

Whose Slave Are You?
Romans 6:15-23 (04/07/13)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

I want to ask you a simple question. I'd love to have each of you write your answer on a piece of paper. Why did God save you? Many people are completely confused about God's purpose in saving us.

Why did God save us?

Not to make us healthy, wealthy, or successful in this world.

Not to make life easier for us or make everyone in our lives easier to live with.

Not even just to give us a one-way ticket to Paradise or to make us feel good about ourselves or boost our self-esteem.

God saved us to make us holy. He saved us to deliver us from sin's penalty and power and finally sin's presence in our lives, and to change us more and more into the likeness of Christ. This is what Romans 6 through 8 is all about. Sin is our greatest enemy and holiness is our greatest friend in this world. Ephesians 1:4 says God chose us in Christ to make us holy and blameless before Him. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 God's will is for your sanctification or holiness. Hebrews 12:10 says God disciplines us for our good, that we might share His holiness. And God makes us holy through and in His Son, Jesus Christ!

Turn to Romans 6. In chapters 3 through 5, Paul has drilled into our hearts that great truth of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. And we heard those soul-refreshing words, where sin abounded, grace super-abounded. In our greatest guilt, God's grace goes deeper. So what is our attitude toward sin? In verse 1 of chapter six Paul asks, "Is it OK to continue a life of sin so that grace might abound even more?" Then he answers, "Don't even think about parking there." He says this because of one major truth; when you came to Christ, God joined you to Christ, you are in union with Christ, you died to sin once for all with Christ, you were buried with Christ, and you've been raised up with Christ to walk in newness of life. And we've heard two excellent messages by Matt Caze and Bryce Beale on how your union with Christ answers the question of verse one.

Now we come to a similar but different question in verse 15. Since we're not under the law anymore since Christ fulfilled the law for us, we're no longer under the law's jurisdiction; rather we're under grace. Okay, if we can't continue a life of sin, what about sinning occasionally? Sinning every once in a while is okay, isn't it? What do you think Paul's answer is?

Before we go further, I want us to be sure we understand that Christians still sin. We will be tempted and cave in to sin until we hit glory land. We still have the remains of sin in our flesh, and as the Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte put it, the hounds of our sin will trouble us all the way to heaven and leave their slaver on heaven's door. In Romans 7 Paul is going to get into the serious struggle believers have with sin. But the real issue this morning is, what is your attitude toward sin? Do you have a casual attitude toward sin? Like, "Since I'm in Christ, I'm under grace, sin's no big deal, right?" Let me give you some thoughts about sin to carry with you:

- We're fighting our sin. We're not coasting downhill in the sin car, or bungee jumping in sin for the thrill ride.
- When we sin, we're not making excuses for our sin or blaming others.
- We're being radical about dealing with our sin, tearing out eyes, cutting hands and feet that make it easy to sin. We're in the sin-killing business by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We're not asking, "How far can I go in sin and still be a Christian?" but fleeing it like Joseph fled from Mrs. Potiphar. Sin is our enemy.

Now, back to verse 15. Paul asks, "Is it ok to sin every once in a while?" And he roars from his writing room, "DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT PARKING HERE!" Why? Because Christian, you are a slave to a new Master. As we go through this passage, I want you to see that most of what Paul says are facts or indicatives. There's only one command in this passage. Why? Because God wants you to understand who you are in Christ before He tells you what to do. Let's get started:

THE TWO MASTERS – v. 16

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?

First Paul expresses an obvious truth out of the world of slavery. You are the slaves of whomever you obey. How do you know who your master is? Whom are you obeying? If you are employed by XYZ Company, you'll be showing up every day to work for the XYZ Company. You won't be showing up at the ABC Company. Whom you obey shows who your master is.

There are only two masters in this world, and every single human being is a slave of one or the other. There is Master Sin and Master God. That's it. There's no neutral zone here. You're either a slave of one or the other. That great theologian Bob Dylan said, "Gotta serve somebody." Well, he was on to something.

