need to do.

So, what is it that we need to know in order to live out our freedom?

1) We have died – and dead people don't sin

Paul makes it clear that when we become a Christian – our old self dies and is buried. And we begin to live a new life.

We often state the fact that Jesus died for us. That Jesus was crucified for us – to take away our sin.

But what about the reverse truth? **We were crucified with Christ**?

The former truth – Jesus was crucified for me – guarantees my forgiveness.

The latter truth – I was crucified with Christ – guarantees my freedom.

In Romans 6, Paul highlights the fact that a Christian has been baptised or immersed into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Water baptism enacts the truth of that death of our old self, the burial of our old self, and the resurrection of our new self – a new life in Christ.

"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have **died to sin**; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us

who were baptised into Christ Jesus were **baptised into his death**? 4 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. 5 For if we have been **united with him in a death** like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that **our old self was crucified** with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – 7 because **anyone who has died has been set free from sin**."
(Romans 6:1-7)

Paul declares something truly radical.

If you remember last week – we are no longer in Adam, but we are in Christ. And we are identified with him and united with him in his death, burial and resurrection.

Literally, Paul refers to us as being co-crucified, co-buried and co-resurrected with Christ.

It seems many Christians don't know this, or don't live in the reality of it.

"My identity has been fundamentally altered through my union with Christ. I am no longer a sinner, enslaved to evil forces more powerful than me. I belong to God." Andrew Ollerton

As Paul concludes in verse 7,

"anyone who has died has been set free from sin."

6:2 How can we who died to it still live in it?

6:7 The one who has died has been set free from sin

6:11 You must consider yourselves dead to sin

Paul is affirming this truth for all who are "**in Christ**". He is not describing elite Christians with an advanced state of purity. He is describing an up-front status change that remains true regardless.

You may not **feel** particularly dead to sin right now, but that's not the point.

It is perfectly possible for something to be true, even if you don't know it, feel it, or live like it's true.

Your flies are undone.

Your brake light is not working.

You might now know it - but it's true.

Paul wrote the same to the Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal. 2:20)

"we must not see ourselves as sinners doing our best to reform our ways. That's hopeless. The truth is far more dramatic than that. Our old self is dead and buried." Andrew Ollerton

"Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life – no longer captive to sin's demands." (Rom. 6:6-7 TM)

Dead people don't sin!

A young monk came to his Abbot Macarius and asked the question:

"Father what is the meaning of being dead and buried with Christ?"

The Father answered: "My son, you remember our dear brother Sinusitus who died, and was buried a short time since? Go now to his grave, and tell him all the unkind things that you ever heard spoken of him, and that we are glad he is dead, and thankful to be rid of him, for he was such a pain to us… Go, my son, and say that, and tell me how he responds."

The young monk went to the grave, spoke as commanded, then returned.

The Father asked him: "How did he respond?"

The young monk said, somewhat confused: "He didn't. He's dead."

Go now again my son and repeat every flattering thing you have ever heard of him, tell him how much we miss him, how great a saint he was, what noble work he did, how the whole church depended on him, and come again and tell me what he says.

The young monk did as instructed and once again reported back: "He answers nothing; he is dead and buried."

The old Abbot said: "Now you know what it is to be dead and buried with Christ. Praises or curses are nothing to him who is really dead with Christ."

Of course, the young monk was still alive and would still be tempted to sin and would still sin sometimes – sin is not dead in him. However, the Abbot's point was that the monk was to live as if dead to sin. To have a different mindset.

Which is what Paul is talking about in 6:11:

"count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

We begin to think differently – to know the truth of who we are in Christ – and we begin to change.

Paul says – we are dead – that is the fact. And dead people don't sin.

2. We have been freed from slavery and have a new master

The other thing Paul says about us is that we are no longer slaves to sin – we now have a new master – and freed slaves don't take orders from old masters!

Romans 6

6: We are no longer slaves to sin.

14: Sin is no longer your master

16: Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

17 Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18 Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

22 But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God.

"when the slave is set free from his master and his bonds, he can go where he wants, when he wants, and do what he wants. Paul says that the old slave master of sin has been nullified. He has lost his job, lost his slave. The old slave master may shout, but the freed man need no longer jump." (Simon Ponsonby)

"While this side of heaven we will never cease to be plagued by sin, nevertheless we need never again be mastered by it, for now we are the children of God, and no more, never again, the slaves to sin."

Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones:

Take the case of those poor slaves in the United States of America. There they were in a condition of slavery. Then the American Civil War came, and as the result of that war, slavery was abolished in the United States. All slaves, young and old, were given their freedom, but many of the older ones who had endured long years of servitude found it very difficult to understand their status. They heard the announcement that slavery was abolished and that they were free: but hundreds, not to say thousands of times in their after-lives and experiences many of them did not realize it, and when they saw their old master coming near them, they began to quake and to tremble, and to wonder whether they were going to be sold …..

You can still be a slave experientially, even when you are no longer a slave legally … Whatever you may feel, whatever your experience may be, God tells us here, through his word, that if we are in Christ we are no longer .. under the reign and rule of sin … if I fall into sin, as I do, it is simply because I do not realize who I am … Realize it! Reckon it!"

Isn't that challenging? You can still be a slave experientially, even though you have been set free legally.

Samuel Northup – 12 years a slave

The authorities from New York come to tell Samuel that legally he is a free man – he can no longer be held by his old master. The old

master shouts and threatens and tries to hold on to him – but he cannot hold him – he is free.

"Do you still take orders from your old boss, your old enemy? Formatted responses to sin need to be reprogrammed. The only authority the slave master sin has over you is that which you give him. You are under new management – you have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's Son." Simon Ponsonby

Andrew Ollerton – used to live in a house in Cornwall – moved to a property about a mile away – for a while he would automatically drive back to the old property out of pure habit. On one occasion, he actually pulled into the drive, before realizing:

"I don't live here anymore!"

"In the same way, we can find our bodies and minds taking us back to old patterns, habits and ways of relating to others. But when sin tempts us to revisit our old ways, we can declare: I am in Christ. That's now how I live any more. My home is righteousness." Andrew Ollerton

6:13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Simon Ponsonby - Red – Amber – Green

"Paul has brought us to the point where we can see it may be possible for us to advance through life without being held back by sin. It won't go away, but it need not be our master."

Red means no

"do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." (6:12)

In the cultural revolution in China, the Chinese Communist Party didn't like the colour red being associated with Stop! They wanted a more positive connotation – so they changed the traffic lights so that red meant go! It caused absolute pandemonium.

In our cultural revolution, we do the same with our moral relativism – calling good evil and evil good – we want red to be green.

"But red is red; sin is sin; stop is stop! And Paul wants us to see red and stop sinning."

"Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness." (6:13)

Amber means think

6:11 "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God". The key word is "consider".

Deliberate and sober judgment of who we are in Christ.

"Sin often begins in the mind…. We need to retrain the mind to righteousness. Reckoning yourself dead to sin is setting your mind – having a mindset not to sin. We need to train the mind to think: dead to sin, alive to God."

Green means go

"But offer yourselves to God … and the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

The transformative power of a greater affection – of displacement.

"Holiness is Godward life. We need to cultivate a Godward grammar – living a life of, to, for, by, with and from Christ."

"Practice makes perfect. Sin is often a programmed habit, an auto-reflex of the flesh – body members and mind. Holiness can become a habit through habitually presenting yourself and the parts of your body to God."

Second nature – virtues and vices

A virtue, put simply, is **a good moral habit**.

A vice is a bad moral habit.

Good moral habits are character traits that become woven into who you are….

When you have acquired a moral habit – a virtue – it becomes **second nature**.

Our "first" nature is the hardwiring of our biological bodies and operates without our thinking about it.

At this very moment, you are not choosing to breathe. You are not thinking about breathing. 99.9 % of the time, you breathe, and blink and digest your breakfast without thinking about it. Nature simply takes care of this.

The habits in our life that become "second nature" operate in the same way: they become so woven into who you are that they are as natural to you as breathing and blinking.

You don't have to think about these things – they come naturally.

What are some of the things that Paul tells us to practise? What are some of these virtues that need to be at the centre of our life?

To become second nature…

Compassion. Kindness. Forgiveness. Thankfulness. Self-forgetfulness.

Virtues. Good moral habits. Second nature.

Ridge of freedom

Legalism or liberalism

Law or licence

"Legalists are refuges from grace; liberals are abusers of grace."

