

Romans Study
Session 9 - Romans 6:15-23

In our last session, we began to answer the question of how does justification impact the believer's life in the here and now. The overt teaching of the text was that our relationship to sin and God have both fundamentally changed. This is because we have been given a new identity that is "in Christ". Our old self, the sinful nature we were born with "in Adam" died with Christ on the cross when we accepted God's grace and now Christ is our life. Sin has no more power over us now than it does over the risen Lord Jesus due to our new life in Him.

This session we are going to take the same basic idea see our new identity in Christ be expressed in a different way. Last week the contrast was between death and life. This week the contrast will be between slavery and freedom. The truth is that ownership of our lives has been transferred from being in slavery to sin to being in slavery to God. No one can be a slave to two masters. If you hold to sin being your master, you are free from God and righteousness. On the other hand, if you hold to God being your master, you are free from sin.

Like Paul did in 6:1 to kick off his teaching on being dead to sin, he begins this section with a question that stems from the verse before it. In 6:14 Paul told believers that sin shall not be master over them for they are not under law but under grace.

Before we dig into the text, let's examine two words.

Q: What does Paul mean by "law"? (*The Mosaic Law or the old covenant given on Mt. Sinai. It was the old way God related to His people before the new covenant was put into effect by Jesus dying on the cross. It was full of laws and regulations and rituals pertaining to God's holiness. At it's heart, it was based on the performance of the individual to keep the commandments.*)

Q: What does Paul mean by "grace"? (*Grace is God's unmerited favor. It is His transforming power given to a believer in the person of the Holy Spirit at the time of their new birth in Christ. It is a gift of God, not the result of personal works that establishes and maintains this new relationship with God. It's the way we related to God in the new covenant.*)

According to this passage believers have been transferred from living under the Mosaic covenant to living under God's grace. There is a transfer of ownership of our lives from sin to God. We're going to look at some of the implications of what this transfer of ownership means to us. Salvation means that there is a change to whom we are in bondage.

[Romans 6:14-18]

Q: Why does Paul say those under grace are not to continue in sin? (*We are no longer slaves to sin.*)

Q: What is a slave? (*a person under the direction and control of another person*)

Q: According to v.16, how does one become a slave of another person? (*they present themselves for obedience to someone else*)

Q: What are the results of presenting oneself to sin for obedience to it? (*v.16 - death*)

The phrase that follows this means “obedience to God” and we know this because the result is righteousness.

[John 8:34-36]

Q: According to Jesus, who is a slave to sin? (*anyone who commits sin*)

Q: What is the problem of being a slave to sin? (*v.35 - the slave has no inheritance in the household of God*)

Q: Based on this, what is the freedom from that Jesus mentions in v.36? (*freedom from sin. It is important to understand that true freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.*)

Q: What was Paul thankful for in v.17 (*that believers had become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which they were committed.*)

The “form of teaching” in v.17 describes the difference between the basic teaching of Judaism and Christianity. It’s the difference between trying to regulate sin yourself by your own self-efforts and realizing that you are no longer under the dominion of sin but rather are under the dominion of Christ. Instead of you attempting to stop sinning in your own strength, you realize that sin isn’t who you are any longer and instead live by the power of grace, the Holy Spirit, Who has been placed within the heart of each believer. It’s the difference between constant work to free oneself from sin or living in gratitude for the freedom from sin given to you by Christ.

There is another aspect of this form of teaching in that it is passive. That means that we don’t choose to be obedient. God has handed us over or given us up to a new way of life under grace whereby the natural choice of the believer is righteousness. The only time we, as believers, need to choose a direction is when we face temptation. When we are living our lives, the normal outcome of our lives will be righteousness. It’s what we produce due to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling in us. However, when temptation comes along to entice us to return to our former master, our choice should be in keeping with our loyalty and love to our new master, Jesus.

Verse 18 contains the one aorist verb in this section which reveals to us our new identity in Christ. We have become slaves to righteousness. Righteousness is what is pleasing to God. We have chosen give our lives over to Christ and live under His dominion and now we have been made slaves of righteousness - it is our nature to continue to do the right thing before God. What is interesting is that there is no middle ground in this text. There is no “third” option. Either you are a slave of sin or you are a slave of righteousness through Christ. When you become a slave to righteousness, you are one forever afterwards. You can never be a slave to sin again. (While it is possible for a believer to sin after having their allegiance transferred to Christ, it isn’t natural.) The main thing is that once God changes and aspect of our identities, it is eternally permanent.

