

# No Longer Slaves

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning. How many of you have read Little Women by Louisa May Alcott? Anybody? How many of you have watched the movie?

I am not particularly a fan of either one. I don't think I was the demographic that she was writing for. But listen, there's a quote from that book.

That I think most of us can relate to. She wrote, I keep turning over new leaves and spoiling them. And I make so many beginnings, there never will be an end.

How many of you have maybe made a big change? Made a new beginning, a fresh start? And maybe you moved to a new place or you started a new job or started a new relationship.

Or maybe you came to church. Maybe you gave your life to Jesus and started something new. And you realize that the problem with the new phase or the new thing is that it's still the same you in the new location.

[ 1 : 1 0 ] It's still the same person working the new job. The problem usually is we take the same self with us wherever we go, whatever we're doing.

And I think the ancient philosopher Confucius was on to something when he said, no matter where you go, there you are. It's still you, right?

It's one thing to change your location. It's another thing entirely to change your nature. To change you. To change me.

For every one of us in the room today, whether you have been a follower of Christ for many years or you're just exploring your faith.

This is the reality of the Christian life. And it can be frustrating. We know we're what we call saved. Saved from the curse of sin, the punishment of sin, the effects of sin.

[ 2 : 1 7 ] By the work of Jesus Christ that he did on the cross through his resurrection. We have that power. We have that identity in Christ. I'm a child of God. I'm no longer a slave to fear.

And that's what we're going to talk about today. But oftentimes we don't feel that way. We don't see it take shape in our Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday.

So Paul is writing in Romans chapter 8 to show us how God gets us out of the wilderness of never being able to change who we are.

And he starts with a massive foundational principle to the Christian life. It's called justification.

Would you turn with me to Romans chapter 8 verse 1?

Romans chapter 8. We've been in Paul's letter to the churches in Rome for many weeks now. We started at the back of the epistle. We're working our way to the front. Kind of doing it backwards to shake it up a little bit.

[ 3 : 1 8 ] And we get a slightly different perspective when we do it that way. So Romans chapter 8 beginning in verse 1. Some of the greatest words Paul probably ever wrote most impactful for child of God are these in verse 1.

So therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in the Messiah, Jesus. Church, I know we don't stand for every reading of the scriptures. Would you mind joining me in standing on this first section here?

Romans 8 verses 1. If you're able to, join us in standing. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Jesus Christ.

Why not? Verse 2. Because the law of the spirit of the life in the Messiah, Jesus, released you from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, in parentheses being weak because of human flesh, what it was incapable of doing.

God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And as a sin offering and right there in the flesh, what did he do? He condemned sin. Verse 4.

[ 4 : 25 ] This was in order that the right and proper verdict of the law could be fulfilled in us as we live not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

Would you join me in praying? God, we thank you for these words, which you gave to your servant Paul so many years ago. He passed them on through Phoebe, the message carrier to the church in Rome.

And they needed this at this time. They needed to be reminded who they were in Christ. Jew, Gentile, rule followers, struggling with traditions.

All of them were under this grace. And there was no condemnation now that could be held against them. And God, I thank you that we find ourselves in the same standing. With the same identity.

With the same promise. I pray that we would hold on to it tightly. That we would never let it go. And that we would use it to remind ourselves who we are in you and the great purpose you have for us.

[ 5 : 22 ] It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thanks for standing. This is a bedrock doctrine or long-held, firmly-held, concrete belief of the Christian life, of the Christian faith.

It is called justification. It is a legal verdict handed down to us from God himself. You are safe, secure, you're forgiven. But Paul then immediately pivots to say, God doesn't just want to change your legal status.

He also wants to change your daily reality. He wants to change your nature. So he reminds us that our security in Christ is absolute. It's final.

No one can condemn you. Now, I'm sad to say that religion has often done a lot of condemning. We've gotten a reputation for that, so to speak.

You go to church and you're going to hear about all the things you shouldn't do. And then you're going to get looked, somebody's going to look down their nose at you or look at you cross ways or shake their finger at you. If they catch you doing something they feel you shouldn't do, Christ says there is no condemnation.

