

Slaves of Sin or Obedience

By David Harrell
Romans 6:15-23

In the providence of God we now arrive to Romans chapter six and we will look this morning at verses 15 through 23, so if you will take your Bibles and turn there, Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter six beginning with verse 15.

Let me read this text to you.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹

I am always amazed at how practical the Word of God is. Certainly, Paul's epistle to the Romans speaks to each of us as if he has had some kind of a video camera watching our lives. Many of you have acknowledged this over the course of our study and, of course, this should be no surprise, because the one who created us is the author of this book. So he knows perfectly well every intimate detail of our life. He knows the things that we are drawn to and the things that we should be doing that would give us life and give him glory.

But all of these truths that he has given us are meaningless unless we bring our lives to the text.

Recently a young man met with me. He was utterly devastated by his life of sin. You might say he had sown the wind and he is reaping the whirlwind. He was a young man that had been in church much of his life, but really audited the church services, never really got involved in the church, no real discipleship. He began to date what he called a trashy girl. Before long he was sexually involved. He got involved in the whole party scene and then it was one girl after another.

¹ Romans 6:15-23.

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Immorality always has a way of doing that. It explodes into a fire storm that is out of control. Before long all of the life dominating sins that are associated with that kind of a lifestyle began to manifest themselves in his life literally to a point where it was threatening his very health.

So as he told me he cried out to God and I believe in God's mercy, the Lord saved him. But he was calling me saying, "Pastor, I still struggle with indwelling sin and temptation." And he poured out his life to me and as he did I would affirm the fact that I believe that God did truly save him. But what became very apparent is he lacked any real biblical understanding. He didn't really understand the Word of God. His theology was distorted. He was typical of so many Christians that have really never been taught, a victim of arm chair theology, kind of the home spun red neck theology that we have especially in our culture.

So he was confused. He was afraid. He was ashamed. He was desperate. What am I going to do?

And it was a joy to be able to open up the Word of God to him and begin to help him see what the Scriptures really teach about various things that were heavy upon his heart. And it has been a joy to see the Lord begin to work in his heart and gradually move him in a direction where he begins to enjoy the riches that are his in Christ Jesus.

And before we approach this text, I might say that some of you, perhaps, within the sound of my voice, are like that young man before he repented. You are a slave to your sin, ruled by your lust and your emotion. Your religion is nothing more than a sham and your life is spiraling downward into an abyss of shame and despair. And you are trying everything you can to silence your accusing conscience.

Others of you may be like that young man just after he was saved. You are still confused. You are in need of discipleship. Perhaps you are under the illusion, as he was, that just showing up for church every now and then is really all you need. You really don't need to get serious about the Word of God, serious about discipleship. You just kind of play the Christian game. And, therefore, you are struggling with sin in your life.

And, finally, some of you are probably like that young man was when he contacted me, seeking to understand the will of God. You are still confused about things. You are still afraid and ashamed and desperate, but by God's grace, you are beginning to be moved into a position where you can hear the Word of God and the renewing of your mind can begin to transform you. And, if so, that is good news because it is grace that has brought you to that place and it will be grace that will sustain you and grow you.

Did not the Lord say, "Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth"?²

² John 17:17.

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But, again, the word will be meaningless and powerless unless you hear it, unless you learn it and unless you live it. And so I would encourage you this morning as we come before the Word of God yet again, as we do every Sunday morning, that you will take off the garments of self righteousness, that you will peel away all of the layers of self protection and all of the things that you think you know and all of our self confidence and pride and say, “Lord, I just want to lay myself before your Word this morning that you might speak to me, that your Word might expose my sin.”

So I would begin this morning by asking you the question: Are you a slave of sin or a slave of obedience? Who is your master? Is it sin? Or is it obedience to the Word of God?

To say it a little bit differently: Is the Lord Jesus Christ your Lord and master or do you serve another? Perhaps you serve yourself.

Paul’s words here in Romans six verses 15 through 23 really draw our attention to this whole idea of spiritual allegiance, the idea of genuine discipleship. May I remind you of the context?