V. 18 also contains the full answer to v.15's question. “Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?” You can’t because you were freed from such thinking and acting.

[Romans 6:19-23]

The reason the phrase “human terms” is used here is to describe an imperfect illustration. It’s not entirely accurate to call the new life in Christ “servitude to righteousness”. The fact was that the Roman Christians (and every other Christian in the world) has limitations based on our nature as former sinners. It’s not really accurate to call us slaves to righteousness but while it is imprecise, it is appropriate for Paul’s teaching purpose which was to show the believers their new identity broke their former bondage from sin.

Q: What did presenting one’s members as slaves to impurity lead to in v.19? *(further impurity and lawlessness. The picture given in the phrase further lawlessness is similar to what we’d call a “junkie” today. The person was a sin junkie, desperate and helpless for their next fix of sin.)*

Q: What does presenting one’s members to righteousness lead to in v.19? *(sanctification)*

Q: What is sanctification? *(It is the point and process of becoming more Christ-like. We are initially sanctified when we are born again and then we spend the rest of our lives conforming to the image of Christ through grace.)*

[Hebrews 10:10, 14]

Q: According to these verses, when did sanctification happen? *(in the past, when we came to Christ and depending upon the translation of v.14 either past or present)*

[I Thessalonians 5:23]

Q: According to this verse, when did sanctification happen? *(it’s still happening now, present tense)*

[I Corinthians 1:30]

Q: According to this verse, when did Christ become sanctification for us? *(in the past, when we were saved. Notice that no matter which tense of sanctification we are talking about, this is God’s work. Christ did this for us and to us. We merely accepted the gift of grace and now live in the completed work of His power. We now cooperate with Him through this life to continue the process of becoming more Christlike. A good illustration is when a child is born. It is born human and cannot change. It can mature and grow but it will never be more human than when it was first born. That’s how we are in Christ. Jesus sanctifies us upon receiving grace and then continues to apply grace, the working of the Holy Spirit, in our lives to make us more Christlike than we were previously.)*

Sanctify means to set apart for God’s use. To be exclusively used by God for His purposes. When we came to Christ, many changes happened all at once. We were justified and forgiven of all our sins. We were crucified with Christ so that our sinful nature was put to death and we were given a new life that shared in God’s divine nature. We were freed from our slavery to sin and freed to live out the life of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit God placed in us. The initial act of sanctification, began when we accepted God’s grace. That was a point in time. Now we live in manner designed by God whereby we become more and more like Christ

as we live each day.

[II Corinthians 3:17-18]

Notice that we are being transformed from glory to glory. In other words, we are already in the state of reflecting God's glory because of our new relationship with Christ. We've been saved. But now we are transformed into even more glory, more like Jesus, daily. This shows us the work of sanctification.

Q: When you were a slave to sin, what were you free from? (v.20 - righteousness)

Q: What does this mean in practical terms? (*When we were sinners, there was no expectation for us to please God in any way. As a matter of fact, we couldn't please God even if we had wanted to. We were free from any and all constraints of righteousness.*)

In v. 21, the word "benefit" means "fruit" and the word "deriving" means "what you hold onto" or "what's left afterwards". The thought is that the former sinful life was one that bore shame and that shame led to death. Paul is having them remember the ashes of their former shameful lives so that they will understand that they are now under grace and righteousness - not law and sin.

Q: What is the outcome of sanctification according to v.22? (*eternal life*)

A chart can help us explain vv. 21-22:

	<u>status</u>	<u>result</u>	<u>outcome</u>
Before we were Christians (v.21)	slaves to sin free from righteousness	fruit bearing shame	death
Now that we are Christians (v.22)	free from sin slaves to God	fruit bearing sanctification	life

V.23 not only explains the contrasting outcomes of death and life but also brings the chapter to a conclusion. Only by remembering the negative and dark side of life outside Christ can Christians genuinely appreciate God's gift of grace given to us freely.

The word "wages" was the word used to describe a soldier's pay. He worked hard for the wages he earned. If he worked as a soldier, what he received was his earned wages.

Q: According to this verse, what are the wages that sin pays? (*death*)

Q: What is the result of accepting the free gift? (*eternal life*)

This summation wraps up the section perfectly in three different ways:

- 1) The master that is served - sin or God
- 2) The outcome of that service - death or eternal life
- 3) How that outcome is reached - wages earned or accepting a free gift.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?