[ 6 : 32 ] Through his servant Paul, there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. Why? Because we have been released by the spirit of life found in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

We have been released through that spirit from the law of sin and death. What law are they talking about? The law that was given by God to his people. Read about it in the Old Testament.

You've got the Ten Commandments, the most famous summary of this law. But so many laws were given by God to his people. He said that law could never free you.

That law was there to show you how you cannot measure up. That law was there to show you this is how perfect God is. This is what he requires his people to be.

You're never going to be able to be that. So when you get Pharisees or keepers of the law who says, I've kept the law. No, you haven't.

[ 7 : 33 ] You have been selfish. You have held other things above God and above what his heart is for, which is people. So no one can truly keep the law completely.

God gave it to us as a guideline, ultimately to keep us from unnecessary evil in this world, but ultimately to drive us back into his arms.

Say, God, I can't do this on my own. I need you. I need your grace. So the law of the spirit of Jesus, life in Christ, releases us from that law of sin and death.

So this is where we're going today. From Romans 8, we read 1 through 4. We're about to pick it up in verse 5. We're not going to do the entire chapter today.

We're going to save some of that for next week. But we have this theme before us. We are no longer slaves to the law.

[ 8 : 33 ] And even more than that, we're no longer slaves, not just to the law, but to the sin that the law reveals. So we don't have to be slaves, not just to the rules, but also we don't have to be slaves to our own inability to keep the rules.

You understand what he's saying? If it's not clear yet, I pray that by the end it will be. We've got some doctrines here that we're looking at. Throughout this passage, what do we say doctrines were?

It's these long-held concrete beliefs of the faith of Jesus Christ. So the first doctrine that we're looking at is this doctrine of justification. I've heard a definition of justification.

Somebody said it's that you're made just as if you never sinned. And there's an essence of that in it, but it's so much more than that. It is a legal standing before God that says, not only has it been made just as if you never sinned, that's not quite it.

It's more that God has freed you from the curse of sin. That's more what justification is implying. [ 9 : 44 ] That as long as you were under this curse of sin, and we're going way back to the very beginning, Adam and Eve and the fall of man. And, you know, even before that to the rebellion in heaven and Lucifer, the angel being cast out with all the demons.

And we go way back to this origin of sin or going against God. Justification is freeing you from that. We're all born under this curse of sin.

Somebody has to free us from it. Otherwise, we're slaves to it. So justification is being freed from slavery to sin.

So, number one, verses 5 through 11 highlight this theme, changing our focus.

If we want to understand what Paul is writing about in verses 5 through 11. By the way, let me just jump in here real quick. Romans chapter 8 is arguably the most impactful writing that Paul ever did.

[ 11 : 00 ] It is the central theme of the book of Romans, the letter of Romans. It's what he used to illustrate the point that he was making. Way back in the first couple of weeks of this series on Romans, we understood what Paul was trying to accomplish with this church in Rome.

They were a divided church. You got the old long-standing Jewish Christians. Now, listen, they were all followers of Christ. Jesus was not that long in the tomb, then risen from the dead and gone back to heaven.

He'd given his command to his people to go across the world and preach the gospel. And not long after this, still fresh in their minds, these long-standing historic Jewish Christians, now believing that Jesus was their long-promised Messiah.

And then these new Gentile Christians were trying to make it work together. The Jews had had to leave Rome. They'd been cast out by the Emperor Claudius, and then they got to come back.

And now, they're trying to mesh together. Well, yes, we all believe in Jesus. We all want to follow Jesus. But wait a minute. You also got to keep all these laws that were given to us by God.

[ 12 : 14 ] Let me break out the Torah and start reading you some of these laws that God told us to keep. You Gentiles have to keep those too. And the Gentiles were like, Wait a minute. We weren't signing up for all your Jewish laws.

We believe in Jesus. What are you talking about? So they're trying to make this work. So Paul's trying to accomplish this by reminding them who they are in Christ, what it's really all about.