The apostle has very carefully examined the doctrines of condemnation, how man is under the wrath of God because of his sin and, therefore, in need of justification. And he has explained that in great detail, comparing and contrasting our former relationship between Adam and now our relationship in Christ if we are born again.

Once we were created in Adam and united to him in physical death and now we are a new creation in Christ new spiritually and his life becomes ours.

And in verse one of chapter six he anticipates the preposterous conclusion that the Legalist as well as the Libertines made when they heard the doctrine of justification by free grace.

Verse one.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?³

And so he went on to explain how we, as believers, have died to sin. We cease to exist in Adam. We become alive in Christ. We have spiritual life. And spiritual life and spiritual death cannot coexist. You can’t be alive and dead at the same time. We have been permanently immersed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse four he says:

³ Romans 6:1-2.

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“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”⁴

He went into great detail explaining how as believers we are no longer under the tyranny of sin. That is no longer our master. We have a completely new nature.

Verse 11.

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.⁵

And how he comes to verses 15 through 23 where the apostle approaches these truths in yet a little different angle, as any good teacher would do.

So let's approach this text this morning by examining three things: the lie, the logic and the liberty. We are going to look at the lie that would pervert grace into a license to sin. We are going to look at the logic that refutes such a perversion and then finally the liberty that every slave of Christ will enjoy.

So, again, I would encourage you to bring your lives before this text. Don't just audit this. Bring your life to the text and let the Word of God do what it will inevitably do for those who cry out for that transforming grace.

First of all notice the lie. You will recall in verse 14 he has just said:

“Sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”⁶

Now in verse one the antagonists were reacting to the issue of abounding grace, how that could potentially fuel a desire to sin all the more. But here the issue is not so much abounding grace, it is, rather, a reaction to the removal of the law which they believed would also fuel a desire to sin.

Knowing this would ignite controversy and deliberate misuse, he is going to anticipate both the response of objectors as well as abusers.

So in verse 15 he says, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!”⁷

⁴ Romans 6:4.

⁵ Romans 6:11-12.

⁶ Romans 6:14.

⁷ Romans 6:15.

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To be sure, whenever the gospel is accurately preached, the doctrine of free grace will inevitably be misunderstood, misinterpreted and abused. And it is typically done so by two groups of people as we have discussed before. But may I remind you. One group that will abuse grace will be the self righteous moralist, especially in this context, the Jewish Legalist and even the Judaizers that had infiltrated the early Church. These people would insist that obedience to the law is necessary for salvation, that the imputed righteousness of Christ, that is not enough. And if you remove the law, you remove all restraint for sin. That is a license to sin. Without the law we would have no standard of right and wrong, they would argue, no threat of punishment.

And I might add that we have a variation of that even in Christian churches today where many times our creedal confession would be, yes, I believe in salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, but then we unwittingly add all of our lists of rules and regulations, our ceremonies, our rituals, our codes of conduct that we believe that will make us somehow a bit more acceptable to God and in a subtle way say, “Lord, your imputed righteousness wasn’t quite enough, so I will help you ought a bit.”

So the Legalist would object to Paul’s statement that we are not under law, but under grace.

The second group that would abuse it, they wouldn’t so much object to it, would be the Libertine or the Antinomian. As you know, it means opposed to the law, against the law. These are those are typically non believers. They despise all spiritual authority and they live a life of practical atheism. They are the ones who, according to 1 John 2:15 love the world. They love the things in the world. Therefore the love of the Father is not in them and so forth.

But I might also add that this would include another group of people and that would be the carnal Christian, the carnal Christian that subtly abuses grace. Paul described them in 1 Corinthians three and verse one as men of flesh, as babes in Christ. And, sadly, that is a description of many that come to church. Sadly, it describes some of you that I love so dearly.

These are believers who periodically yield themselves to the temptations of the world and the desires of the sinful flesh that is in opposition to the Spirit. Their behavior is what Paul would call fleshy.

In fact, in Galatians 5:19 the apostle says, “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident.”⁸ And he gives us a list. They are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. And he went on to say that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The carnal Christian will not practice these things as a persistent way of life, but he will dabble in them far more than he should.