So if you present yourself and habitually go stand alongside of sin, you show that sin is your master. Paul isn't saying if we present ourselves to sin, that sin BECOMES our Master. No, whom you obey reveals who your Master is. If you habitually go stand alongside of obedience to God, this shows God is your master. If you are working in Bob's field every day, then you are Bob's slave. If you are working in Bill's field every day, you are Bill's slave. That's simple, right? It would be weird if you are Bill's slave, but go over and work in Bob's field, right? That's what happens when we casually indulge in sin. We are acting as if we were still slaves of Sin, even though we aren't.

And right away Paul warns, if your actions show that sin is your Master, you need to see that obeying Sin leads to death. Even believers need to remember this. Remember, there are only two Masters and every single human being is a slave of one or the other. And here's a fact – every one of us was born the slave of Master Sin.

THE GREAT CHANGE OF MASTERS – vv. 17-18

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.

Here's a fact of life – I was a slave of sin. I showed up every day to serve sin. That's who I was. I didn't choose to make sin my master. I was born that way. When Adam opened the door of disobedience, sin rushed into the human race and set up his throne. Now he rules the hearts of every single human being from birth. He's the Master; we're his slaves. This doesn't mean we all do all kinds of horrible things. It just means I lived my life the way I thought best. Like Frank Sinatra boasted, "I did it my way." I may have been a really good person, a really good husband or wife, parent, worker, really moral. I wouldn't dream of cheating on my wife or living together outside of marriage. Or I may have been a big hypocrite, living to impress others, but secretly indulging my lust in sex or pornography. I may have gone through really hard times. I may have been abused and found ways to numb the pain. I may have turned to drugs or alcohol or practiced cutting. I may have lived with deep resentment and bitterness toward parents or others who mistreated me.

Either way, whether I was living a really good life or really messing up, I was living as a slave of Sin. My heart was an idol factory. I worshiped my own comfort and pleasures and what I thought was best for me. My heart did not love Christ. I didn't live to please God. I wasn't trusting in Jesus

Christ as my Savior. I didn't know it, but my heart really was at war with God. I was a slave of sin.

BUT THANKS BE TO GOD! Not "Thanks to you Romans, you delivered yourself from your slavery to sin." Not, "Thanks to all the self-help programs and humanistic counsel that saved you." No, GOD, WE THANK YOU! What did He do? He rescued us! He pulled off the most wonderful extraction operation ever. Let's notice each step, realizing each step is because of what God has done.

#1 You became obedient. Obedient means to put your ear under the authority of someone. God opened your ears to hear and submit to Him.

#2 Your obedience came from your heart. Not just legalistically or moralistically or behavioristically, but kardiologically, from your heart (Greek for heart is "kardia"). Wholeheartedly, with zeal from a changed heart, a new heart, your inner person where you responded to God.

#3 You bowed your heart to a specific form or pattern or mold of teaching. Not just a feeling, or an experience, but teaching. Not just some neat, spiffy ideas to perk up your life and help you feel better about yourself. No, God brought you a message, and that message is the gospel of Jesus Christ, from the wrath of God on your sins to the work of Christ on that cross making propitiation for you, to justification by faith alone. You bowed your heart to this message.

#4 God delivered you into this message. "Committed" is passive, and means you were delivered into this message. Here's the gospel message, like a mold or pattern, like you pour jello in and let it firm up. Ever eat scrapple? They cut off left over bits of pork from the head and other places, boil it up with corn meal and flour and some other stuff, sprinkle in some pepper and garlic, pour it into a mold, a pan, let it cool down and firm up, then you turn it upside down, tap it out, slice it off, fry it on the stove 'til crispy on the outside, drop a couple of eggs in there, then onto your plate and you're looking at a fine Pennsylvania Dutch breakfast.

All of that to illustrate how God takes us slaves of sin and pours us into the form of the gospel message and makes us His slaves. It is all God's work and He does it through the teaching of the gospel. Don't ever accept the idea that we don't need teaching, we just need to be like Jesus or imitate Jesus or try to do what Jesus did. That's not the gospel and it doesn't save. We need the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ. And this is what God uses to deliver us from slavery to sin. This is what it means to be saved.