And Romans 8 is the pivotal moment. It's where it all turns right here in Romans 8. So let's pick it up in verse 5. Look at it like this. People whose lives are determined by human flesh focus their minds on matters to do with the flesh.

But people whose lives are determined by the Spirit focus their minds on matters to do with the Spirit. So verse 6, he gives instruction. Focus the mind on the flesh and you'll die.

But focus it on the Spirit and you'll have life and peace. Well, that's a dichotomy there. You want death or you want life and peace. Everybody's pursuing life and peace.

[ 13 : 17 ] Whether you're in the medical profession or whatever you're doing, your ultimate goal is life and peace. He says, focus your mind on the Spirit of God and you'll have life and peace.

Verse 7, the mind focused on the flesh, you see, is hostile to God. It doesn't submit to God's law. It can't. In fact, it cannot submit to God's law.

Those who are determined by the flesh cannot please God. Verse 9, but you're not people of the flesh. You are people of the Spirit. If indeed God's Spirit lives within you, note that anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of Jesus does not belong to him.

But if the Messiah, if Jesus Christ is in you, the body is indeed dead because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of covenant justice.

Verse 11, so then, if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives within you, the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies too through his Spirit which lives within you.

[ 14 : 32 ] What's he talking about? He's hearkening back to Exodus 14. Ready for this? You don't have to turn there right now. It stretches way too long of passages for us to dive into it all this morning.

But in Exodus 14 all the way through Exodus 17, we read about the wandering in Egypt, the wandering in the desert. After being freed from Egypt, God miraculously parts the Red Sea.

He delivers his people out of slavery in Egypt. They were legally free. They'd been justified in some ways. But then if you read in Exodus 16 and 17, what do they do?

Do they praise God for his freedom? When things get tough in the desert, what do they do? They grumble. They complain. They blame. Because they'd been pulled out of Egypt. But you could say that Egypt hadn't been pulled out of them yet. You ever felt that way? God saved me from sin, but he hadn't saved all the sin out of me yet.

[15:41] Anybody identify with that? God saved me from sin. God saved me from sin. God saved me from sin. So Paul's using this as an example to show you that God is interested in changing your nature, what he calls the flesh.

When we try to live according to the old Egypt way of thinking, the old slavery way of thinking, the old, this is how I've always done it, this is how I've always learned it, I have to get what's best for me.

I have to be selfish. I have to look out for my own interests. This is being a slave to sin. It's thinking with the flesh. Paul says God is trying to change that in you.

Psalms 106 verse 21 talks about the children of Israel wandering in the desert. They forgot the God who saved them, who had done great things in Egypt.

Yeah, he had. All the miracles, the plagues that got Pharaoh's attention and finally let him free the people and then he changes his mind as they're just about to get out of town and sends his soldiers after him and God miraculously delivers them with the parting of the Red Sea.

[16:59] God did great things freeing them. God did great things freeing you from sin. God did miraculous things freeing me from sin.

He sent his only son, Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, lived among us, took off his heavenly royal robes and lived among us, humbled himself like a man, performed great miracles, healed people, incredible things that no one else could do and then he willingly laid down his life to free us, to conquer, to pay off our sin debt and then in God's power raised him from the dead.

Great things, miraculous things God did to free us from sin. But are we like the children of Israel who we then forget what he's done?

Oh, we know it in our heads, but that doesn't translate to our nature and we go running back to slavery, to sin.

What did the children of Israel do? Immediately, they started thinking, man, at least we had enough to eat in Egypt. Yeah, we were slaves. Yeah, life was terrible, but at least they provided for our basic needs.

[18:19] We're out here wandering in the desert. We don't know where our next meal is going to come from. And they blamed God because they forgot the one who had saved them. The flesh that Paul's talking about in Romans 8 is not this flesh, our physical skin, right?

It's the old, stubborn, me-first attitude. It's the default human setting. It's what we were programmed with under this curse of sin.