⁸ Galatians 5:19.

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Paul will go on to say that the carnal Christian is one that abuses grace like a babe. He calls them babes in Christ. These will be Christians that act like children, easily distracted, quickly bored with spiritual things, spoiled, demanding, undisciplined, ignorant, ruled by their emotions and lusts.

As we would say with our children, they are always getting into things, always getting into the wrong things, things they are not supposed to be. And when it comes to the truths of Scripture, they must be given, according to verse two of that text, milk to drink, not solid food. They can't digest anything but the basic gospel message. They have no appetite for the Word of God, for the deeper things of the Word of God, no desire to really be taught, to be discipled, to grow. They are too busy pursuing their fleshy appetites.

And often they are like a child, a child that thinks he knows everything.

In verse three of 1 Corinthians three Paul describes one of their chief characteristics, one of the primary characteristics of a carnal Christian. They are prone to jealousy and strife. Just like a little child they are selfish. They are self centered. They are demanding. They are the ones that cause divisions and strife within families, within the church.

So the carnal Christian also abuses grace. Though not on the same scale as the Antinomian in that he shows little regard for the undeserved mercy that he has received in Christ. The carnal Christian fails to keep forefront in his mind that he has been forgiven and freed from the very sins that he deliberately chooses to go back to and obey.

So Paul begins by anticipating this lie that perverts grace, that perverts it into a license to sin.

Again, verse 15.

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!”⁹

Beloved, I ask you. Could you respond to such a statement with such passion? May it never be. God forbid. After the undeserved mercy that God has shown me? Living in sin is absolutely abhorrent to me. To even suggest that I would want to enslave myself to the very thing that cause such unimaginable suffering and death for my Savior. That is inconceivable to me. Loving and obeying and serving Christ, that is the number one priority in my life. He is my Lord. He is... and I am his joyful slave.

So Paul moves from the lie to the logic, the logic that refutes such a perversion, verse 16.

⁹ Romans 6:15.

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“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”¹⁰

So he is saying, “Do you not know this?”

This is a self evident truth here. Use some common sense. Use some basic logic. He is saying, “If a man presents himself to a master to be his slave, he is subject to the power of that master. He is under that master’s authority. He is no longer free to do as he pleases. He now lives to do the will of his master. Don’t you see that?”

And here Paul sets forth two masters. Two master we will obey, either sin or obedience. Real simple.

Sin results in death and obedience results in righteousness. Now he has already made the case that every man, woman, boy and girl in the world is either in Adam or in Christ. You can’t be in both. You are a slave to the old Adamic nature living under the rule and reign of sin which is the result of our natural birth. Or you are a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of the new birth. You are alive with him. You are under his reign, under his rule. You cannot have two opposing natures at the same time. Nor can you be a slave of two masters. You are only owned by one or the other.

A man either lives under the tyranny of Satan and the kingdom of darkness or under the loving rule our God and the kingdom of his dear Son. You either submit to the lordship of Satan, to your flesh, or the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these two powers are antithetical to one another. They are bitter enemies violently opposed to one another. And these two opposing masters offer you two radically different wages. Sin results in death and obedience results in righteousness.

So central to Paul’s entire argument here is this most basic bit of logic and that is this. You simply cannot be a slave to both at the same time. You can’t have two masters. But now you can have a divided loyalty.

In fact, Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, “ No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other.”¹¹

So believers either belong to Christ or to Satan. Or I should say a person only belongs either belongs to Christ or to Satan. A believer will only belong to Christ, but at times he will yield himself to the tyrant of sin.

Now, some will say, “Well, now wait a minute, pastor. I am no one’s slave. I don’t bow to anyone.”

¹⁰ Romans 6:16.

¹¹ Matthew 6:24.

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Oh, boy. You have been deceived, my friend. You just think that you are your own master. In your arrogant flesh, Satan has convinced you of a deadly lie. In fact, in 2 Peter chapter two beginning in verse 18 Peter blasted some of the false teachers that were promoting this idea of human independence and he says:

For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.¹²

My friends, you show me a man that brags about his spiritual and moral independence and I will show you a man who is enslaved by a myriad of sins, a man that is overcome with more things that he can even count.

