

Romans 6:15-23 (NKJV)
15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!
16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?
17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

1

18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.
20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

2

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.
22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.
23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3

In 6:1-14, we learned ...

- When you were saved (regenerated), you died with Christ, you were buried with Him, and you rose with Him – in a spiritual sense
- You were immersed (or placed) into Christ by the Holy Spirit, so that you have been united with Him, and you are now part of His body (*in Christ*)
- Consequently, you are now dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ

4

In 6:1-14, we learned ...

- You possess newness of life, and God wants you to walk in it (i.e., to live as if that were the case)
- Specifically, He wants you to do three things:
A) Reckon it to be so – consider it, do the accounting, and resolve in your mind that this is so!
B) Don't allow sin to be your master – you have been freed from sin, so don't go on living in the jail house of sin

5

In 6:1-14, we learned ...

C) Use your body parts as tools for righteousness –

- Your hands and feet and mouth and brain and eyes and ears can be used to commit sins that lead to spiritual deadness, not only in this life, but also in the next ...
- Or they can be used to do righteous deeds for God that lead to life and vibrancy, not only in this life, but also in the next
- God wants you to use your body for HIS glory

6

- Paul is now going to develop those themes further in 6:15-23

Rom 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

- Similar to the question asked earlier:
Rom 6:1-2a What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!
- Paul emphatically insists that believers should not continue in sinning now that grace has abounded over sin and the law

7

- Grace is not a license to sin!
- Paul uses idiomatic language to make his point:
 - NKJV Certainly not!
 - NASB May it never be!
 - HCSB Absolutely not!
 - ESV By no means!
 - Zane Hodges: That's unthinkable!
- Why would someone who has died to sin continue to make sin their master? As if to imply: how foolish!

8

- A good summary of Paul's point in this new section:
Rom 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?
- The two masters:
 - SIN leading to DEATH
 - OBEDIENCE leading to RIGHTEOUSNESS
- The obedience must be driven by FAITH in our new Master, Jesus Christ (per Rom. 4-5)

9

Which one is your master? SIN or OBEDIENCE?

- Jesus said something similar, using a different metaphor
Matt 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.
14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
- The two ways are not Heaven vs. Hell, but rather, the two possible ways of living chosen by believers: sanctification or sinfulness

10

- You are the one who chooses which master you are going to serve
- Notice the word PRESENT in v. 16
- You PRESENT yourself as the SLAVE of either sin or obedience
- PRESENT can also be translated YIELD – the same word used in 6:13 and 12:1
- The old master is gone; the new master, Jesus Christ is now your rightful authority
- You have to choose whether or not you are going to submit to Him – He will not force you

11

- Paul puts in a personal parenthesis of sorts:
Rom 6:17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.
Rom 6:18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.
- Many commentators think the "form of doctrine to which you were delivered" refers to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith – that is, the truths regarding initial salvation – but that doesn't fit the context

12

- Zane Hodges translates the last half of v. 17, “You have obeyed from the heart that form of teaching in which you were instructed.”
- He adds: “My rendering is also reflected in the Jerusalem Bible which reads: “you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught.”

13

Zane Hodges: Paul is grateful to God for the Christian experience of the Roman believers. In their unconverted days they had been slaves of sin, but after their conversion they had obeyed from the heart (i.e., sincerely) the form of teaching in which they had been instructed. That is to say, they had responded obediently to the Christian teaching they had received.

- In the context of the book of Romans, Paul is not talking about unbelievers getting saved
- He is talking about believers continuing in discipleship AFTER their salvation

14

- These believers are having some carnality issues, largely because of ethnic prejudices, which had resulted in division and disunity, but they were a far cry from their behavior before becoming regenerated
- But he wants them to keep on growing and choosing obedience as their master, by faith
- That’s the only way they are going to experience the salvation of their souls and the only way they are going to resolve their in-house problems as the church at Rome

15

- Why does Paul refer to the outcome of this decision as “slavery” i.e., you are either sin’s slave or the slave of obedience?