It's what the prophet Ezekiel calls a heart of stone. And God's looking at his people and he's speaking through Ezekiel, his prophet. He says, I will remove from you this heart of stone and I will give you a heart of flesh.

This is a different kind of flesh. This is a soft heart. So what Paul is calling flesh in Romans 8, Ezekiel is calling a heart of stone back in Ezekiel 36.

God is saying he wants to change your nature. Verses 5 through 8, Paul says, a mindset on the flesh, Romans 8, is hostile to God. It's this old slave mindset that relies on self-preservation and fear.

[19:33] How many of y'all think slavery is wrong? Can we agree on that? Is everybody, or can we? Not every hand is raised. I'm a little worried right now. So if slavery is wrong, then why do we subject ourselves to being slaves to sin?

Jesus came to free us from that. We read about how he came to set the captives free. Yes, he's interested in justice on this earth.

Yes, God hates human slavery. God also hates slavery to sin. He came to free us from its shackles. So these are also some doctrines that we're looking at here.

This is regeneration and progressive sanctification. What does regeneration mean? Regeneration means you're re-generated. Like new DNA.

Yes, thank you. God bless you. Harlan's a hero. Thank you, sir. So regeneration means that, yes, we were born under the curse of sin.

[ 20 : 40 ] Thank you, sir. Perfect. God, through Jesus Christ, rescued us from that. But it's more than just being freed.

It's that you're now brought into, what he says, grafted into the family of God. So how special is it that you and I can say, yes, God wants me in his family, but he wants me as his child.

Regeneration means. It's not just that we become a friend of God. That's part of it. But it's also that we become part of God's family that he's bringing us out of the curse of sin and bringing us into his royal family.

So regeneration is a special thing. That's why he says he wants to change our nature. It's natural for us to want to go do the things of the flesh. It's natural for us to want to go back and live as though we're slaves to sin.

He says, I want to change what's natural to you. So if you say that's just who I am, that's never an excuse with God. Isn't that sad? He takes away our excuses.

[ 21 : 46 ] Well, I just don't like doing this. Or that's just not who I am. That's just not how I tick. God wants to change what makes you tick. He wants to change you.

I've seen God change people's personalities. I've seen God take jerks and make them nice. I've never seen him do it the other way around. But God wants to re-gene you.

A lot of things are passed down for us, to us from generation to generation. Proclivities to certain things. You know, just the way we're wired and we're prone to this, we're prone to that.

God can change all that. He's the one who ultimately programs all of us anyway. So regeneration is how God changes our nature. And then progressive sanctification is God changing us over time.

What does sanctification mean? To set apart, to make holy. That doesn't happen all at once. When you choose Jesus, and he comes in and takes up residence in your life by his spirit, he does instantly transform you into 100% different than you were before.

[ 22 : 52 ] It takes time. That's what we call progressive sanctification. It's progressing slowly over time, God changing you into more and more of his image.

So, number two, changing your status. Thankfully, we only have two points today, and we're on the last one, okay? So first, changing your focus. Second, changing your status.

If you change your focus from the things to the flesh to the things of the spirit, then you recognize how God has changed your status. Has anybody ever updated your status on social media?

What about your relationship status? I'm talking more to the younger people in the room. If you're in a relationship, or there's the fun, it's complicated thing, you don't know exactly what your status is with your relationship.

But look, God wants you to understand that your status is what he says it is, not what you feel like it is. There might be times when you feel like, man, God loves me.

[ 23 : 58 ] God's the best. He's pouring out all these blessings on me. And there might be other times in life when you don't necessarily feel that way. That's why your status update should not depend on how you're feeling in the moment.

Your status with God is what he decrees that it is. So let's look at verse 12. Romans 8 and verse 12. So then, my dear family, we are in debt. Isn't that great? You came to church this morning to hear that you're in debt. He says, but not to human flesh to live our life in that way.

If you live in accordance with the flesh, you will die. But if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Verse 14. All who are led by the spirit of God, you see, are God's children. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery, did you? To go back again into a state of fear. But you received the spirit of sonship. This is slavery versus sonship. Which would you rather be?