Now please understand. Paul is not saying here that a believer ought to be a slave of righteousness. That is not what he is saying. He is saying that a believer is a slave of righteousness. There is a big difference.

Again, you cannot have two opposing masters at the same time. You cannot live in two opposing kingdoms. You cannot have two opposing natures.

But wait a minute? I am convinced that I am a Christian and yet I find myself still yielding to sin.

Well, of course, this is true for every Christian. Galatians five speaks of how our flesh and the spirit are at war with one another. And the only way we can conquer that is by walking by the Spirit, surrendering to the Spirit of God as he has revealed himself in his Word.

But being overcome by sin and enslaved to sin will never be the pattern, the ongoing pattern of a true believer. Temporary unfaithfulness? Yes. Temporary disobedience? Yes. Even an ongoing struggle with certain sins many of which we are not even aware of? Absolutely. That is the process of sanctification. We will never be out of this body that has a proclivity to sin until this body is done away with. There is no such thing as the eradication of sin until glory.

But as a willful life dominating pattern of life and slavery that increases in corruption and devastation, no. That will not be characteristic of a true believer.

In fact, John tells us in 1 John three beginning in verse nine, “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin,”¹³ referring to he cannot sin habitually with impunity. Why? “because he is born of God. By this the children of

¹² 2 Peter 2:18-19.

¹³ 1 John 3:9.

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God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”¹⁴

So, again, Paul is saying that a man is either a slave of sin or a slave of obedience. He is under the power of one or the other. His nature will manifest itself in either one or the other.

So this is the theological logic that refutes the lie. So just because we are no longer under the condemnation of the law, but under grace, does not mean that we see ourselves as having a license to sin. In fact, quite the opposite is true. We no longer belong to that tyrant. And here Paul moves into the concept of the liberty that every slave has who is enjoined to Christ by his grace.

Verse 17.

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.¹⁵

Beloved, I believe there is no greater text in all of Scripture to describe a Christian than this. What a magnificent passage. A Christian is a man who has a change of nature, a man who has a change of masters. He is obedient from the heart. He is a slave of righteousness.

I ask you. Does this describe you?

I think of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians six beginning in verse 19. You remember that text. He is admonishing believers to flee from immorality and he says this.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁶

My goodness, talk about a change of nature and a change of masters.

Now you might ask, “But how can I know that this change has truly taken place in my life?”

Well, the apostle gives us three measures by which we can determine this. If you will notice he says, first of all, “But thanks be to God.”¹⁷

¹⁴ 1 John 3:9-10.

¹⁵ Romans 6:17-18.

¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

¹⁷ Romans 6:17.

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In other words, if you are a true believer, you are going to understand that your salvation is wholly a work of grace. It is wholly a work of God, that you had nothing to contribute to it. You had nothing to bring to the table, so to speak.

It does not say, “Thanks be to God for my cooperation with him.”

That is not what it says here. That is always a mark of a false profession that cannot save.

So he says, “Thank be to God,”¹⁸ but a second measure would be in the phrase, “that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart.”¹⁹

You were, two words. What does that indicate? You were something and now you are something different, right? It is very simple. There has been a great change here. You were a slave to sin, but now you are obedient from the heart. Is that true of you? Do you see a difference in what you versus what you are now? That is the point. Are you obedient from the heart, not out of duty, but out of desire, not out of a sense of compulsion?

Oh, my, I guess I am supposed to do this.

But because you love the Lord Jesus Christ. You are overwhelmed with what he has done for you. And therefore it is the longing of your heart to seek to do what is pleasing to him.

But he gives us yet another mark here. He goes on to say, “you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.”²⁰

I want you to notice here the object of this heart felt obedience. This is a fascinating statement and it will require me to get technical for just a moment because I fear that many times people read this and they overlook what it is really saying.

