

Romans – Bible Study – Chapter 6:15-23

Paul has laid out his case that our lives should be changed in light of our faith in the works of Jesus Christ. Having shown that we too have died to sin and will be raised into eternal life, there is no way that our life can remain the same prior to our conversion.

In today's passage, Paul reinforces the message that our lives will be following one of two paths; being a slave to sin or being a slave to God.

Slaves to Righteousness

(Verses 15) Refer to Romans 6:1. Is the question in verse 15 the same as verse 1? Why or why not?

- This is not a repetition of verse one
- In that verse, he is asking if we could continue to sin or go on sinning
 - That passage is looking at increasing or magnifying God's grace by our sinning
- In this verse, he is asking does sin matter
 - It can be summarized as "If we are no longer under the law, why should we be concerned about sin at all? Let's go on living the way we always have and not worry about it"
- Here, he is looking at specific acts of sin
- A sinful lifestyle and acts of sin are both inappropriate for a believer who is living under God's gracious authority
- If we are living under grace and God will forgive us, do our sinful acts matter?
- We are not given a license to sin if we are under grace

(Verses 16-18) Can we remain neutral in regards in what we do, whether it be to sin or to God (Luke 16:13)? Can a true believer be a slave to sin? What is the result of dedication to sin and dedication to obedience?

- We either follow a sinful life or we follow a life of obedience in Christ
- A slave is obligated to serve his or her master completely
- **Luke 16:13** – We cannot live a life of compromise as we cannot serve two masters
- ****emphasize**** We need to look at the lifestyle of the person as to where their heart lies, not the individual acts of sin as we will still sin, but to whom do we dedicate our lives to
- Obligation always follow dedication, whether the dedication is to sin or to obedience
- If we follow sin as a lifestyle, our result will be death (path to destruction)
- If we follow obedience (Christ) as a lifestyle, our result will be righteousness (path to life)
 - We are talking about imparted, moral righteousness (i.e. progressive sanctification), not imputed righteousness (i.e. justification)

In Paul's address to the Roman Christians, what does he note about their attitude towards the teaching of Paul (v.17)? Is this something that comes automatically to the believer (Philippians 2:12-13)?

- The Roman Christians embrace Paul's teaching for themselves
- This was something they did on their own and not something that was forced on them
- Dedication to God is not something that comes automatically to the Christian

- Rather, it is something that the believer must dedicate himself too or else he/she will continue to practice sin to a greater extent than he will if he presents himself/herself to God
- We will still sin, but it does not enslave us
- It is the gift of God that allows us to follow Him and will sanctify us on our journey
- **Philippians 2:12-13** – We are commanded to work out our salvation, an action that must be taken by the Christian in this life
 - There is no allowance for us to be bystanders

(Verses 19) What does Paul imply when he says “human terms”? What is Paul’s encouragement in the second part of the verse?

- He is trying to use human terms to explain spiritual truths
- This is something that the Roman Christians would have understood as some of them would have been slaves and some freed men
- Spiritual truths would have been very difficult for the listeners to comprehend and the use of an illustration helps explain these truths
- Paul is encouraging the Roman Christians to continue in their obedience to the apostolic teaching
- He is also trying to make a strong impact on his readers
- He wants to make a contrast of their former life with their present life
 - They used to deliberately yield to sin
 - They now need to deliberately offer themselves as slaves to God
- This would be part of the Christian’s progressive sanctification
- Again, he is stressing that progressive sanctification is not passive nor is it automatic, but rather it takes deliberate commitment as ones dedicated to the teaching of God’s word
- In the same way that we use to commit our lives toward sin, generally towards even greater sin, we should commit ourselves to righteousness and doing greater things in righteousness
- ****Question**** - Practically, what does this righteousness look like? – Be prepared to answer that question
 - Is it in service within the church or in the mission field?
 - Is it in the study of His word, to understand Him better in terms of what he has done for His creation and who He is

(Verses 20-23) What is the ultimate “benefit” for us if we are enslaved to sin? What is our benefit if we are enslaved to righteousness?

- If we are enslaved to sin, we are free from righteousness
- However, if we think we are free, that is a lie and fallacy that one will fall into
- All acts of sin and evil lead to death
 - Death can be noted as a physical death, a spiritual death, and eternal death once the physical body passes
- It is something we earn (denoted by the term ‘wages’) and not something imputed or given to us
 - Our actions condemn us and we are rightfully judged for that
- This ‘freedom’ will ultimately bring us shame
- However, if we are enslaved to God, we receive sanctification and a pure conscience which accompanies love for God and service to Him
- This results in giving us eternal life, which is a gift from God and something that we cannot earn by our actions and cannot be merited
- He does not ask us to earn it, but something we are given as a free gift, something that is different with sin and how we ‘earn’ death

- Eternal life refers to knowing God (John 17:3)

In the last study, we learned that we should not offer our bodies (in part or in whole) as instruments of unrighteousness because it is inconsistent with who we are now as those who have died to sin with Christ and resurrected to new life with Him.

In tonight's study, Paul tells us that a life of sin leads to enslavement and death whereas obedience to God leads to righteousness, sanctification, and eternal life. He also teaches us that grace does not give rise to license to sin, but ushers in obedience (Titus 2:11-13 "***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ***"). Paul implores his audience that they must obey God wholeheartedly. If they do not, they will find themselves falling back under the domination of sin in their lives and becoming its slaves once again. God has not freed us temporarily, but has freed us permanently, though we must continue to strive to be more like Him through the help of the Holy Spirit on this side of heaven so that our lives would be more reflective of who He is.

Point to Ponder: What examples can you think of in which exercising the 'freedom' to sin actually results in slavery? Or when 'slavery' to Christ results in freedom?