[ 25 : 00 ] A slave or a son? You receive the spirit of sonship in whom we call out, Abba, Father. When that happens, it is the spirit itself giving supporting witness to what our own spirit is saying that we are God's children.

And if we're God's children, we are also heirs. This is where that regeneration comes in. What does it mean to be an heir? You're in line to receive the blessing.

You're in line to receive the inheritance. Because you have been re-gened into his family. And if we're heirs of God, we're fellow heirs with Jesus, the Messiah, as long as we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

That's where we'll stop for today. But listen, I want to draw your attention to a couple things before we close. In the Old Testament, God called Israel his firstborn son.

The people of Israel, the Hebrew people. He rescued them from Pharaoh back in Exodus 4 and verse 22. He calls them his firstborn son.

[ 26 : 09 ] I think we've got it on the screen here. This is what the Lord says. Israel is my firstborn son. So he loved them. What did we learn a few weeks ago? You have the Israel of the Old Testament.

Well, then you have the church, which God calls his people, of the New Testament. Here we are. We are the church. There are many more churches all around this globe full of God's people. So how do you... What? Did Israel go away and now it's the church? No, no, no. God does not get rid of his son. He doesn't change his promise. He doesn't break his covenant. The church is the expansion of Israel.

Israel. It's not just the Hebrew people. God also brought in Gentiles. Thank God. They were the forerunner. They were the first edition. And then God brought in all of us.

So we get to be part of his Israel. We get to be part of his people. So Israel broke their relationship with God.

[ 27 : 10 ] They rebelled against him. But now through Jesus Christ, God has instituted a new, a true and unbreakable sonship for any of us who trust in him.

And this gets us to the doctrine of adoption. Adoption. We can be adopted in to God's family. And he does it on a concrete level through regeneration, right?

It's not something that can be revoked in court. God can't say, well, I adopted you, but now I'm going to renounce that. It is concrete. It's set in stone. It's sealed in blood of Jesus Christ.

Galatians chapter four and verse seven, Paul writes this and he says, you are no longer a slave, but a son. And if you are a son, then you are an heir through God.

How many of you want to receive an inheritance? Like you get a magical rich uncle that you never knew about and he died and he left you a million dollars.

[ 28 : 14 ] Anybody? Yeah, that sounds great. I've been waiting for that to happen. I feel like I'm going to keep waiting. Far better than that kind of earthly inheritance would be an inheritance from God himself.

And he says, you've got it. You are an heir to it. You are an heir to everything, all the life, all the peace, all that I am, all that I have is available to you because of Jesus Christ.

you're no longer a slave to sin. You are a son of God, a daughter of God. You are a child of God.

And then in Romans eight and verse 15, he says, you receive the spirit of sonship and you are able to now cry out, Abba, Father.

We're not talking about the Scandinavian pop man from back in the day, Abba. We're talking about this endearing, personal, intimate term for a father that a child would use.

Old Testament Jews would never refer to God as Abba. Be way too familiar for them. You could say it's kind of like daddy in today's world, probably a little different from back then, but it's probably the closest thing we have.

[ 29 : 32 ] Paul says, you can now call God Abba. He's personal for you. You don't have to be terrified of this king of the universe and hoping you get an audience with the king.

You can run right into the throne room. You can access him anytime you want. You have 24 seven access to the God of the universe because he is your Abba Father.

You're his child. You're not a slave. You don't have to live in fear. So those are our doctrines.

Justification, regeneration, progressive sanctification, and adoption.

Here's where we're finishing. We are no longer slaves, but we are children of our heavenly father.

We've been reading Romans from the back to the front.

We've been working through what Paul was trying to accomplish with this powerful, influential letter that he wrote. If we want to be a church that is like Jesus, that loves like Jesus, we have to stop living like spiritual slaves, like orphans wandering in the spiritual desert.

[ 30 : 47 ] We have to lean into our identity as adopted, regenerated children. And as we live out this identity, let's think of it in the context of what I believe God has set before our church for 2026, which is a year of direction, not perfection.