This is why people need to hear the gospel message. The vast majority of people are clueless about this form of teaching, the truth in this teaching. What do they think the Bible teaches? Two things: God loves everybody, and don't judge anybody. That's it. We need to get this form of teaching out there. They don't know how much they need it.

What happens when God pours your life into the mold of the gospel? Look at verse 18. Two things, two facts, are true of every believer. You have been freed from sin's mastery. That's a passive, once for all participle. When you came to Christ, God liberated you once for all from sin's dictatorship, sin's absolute rule over your life. Paul's not saying you were freed from ever sinning again, because sin is still running around in your flesh, barking after you like those bloodhounds. But when you came to Christ, God removed you from Sin's kingdom.

And at the same time God removed you from Sin's dominion, He enslaved you to Himself and His rule. You didn't try to do this. This doesn't happen gradually through a catechism class. God did it and He did it the moment you submitted your life to Christ. You now have a new Master and sin will never be your master again! This is John 8: "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." You were over here in this field slaving for Master Sin, and now God

extracted you and instantly you became His possession to be obedient to His will, which is righteousness. And now, we finally come to a command...

BE WHAT YOU ARE – v. 19

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.

Paul says, "Okay, let me put the cookies on the lowest shelf here." This is kind of tough and what difference does this mean for John and Joe and Jordan and Julie and me? How does this really help us in our fight with sin?

Remember how you used to present your life, your thoughts, words, actions, habits? You took your stand with Master Sin and whether it was in your heart or in your actions, you were not pleasing God but yourself – impurity and lawlessness. Maybe you saw yourself going further and further into a godless life. That's how sin works. And you served sin without even thinking about it. You sinned out of habit, without realizing it. Your thoughts were habituated to pleasing self. You never even questioned whether you were being selfish or self-centered or conceited or all about you. You just were!

So now! Here's the big imperative. BE WHAT YOU ARE. God made you slaves of righteousness – live that way! Present your life, your thoughts, your words, your relationships to God. Please Him! Just as eagerly as you were all about you, now be all about obeying God! The Spirit of God will empower you. Just as you developed habits of selfishness, now as God's slave develop habits of godliness. BE WHAT YOU ARE. Realize God's purpose in saving you. He made you His slave to pursue holiness or sanctification! While you still have sin running around in your members, and sometimes you want to go running back to Sin's field to work for him, it's ridiculous and wrong and you don't have to do that, because you aren't Sin's slave anymore!

REMEMBER THE FRUIT AND END OF THESE TWO MASTERS – Vv. 20-23

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.

YOUR OLD SLAVERY - Go back and think about your life before Christ. That's what God wants you to do here, just for a few minutes. Ask this question, "What did serving sin do for me? What value was it all?" The answer, of course, is nothing. And if God hadn't intervened, that Master Sin, who was so alluring and assuring and pleasing to you, would have taken you straight to hell. The end of those things is death! Living without Christ is ultimately empty and meaningless. Plus, you did stuff you wouldn't want anyone else to know about. What fruit did your life before Christ bring you? And where would it have led you?

YOUR NEW SLAVERY - But now! Praise God, I'm not what I ought to be, and I'm not what I'm going to be, but praise God, I'm not what I used to be! But now with God as our Master, how does He treat us? He is a wonderful Master. He loves us and cares for us and works in us to produce the fruit of the Spirit that is beautiful. We are growing in sanctification – we are becoming more and more like Christ. And when we do blow it and sin, He is forgiving. We couldn't have a more wonderful Master. And what is the end? Not eternal death, but eternal life! The thrill, the pleasure, the joy, the incredible reality of eternal life!

Paul ends this with a simple one liner: People still enslaved to Master Sin will be paid what they deserve – death; but people enslaved to God are given what they don't deserve, a free gift, eternal life, and all because of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Question: Christian, why would you ever take a casual attitude toward sin? Don't even think about parking there!