

THANKS BE TO GOD!

I. [Romans 6:15-23](#) [Romans 7:18-25](#) [Romans 8:1-4](#)

A. Even though Thanksgiving was this past Thursday, I'm not ready to quit giving Thanks to God. It's been a rough few weeks for many people we know but I'm praying thankful hearts prevail, even in times of pain and loss. I also pray that our thanksgiving gives way to thanks-living and that it becomes one of hallmarks. [Hebrews 13:15](#) (NLV) took us home last Sunday and I thought we should bring it back for an encore: *15 Let us give thanks all the time to God through Jesus Christ. Our gift to Him is to give thanks. Our lips should always give thanks to His name.*

B. In the 2012 Presidential campaign, one of the men seeking the nomination was a gentleman named Herman Cain. Herman coined a catchy phrase so people could easily understand his tax plan. He called it his 9-9-9 Plan. Anyone remember? :-)

C. While the title of this message is, "*Thanks Be To God*," we could subtitle it, "*The Romans 6-7-8 Thanks Be to God Emancipation Plan*." But that's kind of on the long side so let's stick with "*Thanks Be to God*."

D. Romans 6:15-23 (NIV) is our first Scripture and it reminds believers we've been set free from sin...

1) **V15-16: 15** *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! 16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Jesus said similarly in [John 8:34-36](#) (AMP) 34 Jesus answered, "I assure you and most solemnly say to you, everyone who practices sin habitually is a slave of sin. 35 Now the slave does not remain in a household forever; the son [of the master] does remain forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free. So have you been set free?!)*

2) **V17-18: 17** *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. (Say it aloud: **Thanks be to God!**)*

3) **V19-23: 19** *I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. (OV: Sanctification) 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! (2nd death!) 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

E. After the Civil War slaves were released from their slave-owners' possession. Some of them struggled as to what to do with their newfound freedom. While many had long dreamt of fleeing the plantation, it was hard for many to finally pack up and go. It was one thing to exit the bondage of the plantation, but now they had to get the plantation out of their souls. Israel struggled in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt. They even craved their old slave rations!

F. Romans 7:18-25 (NIV) is our next Scripture. It reminds us that even when we're set free from the land of slavery, we still wrestle with extracting the slavery out of us. Paul uses his own struggle in these regards to help us...

1) **V18: 18** *For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. (Flesh) For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (I'm off the plantation but plantation habits are hard to break! I'm no longer a slave in Egypt but I often still walk like an Egyptian!)*

2) **V19: 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. (Honest believers know this drill!)*

3) **V20-23: 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. 21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. (Is there hope for us former slaves?!)*

4) **V24-25: 24** *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. (Let's say it loud together: **Thanks be to God!**)*

G. So we've been set free. Emancipated. We're off the plantation. We're no longer picking cotton. We're no longer building pyramids with bricks made without straw. And though we're wrestling, battling, *waging war* against our old sinful nature (our wretched flesh) we have hope for a Promised Day of total and complete emancipation. Hear it this way: "*We've been liberated from sin's penalty; we're being liberated from sin's power; and we'll One Day be liberated from sin's presence altogether.*" (Let's say it again, *Thanks be to God!*)

H. Romans 8:1-4 (NIV) is the last Scripture of "*The Romans 6-7-8 Thanks Be to God Emancipation Plan.*" These Scriptures we've read are not for those who remain in slavery, not for those living in the slave quarters on the plantation. These Scriptures are for those who have been set free by the ransom paid by Jesus' precious blood. If that's not you, we pray it will be you! This is God's desire for you! You're not hearing this by accident! The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate emancipation proclamation! This next passage is not about our former status, it's about our current status as freedmen and freedwomen in Christ Jesus...

1) **V1-3a: 1** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, **2** because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. **3a** For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. (**Jesus became a curse to redeem us from the curse of breaking the law. Gal. 3:13**) (+ 2 Cor. 5:21)

2) **V3b-4: 3b** And so He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (**One more time, Thanks be to God!**)

* Close with Prayer...