Rom 6:19a I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.

- Robert Govett: “This is a sort of apology for ... calling the service of God a slavery (v. 18).”
- It seems that by “human terms” Paul means he is using a metaphor that they will all understand, especially in the Roman world

16

- Man – by his weak nature – is prone to be *enslaved* = to be subject to or subservient to someone other than self

Wm. Newell: Man hates this fact. He boasts his independence, whether it be in the realm of intellect—“free thought!” in the matter of private wealth—“independent!” or in the manner of government—“free!” But it is all really a delusion ... What we most earnestly assert is that not only Paul here, but our Lord Himself, and Scripture generally, sets forth that only those that know the truth and walk therein, are free.

17

Wm. Newell (cont’d): The Jews (in John 8:33 ff) horribly rebel against our Lord’s saying: “If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples: and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free! . . . Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant [slave] of sin . . . If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” There is no freedom out of Christ. “Whose service is perfect freedom” is the beautiful expression of obedience to God.

18

- One of the spiritual laws of the universe is that people are either enslaved to sin leading to death or obedience leading to righteousness
- And seeing that believers have died to sin in Christ, why would any child of God choose to keep living in sin? Thus, Paul reiterates:
Rom 6:19 For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness [wickedness] leading to more lawlessness [wickedness], so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

19

Zane Hodges: The phrase *producing holiness* translates *eis hagasmon*. BDAG reminds us that outside of Biblical literature the word *hagasmos* frequently signals “personal dedication to the interests of the deity.” In the NT it has come to mean especially “the state of being made holy.” In this context, however, an element of the basic meaning seems implicit in the context of being slaves to righteousness. The Greco-Roman world was familiar with the concept of someone who was permanently attached to a pagan temple as a servant of the god who was worshipped there.

20

- Here’s the point: A slave of righteousness is a believer who is totally dedicated to serving the Lord Jesus Christ
- Ironically, real freedom can only come through obedience to Jesus Christ, for it leads to righteousness and life, which we will see when we get to v. 23
Rom 6:20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.
21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

21

- Those who are enslaved by the power of sin find that righteousness is powerless in their lives
- What a tragedy when that continues in the life of a Christian, for it is shameful and results in death, as these Roman believers knew from their former ways of living
- There is no spiritual fruit in a life of enslavement to sin, only spiritual death

22

Wm. Harrison: Death here does not refer to hell. The word “death” means “separation” or “to be inactive” ... When we sin we lose fellowship with God and are separated from such fellowship ... When we live in death, we do not bear fruit or works for God and instead are “inactive,” like a corpse that doesn’t do anything except rot and make things stink for others.

23

Wm. Harrison (cont’d): Shall we go ahead and sin since we are under grace? No, it has consequences and we’ll lose out on experiencing the abundant life that God has for us. Instead we’ll waste our lives as we waste away and become like dead people, who produce nothing of value with our lives ... and bring sadness to those around us.

24

Zane Hodges: For Paul, death is not the mere cessation of physical existence but is also an experience that is qualitatively distinct from true life. As Paul puts it in Eph 4:18, the unregenerate are “alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them.” But as he will show clearly in the following two chapters, such “alienation” from God’s life is experienced also by the Christian when he submits to the desires of his spiritually-dead physical body.

25

- A theologian friend of mine, John Sweigart, wrote an unpublished journal article, in which he demonstrates from the suzerain-vassal treaties of ancient times that one of the definitions of DEATH is “loss of dominion”

John Sweigart: In addition to being used as a separation metaphor, [death] also can mean “loss of dominion.” This can be seen in the life of Adam and Eve who not only were separated from God by being driven out of the garden but also lost their kingship and priesthood over creation in the same judgment.

26

Sweigart (cont’d): This meaning fits admirably well in Paul’s whole discussion in Romans 6-8 ... So, the result is that “life” means “dominion” and “death” means “loss of dominion.” In Romans 6:23 it may mean “the wages of sin lead to loss of dominion.” This loss of dominion applies to both this life and the life to come.

