

## 64. The Book of Romans 6:23

*Paul's Epistle to the Romans*  
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

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(9-18-24)

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First of all, let me review briefly where we are in the Book of Romans and how we got here. We are currently in the section in the book that runs from Chapter 6 through Chapter 8.

**Romans 1-5** told us that as unbelievers we were '*dead in sin*', or in other words—*sin killed us all*.

**Romans 6-8** is going to tell us that as believers we are '*dead to sin*'—that sin no longer has authority over us.

**Chapters 3-5** tell us we are free from the *penalty* of sin.

**Chapters 6-8** tell us we are free from the *power* of sin.

In the last section (Romans 3:21-5:21) the theme was *Justification*—which as a Christian refers to my *position* before God—the emphasis here is on *being*.

In the next section (which we have already entered into) the theme is *Sanctification*—this refers to my *practice* for God—the emphasis here is on *doing*. Understand that the order is *vitaly* important. In the Christian life you have to first *be* what God wants you to be before you can *do* all that God wants you to do—in other words, *position* always precedes *practice*.

So first comes *justification* (salvation) and then comes *sanctification*.

In Romans 6-8 Paul will be dealing with the subject of *sanctification*—or to put it in more practical terms—this section deals with *victorious living in Christ*.

### Galatians 5:16–17, 25 (NKJV)

<sup>16</sup> I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish...<sup>25</sup> If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Paul admonishes us to walk in the Spirit but just what does that mean—I believe that Romans 6-8 is a commentary explaining how to do that very thing!

Look, I know I have been released from the *guilt* of sin—that's what *justification* is all about. What I need now is to know how to be released from the *power* of sin. Having said all of that—tonight we start with a verse that brings us to the great climax and conclusion of everything Paul has said from 5:21-6:22.

And in fact, Romans 6:23 could very well be seen as the great summary verse of the whole book of Romans—not to mention of the entire Bible!

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

One writer put it this way—

*“Sin pays wages...throughout your entire life in small, measured payments or consequences. And then when you die in one last lump sum you receive the final payment for a life of service to sin—death (eternal death).”*

You know, it’s not easy to go to hell...but if you work really hard at it—you can make it!

**Proverbs 26:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> The great God who formed everything gives the fool [Ps. 14:1] *his* hire and the transgressor *his* wages.

**God’s justice demands that you get what you’ve earned.  
To not give you your wages would be to rob you—God isn’t a thief!**

**Romans 6:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Greek word for ‘**gift**’ that Paul uses here speaks of something that was totally unearned—a free gift, given without any strings attached to it. It speaks of something that Roman soldiers living in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire knew well.

You see, they knew that on special occasions (the emperor’s birthday, or on his accession to the throne, or the anniversary of it)—the emperor handed out a free gift of money to the army. It had not been earned (wages)—but was simply a gift of the emperor’s kindness and grace.

So, Paul is picking up on that and is using it to prove his point that: *“If we got the pay (wages) we had earned as fallen sinners it would be death—but out of His grace God has given us the gift of eternal life.”*

J. Vernon McGee—

*“The Devil is the paymaster, and he will see to it that you get paid. If you work for him, the wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life. And you will receive that gift by faith. You are saved by faith. You are to live by faith. You are to walk moment by moment by faith. You cannot live for God by yourself any more than you can save yourself. It requires constant dependence upon Him, looking to the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.”*

**Eternal life** is not so much a *quantity* of life as it is a *quality* of life. And there is only one place to get it—

**John 14:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

**Acts 4:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

That then brings us to Chapter 7.

Each of the chapters in this new section in Romans—is built around a key word:

- The key word in Chapter 6 is **Sin**—it appears 17 times.
- In Chapter 7 the key word is **Law**—it appears 19 times.
- And in Chapter 8, the key word is **Spirit**—used 21 times—more than any other chapter in the Bible.

The key to understanding the relation of chapters 6-8 to each other is found in Romans 6:14:

**“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”**

There are 3 elements of this verse that serve as a kind of ‘*divine outline*’ for Romans 6, 7, and 8.

- **Romans 6** deals with **“sin shall not have dominion over you”**
- **Romans 7** deals with **“for you are not under law”**
- **Romans 8** deals with **“but under grace”**

In Chapter 6 we learned the principles for victory over the power of our sin nature—*Know, Reckon, Present* and *Obey*.

- **Know** is centered in the **mind**.
- **Reckon** focuses on the **heart**.
- **Present** touches the **will**.
- **Obey** results in the **sanctified life**—the grave clothes are removed, and we are living a resurrection life of obedience and victory in the Spirit.

No one knew these principles better than Paul who taught them to us in chapter 6—but here in chapter 7 he confesses that he still wrestles with sin—and often loses. It tells us that just because we know a lot of good, solid biblical principles and do our best to apply them into our lives—we are still going to wrestle with sin until Jesus comes for us and gives us our glorified bodies.

The good news is, as Spurgeon said, *“Dead men don’t wrestle”*—in other words the very fact that you are wrestling with sin is evidence that you are alive in the Spirit!

Romans Chapter 7 lays out the epic struggle between right and wrong—between the flesh and the Spirit that all Christians experience on this earth. Since all of us, who are believers in Jesus, want to live for Him after we get saved—we’re often prone to try to do it through hard work and raw determination—in other words, we try to use the flesh to defeat the flesh!