* Galatians 5:1 (AMP) is a **Benediction for those set free by Christ: 1** It was for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Romans 6:15-23 (NIV)

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! **16** Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? **17** But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. **18** You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. **19** I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. **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! **22** But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. **23** For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 7:18-25 (NIV)

18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. 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. **21** So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22** For in my inner being I delight in God's law; **23** but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. **24** What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? **25** Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 8:1-4 (NIV)

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, **2** because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. **3** For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Hebrews 13:15 (NLV) **15** Let us give thanks all the time to God through Jesus Christ. Our gift to Him is to give thanks. Our lips should always give thanks to His name.

John 8:34-36 (AMP)

34 Jesus answered, "I assure you and most solemnly say to you, everyone who practices sin habitually is a slave of sin. **35** Now the slave does not remain in a household forever; the son [of the master] does remain forever. **36** So if the Son makes you free, then you are unquestionably free.

Galatians 5:1 (AMP)

1 It was for this freedom that Christ set us free [completely liberating us]; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery [which you once removed].

Film Clips & Article Links

"No Longer Slaves" - Voices of Lee (Lee University)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QANH8MWuyaE>

"Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)" - Kendra & Krista (Tigirlily)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPrMcaYSOjs>

Clint Eastwood Reads Praise Song Lyrics (Thanks Mark!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HB7gPIIQT7Y&feature=youtu.be>

Bonus Stuff

2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (AMP)

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty [emancipation from bondage, true freedom]. **18** And we all, with unveiled face, continually seeing as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are progressively being transformed into His image from [one degree of] glory to [even more] glory, which comes from the Lord, [who is] the Spirit.

Galatians 4:1-7 (AMP)

1 Now what I mean [when I talk about children and their guardians] is this: as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave even though he is the [future owner and] master of all [the estate]; **2** but he is under [the authority of] guardians and household administrators or managers until the date set by his father [when he is of legal age]. **3** So also we [whether Jews or Gentiles], when we were children (spiritually immature), were kept like slaves under the elementary [man-made religious or philosophical] teachings of the world. **4** But when [in God's plan] the proper time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the [regulations of the] Law, **5** so that He might redeem and liberate those who were under the Law, that we [who believe] might be adopted as sons [as God's children with all rights as fully grown members of a family]. **6** And because you [really] are [His] sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba! Father!" **7** Therefore you are no longer a slave (bond-servant), but a son; and if a son, then also an heir through [the gracious act of] God [through Christ].

1 Peter 2:16 (ESV)

16 Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

Quote by Jen Wilkin

"I knew I served a God who was and is and is to come, but I had yet to learn that I possessed from Him a salvation of which the same could be said. Salvation from sin can be broken down into three categories: justification, sanctification, and glorification. For the believer, our justification *was*, our sanctification *is*, and our glorification *is to come*. We were saved, we are being saved, we will be saved. I've found the easiest way to understand these three forms of freedom is to remember the three P's: penalty, power, and presence."

Quote by D.L. Moody

"If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you are free."

Quote by Peter Marshall

"May we think of freedom, not as the right to do as we please, but as the opportunity to do what is right."

Quote by Thomas Watson

"To serve God, to love God, to enjoy God, is the sweetest freedom in the world."

Quote by Martin Luther

"Either sin is with you, lying on your shoulders, or it is lying on Christ, the Lamb of God. Now if it is lying on your back, you are lost; but if it is resting on Christ, you are free, and you will be saved. Now choose what you want."

Quote by John Owen

"If we do not abide in prayer, we will abide in temptation. Let this be one aspect of our daily intercession: "God, preserve my soul, and keep my heart and all its ways so that I will not be entangled." When this is true in our lives, a passing temptation will not overcome us. We will remain free while others lie in bondage."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. Aristotle said that some people were only fit to be slaves. I do not contradict him. But I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters."