Will you notice in the phrase, “to that form of teaching to which you were committed,”²¹ the word “form” is the word *τυπον* (too'-pos) in the original language and it means a pattern or a mold, like we would use to build a form into which we would pour concrete. You guys know what that is like. We have built forms before. We have poured concrete in it so that when the concrete dries and sets it fits that pattern, that form. That is what it is referring to here.

And it was also used to describe in ancient days the molds into which a hot molten metals were poured to make all manner of objects.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

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But I want you to notice another word. It says, “to that form of teaching to which you were committed.”²²

The word “committed” translates the Greek verb *paradidwmi* (par-ad-id’-o-mee) and it is a verb that literally means to hand over or to give over, to deliver over, particularly to deliver over to an authority.

Now you add that to the word “to” that “to that form of teaching to which you were committed.”²³

The word “to” can also be translated “into.” And here is what you have.

Paul is saying that a true believer will be obedient from the heart to that form of teaching into which you were delivered.

Let me say it a little bit differently. A true believer will be obedient to the heart or from the heart to that form or that mold of teaching to which God has poured him into. It is a glorious truth. A believer has been poured into the mold of divine truth by God himself. God is the one that has fashioned you. He is the one that has handed you over to sanctifying, transforming truth. This is staggering.

Now specifically what is this form of teaching into which we have been given over to. Well, the answer is: All the doctrine that Paul has been teaching.

Think about it. Remember, Paul has preached doctrine for 148 verses as I told you last week. Teaching on condemnation and justification, helping people understand their true identity in Christ.

Verse 11. It says, “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”²⁴

That is the very first exhortation. So he builds all of this doctrine.

And, beloved, if I could make it practical to you, true evangelism requires a solid doctrinal foundation. You just don’t come to people and give them a bunch of stories that plays on their emotions and ask them to somehow make a decision for Christ or just accept Jesus into their heart. They need to understand the glorious truths of the gospel and the gospel begins with the bad news that, my friend, you are under the divine condemnation and wrath of a holy God. And unless God does something for you, you will perish in your sins. And then you move from that to explain the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ and how he is your only hope of salvation. And then

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Romans 6:11.

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you begin to explain what God can do in justification, that he will declare you righteous, that he will impute his righteousness to you so that God will now see Christ and not your sin. These are the glorious truths that have to be presented.

Now I am not saying that every person needs to understand these things, but the basic elements need to be there even with a child.

This is what we have been poured into. So Paul is saying in verse 17 God is the supernatural agent of this profound change that has taken place in a believer, a change that will be obvious. You will see in this person that he is no longer a slave to sin, but he now he is obedient from the heart to these transforming truths of the Word of God. Doctrinal truths that have been like a mold into which God has poured his life in order to make him look like Jesus.

And in verse 18 he says, “And having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”²⁵

Beloved, a slave is not just one that desires to do the will of its master, of his master. He is not one that merely hopes that he can every now and then please his master. But, rather, a slave is one that is absolutely dominated by the master. He is consumed with doing the will of the master. He is under the power, under the influence, under the control of the master. And, again, if I can give you theologians a concept that you must never forget, there is no such thing as justification without sanctification. You don't just come to Jesus and then later on make him your Lord. If you come to Jesus, he is your Lord and your Savior.

At the moment of the new birth, we are told that we are made to be partakers of the divine nature. There is a principle of righteousness that is placed within us. So to continue a life dominated in sin is utterly impossible for a person who has truly been born again. That is the point.

Beloved, we must pause here for a moment and just bow our hearts before the Lord who has wrought such a change within us.

When I was meditating upon this text, I found myself having to just stop and rejoice and to go to other passages. I... I... my mind went to Philippians 1:6 that he is the one who began this good work in us and he will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

My mind went to Ephesians 2:3 where at the end of the verse it says we:

...were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ²⁶

²⁵ Romans 6:18.

²⁶ Ephesians 2:3-5.

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And in verse 10 he goes on to say, “We are his workmanship.”²⁷

Hallelujah!

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”²⁸

We are part of a glorious sovereign plan of God.

Colossians one and verse 12 and 13. There Paul rejoices.

...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.²⁹

You see, my friends, not only will a true believer hate sin because of his new nature, but he will also hate it because of his love for the one who bore his sins in his body on the cross.