What does that mean? Things aren't always going to be perfect. We're going to have hiccups.

Sometimes you're not going to like the song. Sometimes the words on the screen are going to mess up.

Sometimes somebody's going to walk by you and they're not going to say hi. Sometimes you're going to let somebody down. Sometimes you're going to let yourself down. Sometimes we're not going to do what we should do.

Sometimes we are going to do what we shouldn't do. This is not going to be a year of perfection, but it is a year of direction that God has laid before us a direction to recenter our church on the person and work of Jesus Christ, to remind us that we are not a social club.

We're not just a group of people who maybe think alike or look alike or act alike. We should be a very diverse from economic statuses, from race, from age, from every dividing factor.

[ 32 : 13 ] We should be across the board, a group of people from all those spectrums that get together under the brand of Jesus Christ, his love for us, his sacrifice for us, and that he has brought us in and called us his own.

Jews, Gentiles, young, old, rich, poor, Filipino, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, whatever your background is, whatever labels humanity has put on you, God says you, you, you are no longer a slave to sin.

You are a child of mine. Would you bow your heads with me? I don't want to assume that everyone in this room is a child of God.

Not everyone has made that choice. Just because you're sitting in a church doesn't automatically mean that you have chosen Jesus Christ for your life. Just because I go to a football game doesn't mean I'm on the Dallas Cowboys.

Just because you're around the environment doesn't mean that you've chosen Christ as your Savior, as the forgiver of your sins, as your only hope. So I encourage you, if there's someone here today who's been sitting here and says, yeah, that's interesting, and that sounds good, or I'm not even totally sure what you're talking about, but you feel the Spirit of God calling out to you today, then please don't walk out these doors ignoring that.

[ 33 : 53 ] God, by His Word, can cut through a heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh. We have a hard time changing ourselves, but God, by His Spirit, can do what we cannot.

So I'll ask this question with your heads bowed and your eyes closed for privacy. If maybe you feel the Spirit of God drawing you and say, I want to give my life to Jesus today, I want to put all my faith in Him, would you slip your hand up now and I'll pray for you?

Thank you. Let me ask this question. There's somebody who says, I needed a reminder that I'm a child of God. Maybe too often I go back and live like I'm a slave to the old ways, the old me, and I need God to change my nature.

Would you pray for me as well? Whatever's going on in my heart, my life, my relationships, would you pray for me as well? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, God.

There's hands all over the room. Some people aren't going to lift their hands, but they know in their heart what's going on and you know more intimately, more accurately exactly what's going on, exactly what we need.

[ 35 : 04 ] I pray for your Spirit to have free reign to move in our hearts. to move in our minds, to defeat the lies that Satan tells us that says, no, you're still bound to this. This is who you are.

This is what you do. And Jesus steps in with his resurrection power and says, nope, I can put that to death. I can raise something new to life. You can have power that you never dreamed of.

I pray that you would make that real in us. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Just for the next two minutes or so, would you keep your seats?

Jared's going to lead us in just that chorus of, I'm no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God. You guys can skip ahead to the chorus of that. You can sing it along.

You can listen. You can pray. You can stay in your seat. You can come down front. You can kneel here. If you'd like to talk about joining our church as a member, please come have that conversation. If you have something else on your heart, if you'd like to give your life to Jesus or whatever it is, use this next couple minutes to do business with God.

[ 36 : 09 ] I'm no longer a slave to fear. I'm no longer a slave to fear.

Do you believe that?

I am a child of God. I'm no longer a slave to fear.

I am a child of God. Church, would you pray with me?

God, we love you. Thank you for your goodness to us. We don't deserve being your children, but you didn't do it because we deserve it. You did it out of your great love.

[ 37 : 32 ] Thank you for not leaving us in slavery to sin. Thank you for placing this reminder in the scriptures. It tells us who our identity is, where our focus should be.

Help us to leave this place changed by your spirit and go out and attack this new week as a child of God, not a slave of sin. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.