How Salvation Brings Freedom

By Jen Wilkin - The Gospel Coalition

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-salvation-brings-freedom/>

I grew up in the Bible Belt where, by mid-elementary, most of my peers could point proudly to a note written in the front of their Bibles announcing the exact date they Got Saved. At junior high youth rallies the Rededications began, along with a smattering of I-Thought-I-Was-Saved-But-I-Really-Wasn'ts (scribble over that first date and write in the new one). Through all seven verses of "Just As I Am," and all four years of high school, we children of the Bible Belt battled our doubts and hustled our backslidden selves down aisles to altar rails.

Maybe, we thought, this time just maybe the Saving will stick.

Where's the Freedom?

Our problem was this: our sinning had not ceased with our professions of faith. The salvation that had promised us new life in Christ had by all appearances failed to deliver. We still made all the same mistakes, and along the thorny path of adolescence we added fresh failures to the list. Damning evidence, or so we thought, that when we Prayed The Prayer we had somehow not done it right. Where was the freedom from sin we had been promised?

Looking back I wonder if, for many of us, our problem was not with salvation itself, but with our understanding of how salvation brings freedom. Not until my early 20s did I gain any clarity on this issue. I knew I served a God who was and is and is to come, but I had yet to learn that I possessed from Him a salvation of which the same could be said. Salvation from sin can be broken down into three categories: justification, sanctification, and glorification. For the believer, our justification *was*, our sanctification *is*, and our glorification *is to come*. We were saved, we are being saved, we will be saved. I've found the easiest way to understand these three forms of freedom is to remember the three P's: penalty, power, and presence.

Justification: Freedom from Sin's Penalty

When we came to saving faith in Christ, confessing our great need of Him and asking for forgiveness from the punishment we deserved, we were met with God's unequivocal "yes." Since Christ bore the penalty for our sins, we received freedom from that penalty for all sins past, present, and future. We were justified before God our judge because our penalty had been paid. Those who have been justified never need re-justifying. We can look back to the time of our justification (perhaps written in the front of our Bible?) and know that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus ([Rom. 8:1-2](#)).

Our justification is behind us. It is a past occurrence. We were saved from sin's penalty.

Sanctification: Freedom from Sin's Power

Now that the grace of God has been set upon us as a permanent seal ([2 Cor. 1:20-22](#)), we are being made new. We are being set free from the power of sin by the power of the Spirit. God's grace is restoring to us a will that wants what He wants. Before we were justified, our broken wills were utterly subject to the power of sin. We chose sin at every

turn. Even when we made choices that appeared good from an external standpoint, because we had no higher internal purpose than to glorify self these choices were ultimately sinful as well. Now, the power of sin is broken. We have been given the deposit of the Holy Spirit. Though we once chose only to sin, now we have the power (and the growing desire) to choose righteousness. We who were once slaves to sin's power are now free to serve God. We don't always use our freedom. We still sin, but over time we learn increasingly to choose holiness. Our entire lives from that handwritten date in our Bibles onward are devoted to "working out our salvation" ([Phil. 2:12-13](#)) as we learn to choose righteousness instead of sin, to walk in obedience to God's commands.

Our sanctification is ongoing. It is a slow-moving growth in holiness. We are being saved from sin's power.

Glorification: Freedom from Sin's Presence

We will fight to grow in holiness our entire earthly lives. But when we have run the race and fought the good fight, we will enter into the presence of the Lord forever. We will be glorified. In His presence, our soul rest will at last be complete, as sin and its devastation will cease to assail us. There can be no evil in His presence. Though now we are surrounded on all sides by sinfulness, though now sin continues to cling to our hearts, on a day not too distant we will go to a place where sin is no more. In our glorification we will at last be granted freedom from the very presence of sin.

Our glorification is coming. It is the day we trade the persistent presence of sin for the perfect presence of the Lord. We will be saved from sin's presence.

Rest, Labor, Hope

If my childhood peers and I had better understood these three aspects of salvation's freedom, we might have saved ourselves a great deal of anxiety and a few trips down the aisle. The knowledge that sin is gradually overcome across a lifetime would have been good news to the teenager who thought surely her ongoing sin invalidated her profession. The knowledge that sanctification is hard work would have helped her topple the myth of the effortless stock-photo Christian life. The knowledge that total freedom from sin is a future certainty would have helped her ask in faith for grace for her current failures.

