

# Who Will You Serve

## *Romans 6:15-23*

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Romans 6 is the central passage in the Bible that deals with the great question, Now that I'm saved, does it matter how I live?

Romans 6 has 23 verses and divides easily into two parts. This chapter contains two questions and two answers. The first question is in verse 1, "**What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?**" In verses 2 through 14 Paul gives the answer to that question. The second question is in verse 15, "**What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?**" Paul answers this question in verses 16 through 23.

The two questions are similar but they're not identical. In verse 1 he's asking the question, Should we continually sin? Is it possible for you as a Christian to live in a lifestyle of continual sin? Is it alright for those who have been justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ to just live like the world and follow a lifestyle of sin? Paul answer of course is "**Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**" We cannot just happily live a life of continual sin because that is not our life any longer. We have died to that old life of sin. We have a new life!

### **Question two: Does grace allow me to treat my sin lightly?**

In verse 14 Paul concludes part one, "**For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**" This brings up the second question. It is slightly different than the first—"Shall we sin occasionally, because we are not under law but under grace?" The first question involves a lifestyle choice, the second has to do with my moment-by-moment decisions.

For instance, is it OK to occasionally blow my top because I know I can instantly be forgiven? I've done that. So have you. Is it OK to treat somebody unkindly because you

know you can get back in fellowship with God? Is it OK to pick look at a little pornography today because you know you can be forgiven in your quiet time tomorrow morning? Can I excuse my sporadic sin because God saves me by His grace? Should I go ahead and treat sin lightly because I'm saved by grace?

Paul gives the same answer as he did to the first question. **"Certainty Not!"** or as the KJV says, "God forbid."

In verses 16-18 Paul presents the principle on which he bases his answer: you are a servant of the one you obey. Then in 19-23 Paul calls for us to make a choice about who we will serve and he shows the consequences of each choice.

## **A. The Principle: You will serve someone. (6:16-18)**

### **Who do you serve? (16)**

Verse 16 begins with a simple question: **"Do you not know?"** This is a principle that we should all already be aware of. He asks, **"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?"**

There are two kingdoms in this world—the kingdom of sin and kingdom of God. Before you came to Christ, you lived in the kingdom of sin whether you knew it or not. You were, in Paul's words, a slave to sin. You did what sin demanded. You lived according to the dictates of the lust of your eyes and the lust of your flesh and the lust of your heart. You followed sin. Sin was your master and you were a slave to sin. In John 8:34 Jesus said, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."**

Paul's point here in verse 16 is not so much that a slave had to obey his master, but rather that the master you obey shows whose slave you are. If you obey sin, it shows that you're a slave of sin, headed toward eternal death. If you obey God, it shows that you're His slave, leading to righteousness.

If you have been saved, you have been transferred out of the kingdom of sin into to the kingdom of God. You don't live in the realm of sin any longer. You live in God's kingdom. Now you have a choice as you how you will live.

So look at verse 16 again and ask yourself: Whose Slave Am I? Am I a slave to sin or am I a slave to obedience?

Some of you might want to say, "I'm not really a slave of sin, but it would probably be a stretch to say that I'm a slave of obedience. I'm kind of in the middle." But there is no middle. Paul doesn't give us that option. It's very clear: Either Christ is your master and you obey Him or sin is your master and you obey it. You can't live in both kingdoms at the same time. Either you're a slave of obedience to Christ or you're a slave of sin. You can't have both Christ and sin as your master.

Jesus taught the same thing. In Matt. 6:24 Jesus said, **"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."** In Matthew 7, Jesus said that there are only two gates: the narrow gate that leads to life and the broad gate that leads to destruction (7:13-14). There are two types of trees: the good tree that bears good fruit and the bad tree that bears bad fruit (Matt. 7:17-19). There are two kinds of builders who build two kinds of houses: Wise builders build on the rock; foolish builders build on the sand (Matt. 7:24-27). The wise builders are those who hear Jesus' words and obey them. The foolish builders do not obey.

How does a person move from being a slave of sin to being a slave of obedience to God?

### **Have you been changed? (17-18)**

The only way that you can change from being a slave of sin to being a slave of righteousness is for God to free you from sin by changing your heart. Listen to how Paul describes the change in 17-18:

**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.**

**18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**

How are we changed? First, God changes us by bringing us under the teaching of His Word. God makes the change in us, **“But God be thanked.”** Slaves of sin are not able to free themselves by their own efforts. In fact, slaves of sin often do not realize that they are slaves and they resent anyone telling them that they are.

Only God can change a sinful heart. He does it by bringing our heart in submission to His word. Verse 17 again says, **“you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.”** God changes us by the truth of the gospel. **“That form of doctrine to which you were delivered”** is the gospel that Paul has been explaining now for 6 chapters. It is the good news that God justifies unrighteous sinners by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

True faith in Jesus Christ will always lead to a life of obedience to Christ. God changes our mind, our hearts, our desires by the truth of His word. He renews our mind by the scripture. He washes our hearts by the water of His word. He changes the desires of our will by submission to His Holy Spirit who indwells us.

