

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

The Side Effects of Freedom

Romans 6:15-23

¹ When I was the pastor of a church in Arizona years ago I suffered from hay fever. So, I took anti histamine pills to relieve my runny nose and itchy eyes. The medicine helped the symptoms disappear but, as a result of taking the pills, I got drowsy. It became harder for me to function normally. I began to wonder, after a while, if the cure wasn't worse than the problem! I was experiencing the side effects of the medicine.

Lord Jesus went to the cross to pay the price for your sin. When you took advantage of that event by surrendering your life to His lordship and becoming His child, He provided you freedom. **If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ¹**

That's good! But there are consequences or side effects of this freedom. ² Romans, Chapter 6, verses 15 through 23 explain. **What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer**

¹ John 8:36.

yourself to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ³

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ⁴

What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the

wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I. The Side Effects of Medicine ⁵

Let me explain what the side effects of medicine mean. ⁶ Medicine has been labeled by some naturalists as controlled poison! Prescription medicine is given to kill a virus or relieve a symptom. As a foreign substance to your body, it will almost always have some kind of side effect. ⁷ The medical doctor's job is to balance the treatment so the side effect isn't worse than the problem you had in the first place. ⁸

One of the most interesting positions I held after I had left military active duty was as a chaplain for a Christian auto transport company. I got to counsel and pray with big rig truck drivers. It was great!

The terminal manager's infant son was in the hospital. The boy had E. Coli. His doctor prescribed a medicine to counteract the virus. This medicine ended up

saving the boy's life but shut down his kidneys. His E. Coli was cured, but he had to start dialysis. His life was saved so it was worth it; but then he needed a kidney transplant! There was a side effect to the cure.

II. The Side Effects of Freedom ⁹

There are side effects of freedom. ¹⁰ America is the land of the free. There is no other country on earth like the United States. In spite of its shortcomings and corruption in government, it's still the greatest country in the world. Everybody wants to come here! People immigrate to America to have the freedom to be what they can be! ¹¹

Our freedom does come with problems; side effects. ¹² With all this freedom in the last few generations, the values of our culture have evolved from a Christian base to a humanistic, or secular, base. ¹³ Many of the moral taboos we used to have are no longer here. Some call this progress. Others shutter! ¹⁴

The philosophy of this modern freedom appears to be “do whatever you want as long as it doesn’t hurt someone else”. ¹⁵ There aren’t many absolute standards for moral conduct anymore. ¹⁶

What are the side effects of some of these freedoms? ¹⁷ For sexual immorality there’s venereal diseases, AIDS, abortion and, often, a terrible amount of guilt. ¹⁸ For alcohol in excess there’s a shortened life, brain damage and premature aging. ¹⁹ For smoking tobacco there’s shortness of breath, lung cancer and shortened life. ²⁰ For street drugs there’s brain damage, illnesses of all sorts, jail time and death. ²¹ For divorce there’s broken hearts, loneliness and very insecure children. The list goes on! Freedom to always do what you want has its side effects.

III. The Side Effects of Spiritual Freedom ²²

Just as there are side effects in medical treatment and in American freedom, there are side effects to spiritual freedom as well.

²³ So, what is spiritual freedom? ²⁴ Before the cross the Jews had the obligation to obey the Law of Moses. Their relationship with God depended upon how well they kept it. Perfection was the standard. ² Since perfect obedience was nearly impossible, ³ a system of animal sacrifices temporarily filled the gap! ²⁵

After the cross the Law of Moses was made obsolete as far as establishing a relationship with God was concerned. Colossians, chapter 2, verse 14, **having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took**

² James 2:10 - Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

³ Romans 3:23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .

it away, nailing it to the cross. Lord Jesus fulfilled that law when He died on the cross. ⁴

So the current question in verse 15 becomes, ²⁶ **Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?**

Since there is no longer a law to obey, am I free to live a life of sin? ²⁷ The answer: obedience to the law as the lord of your life was replaced with obedience to Jesus as the Lord of your life! Obedience to a set of rules, which was legalism, was replaced by the building of your character. This is accomplished by your commitment to the principles in the word of God with the Holy Spirit empowering your life to make it succeed. That's the team effort between your will and the Holy Spirit. ²⁸

What are the side effects of grace? The course of action you choose, sin or righteousness, results in side effects, or consequences, whether good or bad.

⁴ Matthew 5:17 - Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Verse 16 tells us ²⁹ it's a matter of selling yourself into slavery. ⁵ ³⁰ It could be selling yourself into sin, verse 19, ⁶ which is doing your own thing. It's the sinful lifestyle; impurity and wickedness which continues to get worse and worse. We call that addiction!

³¹ Your choice could be slavery to obedience, verse 17, ⁷ which is doing God's thing. It's obeying **the form of teaching to which you were entrusted**, what you have in His word!

³² What are the eternal consequences? The side effects of the sinful life ³³ are death and eternity in hell apart from the presence of God. ³⁴ The side effects of obedience are righteousness and eternity in heaven in the presence of God!

³⁵ Simply because the Lord graciously saved you, just as you are, when He died on the cross, doesn't give

⁵ Romans 6:16 - Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey?

⁶ Romans 6:19 - . . . you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness . . .

⁷ Romans 6:17 - But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

you license to live a sinful life. Instead, it gives you the privilege of surrender to the Lordship of Jesus!

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