Maybe you, too, have found salvation mystifying. Maybe you've wondered, *If I'm really saved, why don't I feel fully free?* Well, you're not free yet, but you will be. Our complete freedom from sin is certain, but it is not sudden. So we rest confidently in our justification, we labor diligently in our sanctification, and we hope expectantly in our glorification.

Be assured of your justification. It *was*. One day, you were freed fully from the penalty of sin.

Be patient with your sanctification. It *is*. Each day, you are being freed increasingly from the power of sin.

Be eager for your glorification. It *is to come*. One day, you will be freed finally from the presence of sin.

- Jen Wilkin is a wife, mom to four great kids, and an advocate for women to love God with their minds through the faithful study of his Word. She writes, speaks, and teaches women the Bible. She lives in Flower Mound, Texas, and her family calls The Village Church home. Jen is the author of [None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us \(and Why That's a Good Thing\)](#) (Crossway, 2016) and [Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds](#) (Crossway, 2014). You can find her at jenwilkin.net and [follow her on Twitter](#).

By Grace, We Are Free in Christ

by Sinclair Ferguson - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/grace-we-are-free-christ/>

In [John 8:34](#) Jesus underlined [the bondage](#) in which we are held by nature. On the other hand, He spoke about the freedom into which He brings sinners by grace: "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" ([John 8:36](#)).

How could the Son set them free? Because of who He was. He was the Son who has been sent into the world by the Father. He knew the Father's plan. He had the most intimate relationship with the Father. He had heard everything the Father had said, and He came with this message of good news: "The Father has sent Me in order to set you free" (see [John 8:28](#)).

How, then, does Christ set us free?

John had answered that question earlier, in the most famous verse in his Gospel. This God, this Father, so loved the world, this world in its sinfulness and bondage, that He sent His only Son into it. He had only one Son, but He sent Him to die on a cross in order to save everyone who believes in Him ([John 3:16](#)).

The Son would be “lifted up”—lifted up on a cross, exposed in public shame, hanging between heaven and earth, under the judgment of God against our sins—so that those who believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life ([John 12:32](#); [3:16](#)).

Jesus Christ is able to set us free because He has dealt with the sin that enslaves us.

We can never atone for our own sin. We can never break its power. We can never come to God and say, “God, surely what I have done is enough to compensate for my sins.” Nothing we can do can possibly compensate. But God sent His own Son—think of it, His own Son—who stood in for us, in our place. He lived a perfect life. Since He had no sins of His own to atone for, He was qualified to make a sacrifice for our sins. No sacrifice we could make could ever be adequate to atone for sin. But He was able and willing to do it. Because of that, we can be set free from guilt and from the bondage it creates.

Christ also sets us free in another way: through the truth about God—and about ourselves—that He reveals. If we believe in Him, we will come to know the truth, and the truth will set us free ([John 8:32](#)). That is His promise.

I have met some exceptionally intelligent people who cannot understand the Christian gospel. They hear its message as if it were a lecture on morality. Yet the gospel is not difficult to understand. The problem lies within us—in our spiritual blindness. If there is resistance in the heart to loving God, there will be resistance in the mind to knowing God—and therefore to listening to and seeking God. Only the truth can set us free.

Later on in John’s Gospel, Jesus spoke about sending the Holy Spirit to His disciples. He would be like a great spotlight shining into their minds, illumining them so that they could begin to see and understand Jesus and what He had done. The Spirit would remove spiritual deception, transform the spiritually dead, and glorify Christ.

So Jesus is able to set us free because of who He is and because of what He shows us. As a result, we now may dare to call God “Father.”

This is the most obvious difference between a “religious” person and a Christian. A religious person is likely to address God—especially in a crisis—as “O God,” not as “O Father.” There is a simple reason for this. Unless you know God as your Father, you never cry out to Him in your need as “Abba, Father” ([Rom. 8:15–16](#)).

- This excerpt is taken from [By Grace Alone: How the Grace of God Amazes Me](#) by Sinclair Ferguson.