Young believers, I ask you. Do you think of these truths when you deliberately choose to live your life for yourself rather than for the one who suffered and died in your stead? Do you ever think of these truths when you ignore him and you do your own agenda?

Dear brother, do you think of this when you scream at your wife and manipulate her and humiliate her, when you fail to shepherd your family? Do you think of what you are doing in light of what God has done for you?

Dear sister, do you think of this when your hearth is filled with jealousy, when you begin to gossip and you begin to slander, you being to promote strife within your family within your church?

I read about a profligate son that had brought untold sorrow to his father. It was a tragic story. He was a drunken, immoral wretch of a son. He had stolen from his father. He had disgraced his father. In fact, he had driven his father to an early grave. He decided he would attend the funeral of his father like most people will do, like the rest of his family. And later he was asked to come and hear the reading of his father's will. Well, he was convinced that he would receive nothing, but he decided to attend just so that he could sneer at the family and make them all miserable.

²⁷ Ephesians 2:10.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Colossians 1:12-14.

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To his great astonishment, when the will was read, it said something like this, quote, “As for my son Richard, though he has fearfully wasted my substance and though he has often grieved my heart, I would have him know that I consider him still to be my own dear child and therefore in token of my undying love, I leave him the same share as the rest of his brothers.”

Utterly dismayed, the story went on to say how the man could not believe what the attorney said. He thought he had misread the will and he asked for it to be read again. He was so struck with remorse that he left the room in tears. He was astonished by such undeserved love. In fact, the father’s love had finally mastered him.

He said, “I feel ready to curse myself for grieving my father the way I did. Oh, that I could bring him back again.”

My friends, how much greater our sin and disgrace? And how much infinitely more the father’s love for us?

Dear Christian, does this not motivate you to do what Paul says in verse 13? To “present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”³⁰

Notice Paul continues his logical argument. Having demonstrated that we now have a new master, we are slaves of righteousness, he is now going to go on to say that we need to live consistently with who we are in Christ. In other words, we need to live practically who we are positionally. Does that make sense?

Verse 19.

He says, “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.”³¹

In other words he is saying that these analogies that I am using with respect to masters and slaves to somehow communicate these spiritual principles, especially as they relate to the weakness of the flesh and so forth, the weakness of our flesh and our mortal bodies and so on. I am using these analogies here to help you understand this.

He says, “For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”³²

It is interesting. He is saying, “You are now free from the slavery of impurity.” That is speaking of inner sin that flows from the spring of your heart. You are also free from lawlessness. That would refer to the outward manifestation of those inward attitudes of

³⁰ Romans 6:13.

³¹ Romans 6:19.

³² Ibid.

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that sinful corruption within, the behaviors that we do. And he says all of which results in further lawlessness.

Dear friend, please hear this. Sin never finds a resting place. It never comes to a point where the flesh says, "That is enough." It always has to have more. It will always go from bad to worse.

Parents, if I can put it really practically, if you think it is kind of funny and cut for little Johnny to defy you and look in your face and shake his fist and say no and throw temper tantrums, wait until he is 12 years old and he will bring you to shame, because that sin is going to get worse and it is going to get worse. Wait until he is 30 years old and no one will be able to tolerate it. His marriage will be a disaster and his family will be a disaster.

Young men, you date a girl that looks and acts like an immoral seductress, like so many do today. Do you really think that she is going to in the opposite direction five years from now? No, it is going to get worse.

Young lady, you date a man today that is lazy. He is foul mouthed. He is self centered. He likes his truck really more than you. He shows no real respect for you. He does not demonstrate even a little bit a love for Christ and a desire to become conformed to the image of Christ. Do you really think that when you get married he is going to get better?

It will get worse.

We must understand that the Christian life is all about momentum. You will either increase in sin or you will increase in righteousness. You don't come to a place where it stops and you must ask yourself, "What direction is my life going?"

So, indeed, as Paul says, impurity and lawlessness result in further lawlessness.