If chapter 6 is about **Freedom**, chapter 7 is about **Frustration**.

We do not reach or achieve sinless perfection in this life. Though we are dead to sin, and though we are no longer slaves to sin, we still slip and fall. As Paul says:

"For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." (Romans 7:18-20)

"There are few other scriptures that have brought me more encouragement." Simon Ponsonby

"You too?" I am not alone in my struggles.

Warfare is a way of life for the believer.

"We struggle with sin in our flesh, until we receive resurrection bodies. Battle is inevitable, defeat is not."

So Paul cries out:

7:15 "I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate."

7:24-25 "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

Paul reminds himself and us that the answer is found in Christ:

"Victory is with him not within."

"Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Christus Victor

The prodigal son – Luke 15

17 "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, 19 and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."'

20 "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals

for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.'

Treat me like a slave! I am not worthy to be called your child.

The Father is having none of it.

He has laid a table for you this morning – and he wants you to come and eat.

Know it! Live it! Free men and women you are! What will you do with that freedom?!

Community Group Bible Study and Application Questions

1. **Understanding grace (Romans 6:1–2)** Paul asks, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Why is this the wrong response to God's grace? How should a proper understanding of grace change the way we view sin and the way we live?

2. **Our new identity in Christ (Romans 6:3–7)** Paul teaches that when we become Christians, we are united with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection. What does it mean that our old self has been crucified with Christ? How might understanding this truth change the way you see yourself?

3. **Knowing versus feeling (Romans 6:6–11)** Paul tells us to "count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v.11). Why is it important to base our identity on what God says is true rather than on how we feel or what we experience? Are there areas of your life where you struggle to believe or live out this truth?

4. **Freedom from our old master (Romans 6:12–18)** Paul says that we are no longer slaves to sin and that sin is no longer our master. What do you think it means to be free from sin's mastery, even though we still experience temptation and sometimes fall into sin? Are there old patterns, habits or attitudes that you still find yourself returning to?

5. **Red, amber, green – responding to temptation (Romans 6:11–14)** Consider Simon Ponsonby's three principles:

- **Red – Stop:** Refuse to let sin reign in your life.
- **Amber – Think:** Remember who you are in Christ.
- **Green – Go:** Offer yourself to God as an instrument of righteousness.

Which of these three do you find most challenging? How could you put these principles into practice when facing a particular temptation this week?

6. **Developing godly habits (Romans 6:13, 19–22)** The message describes virtues as good moral habits that become second nature. Paul encourages us to offer ourselves to God and practise righteousness. What Christian virtues (such as compassion, kindness, forgiveness, thankfulness and self-forgetfulness) would you like to become more natural in your life? What practical steps could help you cultivate them?

7. **Avoiding the two extremes: legalism and liberalism** The message says, "Legalists are refuges from grace; liberals are abusers of grace." What do these two extremes look like in the Christian life? Why is it important to hold together the truth that we are saved by grace and called to live holy lives? Which extreme are you more

naturally drawn towards?

8. **The reality of the struggle (Romans 7:15–20)** Paul honestly describes the frustration of wanting to do what is right but repeatedly doing what he does not want to do. Can you relate to his experience? Why is it encouraging to know that even Paul experienced this struggle? How can we be honest about our sin without becoming comfortable with it?

9. **Where does victory come from? (Romans 7:24–25)** Paul cries out, "Who will rescue me?" and answers by thanking God through Jesus Christ. What is the difference between trying to overcome sin through sheer willpower and looking to Christ for victory? How can we depend more fully on Jesus when we struggle and fail?

10. **Living like we are free – what will you do with your freedom?** The message concludes with the reminder that we are free men and women in Christ. Like the prodigal son, we are welcomed home by a loving Father, not treated as slaves or servants. Is there an area of your life where you need to stop living as though you are still a slave to sin, guilt, shame or condemnation? What is one practical change you can make this week to live in the freedom Christ has given you?

Closing challenge for the group

"Know it! Live it! Free men and women you are! What will you do with that freedom?"

Invite everyone to share one truth from Romans 6–7 that they need to remember this week, and one practical way they intend to live it out.

Close by praying for one another: that you would know your identity in Christ, resist the old master of sin, develop habits of righteousness and continually look to Jesus for victory.