This leads to legalism which the Galatian Christians had fallen into. (Galatians 3:1-3)

You can’t use the flesh to defeat the flesh—*“Walk in the Spirit and you will not obey the lusts of the flesh.”* (Galatians 5:16)

In Romans 7 Paul takes on legalism—but what really is “legalism”?

- *It is the belief that I can become holy and please God by obeying laws and commandments.*

- *It is measuring spirituality by a list of dos and don'ts.*
- *It judges by the outward but not the inward (Jesus called the Pharisees 'white-washed tombs'—Explain).*

The weakness of legalism is that it sees sins (plural) but not sin (the root of the trouble). Legalism causes great emotional and spiritual damage and leads a person to one of two consequences:

- *They become a hypocrite, pretending to be holy.*
- *They give up all together on ever being able to live a godly life.*

More often it is the former and they become self-righteous Pharisees who are extremely hard on others, critical, unloving and judgmental. Legalism is a real problem in the body of Christ and it puts us right where the devil wants us—where he can condemn us when we fail.

**In the past** there were a good number of Bible teachers who taught that Romans 7 wasn't important for the Christian to read and know because it dealt with Paul's struggles with sin *before* he got saved. So, they jumped over it and got right into Chapter 8.

However, I personally believe that what we have in Romans 7 isn't Paul's struggle with sin *before* he got saved—but his struggles with sin as a believer. I don't think an unbeliever wrestles with sin as Paul describes in Chapter 7—unbelievers are dead in trespasses and sins—and dead men don't wrestle!

**I further believe** that it was what Paul learned over time in his struggles with the flesh (and recorded in Chapter 7)—that led to the victorious truth he lays out in Chapter 8.

Which means—you can't sidestep Romans 7 to get to Chapter 8 because—Chapter 7 is the *corridor* that leads to Chapter 8 and ultimately to victory!

**Let's compare the two for a minute.**

Romans 7 is a chapter of defeat and ends with a cry of defeat—***"O wretched man that I am!"***

And yet when we 'turn the page' and come to Romans 8—we find a chapter of victory that ends with a shout of victory—***"We are more than conquerors...!"***

You say, *"What happened? How did Paul go from miserable failure to glorious conqueror so quickly?"*

Well, in Chapter 7 Paul uses the personal pronouns "I" and "me" 46 times. In other words, the focus of Chapter 7 is self—it was Paul's testimony of when he tried to defeat sin in his life through his own strength, raw determination, and hard work.

What we have in Romans 7 is Paul addressing the utter failure of trying to use religion (the law) as a way of conquering over his fallen sinful nature! That's why it is a chapter of defeat ending with a cry of defeat—***"O wretched man that I am!"***

But in Chapter 8 (a tremendously uplifting and victorious chapter), the key word is Spirit—as in Holy Spirit! The word ***Spirit*** is used 23 times in Romans 8—more than in any other chapter in the Bible! That's why it's a chapter of victory that ends with a cry of victory—***"We are more than conquerors* (thru our relationship with Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit)."**

When it comes to living the Christian life—we need God’s power or else defeat and frustration will beat the life out of us and cause us to want to give up—*listen to what Peter says:*

**2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

The word ‘**power**’ is the Greek word *dunamis*—the same word we get the English words ‘*dynamite*’ and ‘*dynamic*’ from—which is the same Greek word used in Romans 1:16 and Acts 1:8—

**Romans 1:16 (NLT2)**

<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

**Acts 1:8 (NLT2)**

<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The same power that saved us, is the same power that equips us for service—but also is the divine power we need for living the Christian life on a daily basis! In other words, it is this power that gives us total victory over our fallen sinful nature and makes us all that God wants us to be—“**more than conquerors.**” (*Romans 8:37*)

So, in Chapter 7 Paul wants to teach us that we are dead to the law—that it no longer has any power over us:

**1 Corinthians 15:56 (NKJV)**

... the strength of sin is the law.

Let’s look at this—by looking at Paul’s testimony as recorded in Romans 7.

In Romans 7 Paul talks about the classic battle every believer in Christ faces with their fallen nature when wanting to do God’s will—

**Romans 7:19, 22-23 (NLT)**

<sup>19</sup> I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. <sup>22</sup> I love God’s law with all my heart. <sup>23</sup> But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin [nature] that is still within me.

**The bottom line** is—the Christian life is a *supernatural life*—not a glorified ‘*self-help*’ program.

**Ephesians 3:20 (NLT2)**

<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

The idea of God’s ‘*mighty power*’ at work within us—is a reference to Jesus Christ who lives within us thru His indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 14:18)

**Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The power to live the Christian life doesn't come from a *principle* or a *program* but from a *Person*—Jesus Christ!

He won the victory on Calvary's cross—He vanquished principalities and powers (the devil and his demons) thru His death and resurrection. Since we, as Christians, are in Him—all the victory and power we need to live the Christian life comes thru Him—we just need to '*look to Jesus*' by faith to live His life thru us.

As Paul said, "*The life which I now live in the flesh [in my physical body] I live by faith in the Son of God...*"

It is *faith* that releases the power of God into our lives to be saved and to live for Him—not hard work and self-effort as we rely on the strength of *our* flesh rather than on the power of God's Spirit.

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