- This is important to understand, especially in light of the final two verses of ch. 6

27

6:22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

- Notice that *everlasting life* (*eonian life*, or *life for the age*) is not here considered a present possession, but rather the conclusion for a life that has borne fruit unto holiness
- So this cannot be referring to initial salvation, or the GIFT of eternal life, because holy living *is the condition for* eonian life
- It must refer to the REWARD of eternal (*eonian*) life for living obediently

28

- In their former lifestyle the Roman believers were enslaved to sin and bore no spiritual fruit ...
- But now they are GOD’S slaves (i.e., His servants) and bearing fruit in holiness
- Their “end” – their verdict at the Judgment Seat – is “everlasting life” (*life for the age*)
- If Sweigart is correct, that means they will be rewarded with DOMINION – co-rulership with Jesus

29

- The word “end” is telos, which means “conclusion,” or “outcome”
- IMPORTANT: This is NOT what the Calvinists refer to as “final salvation”

John Piper, article titled, “Will We Be Finally ‘Saved’ by Faith Alone?”: Works ... are the necessary fruit of justifying faith, which confirm our faith and our union with Christ at the last judgment.

30

- So, in essence, a Calvinist Christian really doesn't know if he is actually saved and on his way to "Heaven" or not until he hears Jesus announce that he has final salvation
- That doctrine of Perseverance (as they call it) causes perpetual doubt in the minds of believers regarding their initial salvation and negates their credo of *sola fide*, which means "by faith alone"
- A salvation that has to be confirmed by works is a salvation of works!

31

- That is NOT what Paul is talking about!
- The END Paul is talking about regards matters of Christian living, thus eternal (*eionian*) life, in this context, is the goal of coming to know Jesus in a deeper, fuller way, experiencing His abundant life, and living in holiness ...
- With the outcome being reward, dominion in the age to come

32

- In other words, those who live righteously NOW, are enjoying the benefits of appropriating their eternal life NOW – they are walking in newness of life – and they will be rewarded when they meet Jesus with the privilege of ruling with Him in His kingdom
- The last verse of ch. 6 must be interpreted IN THIS SAME CONTEXT

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

33

- The wages (or payment) for a believer who continues throughout life enslaved to sin is death
- Keep in mind that Paul is speaking to believers, thus his use of the word DEATH includes alienation from God's life here and NOW and even THEN, for their verdict will be "wicked and lazy servant" at the Bema
- Consequently, they will be consigned to the darkness outside New Jerusalem, which means they will be relegated to the earthly realm of the kingdom

34

- In contrast to the wages of sin – death in its many forms – the gift of God is eternal life
 - Why would Paul use the word GIFT?
- Hodges:** By virtue of our being in Christ (see 6:3-4) we possess this gift. When we produce holiness we are living out the gift that God gave us when we were justified by faith.
- Rene Lopez, Grace NT Commentary:** God provides through "grace" ... the means by which believers experience eternal life now. This is nothing less than the resurrection-life experience that Paul developed in 6:1-23 (cf. 5:20-21).

35

- The word GIFT comes from the Greek word *charisma*, which is a bestowal of God's grace
- Since we know that Paul is writing to believers about walking in newness of life, we can conclude he is not talking about initial salvation, thus we must interpret this to mean:
- *The payment for a believer's life of sinning is death – loss of dominion in the next age*
- *But those who live righteously by faith, appropriating God's bestowals of grace, will be rewarded with dominion in the next age*

36

- Rom. 6:15-23 is summed up in Gal. 6:7-8:
Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked;
for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh
reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit
will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.
- The “everlasting life” here in Gal. 6 and also
in Rom. 6 is not referring to our present
possession that assures our presence in the
millennial kingdom

37

- It is the verdict of “Well done” for those
believers who live enslaved to obedience
unto righteousness rather than enslaved to
sin unto death
- They will be chosen to wear crowns and co-
rule as His bride

38

WHO IS YOUR MASTER?
Sin leading to death?
OR
Obedience leading to
righteousness and life?

39