So the apostle's point here is simply this. You don't have to keep presenting your bodies to the slavery of impurity and lawlessness. Present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification. Sanctification, that process of becoming more like Christ. That you might enjoy more of the blessings that are yours in Christ.

Dear Christian, please understand. The more you yield to sin, the more it will enslave you. And the more you yield to righteousness, the more it will enslave you.

Either way, you will continue to gain momentum.

If I can give you an analogy, the Christian life is like paddling your kayak, but it is always upstream. It is always going to be upstream.

Now, the Spirit of God will give you strength and it will be fun. It will be great joy. And you will even find that by the power of God you will keep gaining momentum even

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though you are going upstream. But if you decide to stop, if you decide to take a rest and get into the world and give into the flesh, you know what is going to happen. Your little kayak is going to start gaining the other momentum and it will eventually sweep you downstream over a waterfall of destruction.

I grieve over some of you young people right now who I pray for. I watch your lives and I remember a time where you paddled hard for Christ. But now I watch the current taking you in the wrong direction. I grieve over that.

We offer opportunities for discipleship, opportunities for you to come and grow in the grace and the knowledge of Christ, but you are nowhere to be found. What has happened?

Oh, you will never miss a concert. You will never miss an opportunity to have a party late at night. You will never miss a movie, but when it comes time for the saints to pray, you are nowhere to be found. When it comes time for you to sit down and be taught the word of God, that you might grow in Christ, you are not there. You are not there to serve Christ. You are out serving yourself. You are not disciplining yourself for the sake of godliness. And I fear for you.

Adults, the same thing. The momentum of your life is going in the wrong direction. As Paul says in a different way in Romans 12:2, either the world will conform you or the Word will transform you. Which is it going to be?

And it is amazing, because of the grammar of that text, it will happen to you without knowing it.

“Do not be conformed to this world.”³³

In other words, don't let the world conform you into its image without you even realizing that it is happening.

But, instead, “...be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”³⁴ Again, in the passive voice, indicating that it is the Word of God, it is the renewing of your mind that will cause this metamorphosis to occur where the inside of who you really are as a person clothed in the righteousness of Christ will begin to manifest itself. It will happen to you as a result of the Word of God.

So Paul is saying, “Live consistent with your nature.”

Verse 20. He says, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”³⁵

³³ Romans 12:2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Romans 6:20.

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In other words, non believers are ... they are powerless against the demands of sin. As it says here they are free in regard to righteousness. In other words, they have no linkage. They are completely separate to God's standards of righteousness. They don't understand it. it is all foolishness to them. they have no power to even get close to living consistently with any of those things.

Verse 21.

“Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.”³⁶

Obviously the point is there is no benefit to sin. We know that as believers. Even though, isn't it interesting how sin entices, it promises but never delivers what it promises.

“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”³⁷

There is pleasure in sin, for a season. But, in fact, it brings shame to the Christian and it brings eternal spiritual death, the second death, to the non Christian.

So his point is simply this. Why on earth would you allow yourself to be enslaved once again to those things that bring you shame, to those things that eternally damn the masses who will perish in their sin? Why forfeit blessing in your life, dear Christian? Why subject yourself to divine chastening?

Finally he says, verse 22:

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.³⁸

What a magnificent climax to this chapter.

He reminds us that there are two different wages given by two different masters. If you serve Satan and sin, you will receive the wages of death. Speaking of eternal separation from the living God. If you serve Christ and his righteousness, you will receive the wages of eternal life in Christ Jesus, a free gift.

Oh, child of God, what greater motivation can there be to serve Christ, the one who purchased us with his very blood, the one who has given us life?

³⁶ Romans 6:21.

³⁷ Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

³⁸ Romans 6:22-23.

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As Isaac Watts said, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

So, may I challenge you this morning. Are you a slave of sin or a slave of obedience? Do you live to please your master? Is Christ even your master? If not, today is the day to bow before him and cry out for his mercy. May I challenge you all, believers, all of us. Get serious about serving Christ, not out of compulsion, but out of love and out of freedom.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Do what only you can do by the power of your Spirit to make them come alive in the life of every one who has humbled themselves before these words. I ask this in the name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.

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