

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Christian lives out his life in this world immersed in opposites. You have flesh, and with that flesh comes sin. But at the same time you have been declared to be righteous, by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, the Son of God, the One baptized by John in the Jordan, the One whose baptism works the forgiveness of sins, new birth from above, and gives you the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul himself felt that struggle. He writes about it in the sixth and seventh chapters of His Epistle to the Church in Rome. The sin he does not want to do, he does. And the righteous things he desires to do, these he does not do. And yet he is an Apostle, saved by Christ, who preaches Christ and the righteousness that He alone can give.

So St. Paul speaks of opposites, opposites that dwell in you. On the one hand, sin reigns in the mortal body. If that is the case, the sinner obeys its lusts. The sinner presents his members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. That is to use your body as an agent to commit sin.

This, writes the Apostle, is to make one's self a slave to sin, which leads to death. Perhaps the chains of slavery can't be readily seen, but the sinner is nonetheless conscripted to do what God forbids. And like a slave, the sinner has no choice. It is a real oppression, an oppression you have known: the sinful flesh forcing the body and soul to conform not to God's will, but to the will of the devil.

As you have felt your anger rise, as you have secretly grown jealous of another that seems to have more or have been more successful, as you have become prideful of an accomplishment, as you have lost your temper with a friend, a child or a spouse, you have felt the chains of the oppression of sin.

And all too frequently, even knowing that it was wrong, you have yielded to the flesh. That is slavery, writes St. Paul, slavery that leads to death.

But St. Paul speaks of opposites. On the other hand, you can present yourself to God as being alive from the dead. This power is not yours. The power to present yourself to God comes in being set free from the slavery of sin. And that freedom is a gift of God.

When you were a slave to sin, God, in His mercy, broke the chains of that oppression by slaying you and making you alive. That is why St. Paul writes that before God you can stand as one being alive from the dead. True freedom from sin comes at the price of a life. But it cannot be the life of a sinner, for the sinner is already dead before God.

In His great love for you, God gave His own life. The life manifest to the Magi was given as a sacrifice for your sin. Herod would get his wish. The One born King of the Jews would die. His Blood was shed that the Price be paid. The Son of God died. But more importantly, the Son of God died for you.

His death is washed into you when you are baptized, the transforming event of which St. Paul writes. That salvific flood brings death to you, as Christ's death made yours. In that

death you are freed from slavery to the flesh. And then you are drawn out of those waters, rising to new life with Christ, who was truly obedient unto righteousness. With that new life you receive faith in Christ, the One that died and rose for you. And by that faith, by the Spirit that fills you, you hear the Apostolic Doctrine unto Salvation.

The Word of God works as the Divine Name is spoken over you. And by the same Spirit you are led to obey from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered – not a doctrine of slavery and death, but the opposite: a doctrine of freedom and hope and joy and life in the Holy Gospel, the Truth of salvation by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Washed in the Blood of His Son, bearing His Triune Name, you are set apart, your members presented not as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but rather the opposite – as members of righteousness to God. You are no longer under Law, but rather under grace. Sin has no dominion over you, so death is put to death, and eternal life is yours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Today your body is an instrument of righteousness as the Body and Blood of Christ the Righteous One are placed in your mouth, and you receive Him unto forgiveness and salvation. Having been set free from sin, you have the true freedom of the righteousness of Christ.

Thanks be to God, You are reconciled to Him. You are free to receive His gifts. You are free to worship Him. You are free to return thanks and praise for His marvelous kindness to you in Christ. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law, but under grace.

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