The evidence of this change of mind and heart is that our wills gladly obey the truth. To be “obedient from the heart” is not grudging, outward obedience, but cheerful, inner obedience. It is obedience on the heart level, where God alone sees, not outward obedience to impress others with how spiritual we are.

Verse 18 is not a command to be free from sin, but a statement of fact: **“having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”** Paul sums up his argument from 6:16-17, which refutes the false charge of 6:15, that if we are not under law but under grace, we can just shrug off our sin.

We cannot just sin and think that it is okay because we have a new master. We have a new Lord. In the first half of chapter 6 Paul taught us that we cannot continue in sin because we have a new LIFE. Here Paul teaches that we cannot take even take occasional sin lightly because we have a new LORD. We have been freed from sin and became slaves of righteousness.

This does not mean that we have become sinlessly perfect. Nor does it mean that we will never be tempted by sin. Instead, it means that the power of sin over us has been broken, so that we no longer live under sin as our master. Before we came to Christ we served sin. We obeyed its desires and urges. But now, we serve righteousness. We obey God and His Word. True freedom is not freedom to sin. True freedom is freedom from sin and slavery to God and His righteousness.

### **B. The Choice: Slave of sin or slave of righteousness (6:19-23)**

Having identified the issue, Paul now clarifies the choice. What difference does it make which way we decide to live? Paul answers that it makes all the difference in the world:

**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.**

Paul tells us that we have a choice—to live for sin or to live for God. He gives us a command in verse 19: present yourself as a slave of righteousness. And in verses 20-23 Paul gives the results of our choice. He contrasts the way sin “pays off” with the way righteousness “pays off.” You can go ahead and sin if you want to, but the end is not good. Or you can go the way of God and in the end you’ll be glad you did. You make a choice and you get what you choose.

We can make a chart that explains these verses very simply. He’s comparing what sin pays with what God gives.

<b>WHO IS YOUR MASTER?</b>	
<b><u>OLD SLAVERY</u></b>	<b><u>NEW SLAVERY</u></b>
Slave master = Sin Ro 6:20	Slave Master = God Ro 6:22
Free from righteousness Ro 6:20	Free from sin Ro 6:22
What benefit? = Shame Ro 6:21	What fruit? = Sanctification Ro 6:22
Master Pays Wages Ro 6:23	Master gives gifts Ro 6:23
Wages = Death Ro 6:23	Gift = Eternal Life Ro 6:23

That’s pretty clear, isn’t it? Sin enslaves. He says this a number of times. In verse 19 he says you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery. In verse 20, you were slaves to sin. Sin puts you in bondage. Think about it. Pornography does that, doesn’t it? Some of you men know this. Pornography puts you in bondage. You hate it but you can’t break it. You’re in bondage to it. Same way with alcohol. Same way with drugs. The same way with a critical spirit, bitterness, a hateful word. The same way with lust. It never satisfies. It just enslaves you.

Sin brings shame. Paul says in verse 21, **“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?”** Sin first enslaves and, second, sin makes you ashamed. Jesus said **“For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”** First sin enslaves. Then sin brings shame. And finally sin pays death.

Verse 21 tells us that **“For the end of those things is death.”** Look at verse 23, a famous verse, **“for the wages of sin is death.”** Paul used an interesting word here for wages. He used a word which came from the Roman military. The word he used refers to the daily food ration a soldier would receive.

This is saying the daily payment of sin is daily death. You die a little bit each time you choose to sin. Sure you go to hell in the end, but the terrible thing is that not only does sin take you to hell, it gives you a terrible ride on the way down. If you want to live in sin, this is what you're going to get: slavery, shame, death. And you're going to get it every single day.

Once upon a time there was a man named David who lusted after a woman named Bathsheba. First he lusted, the lust led him to commit adultery. Then he lied to cover up the adultery, then he committed murder to cover up everything else. Lust. Adultery. Lies. Murder. Ever-increasing wickedness. Sin, slavery, shame. The end result is death.

What does God pay off? Well, it's just the opposite. Verse 19 says he pays off in righteousness, a new way of living. Verse 19 says he pays off in holiness, a new way of pleasing God. Verse 23 says he gives eternal life. **The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in or through Jesus Christ our Lord.** Slavery and righteousness, shame and holiness, death and eternal life. Sin satisfies for a little while. Holiness satisfies forever.

So how do you win over sin? How do you experience consistent victory? First, receive the gift of eternal life. If you have never trusted in Christ, you are hopelessly, helplessly under the reign of sin and death. But Christ died and rose again to free you from sin. You must be born again in order to conquer sin.

The world system denies the consequences of sin and teaches that eternal life comes through self-effort.

The Bible teaches Eternal life is a GIFT. It cannot be bought, for the price too high, perfection. It cannot be earned, for we have all earned death. It can only be accepted through faith.

It is also possible to be enslaved and yet still think that you are free. Have you come to Christ in repentance, seeking His free gift through faith alone? There is an invitation here for you. God offers you the gift of life. Will you accept it?

It is also possible to be free, yet still think and live like you are enslaved. So for those of you are already in Christ, present yourself to God as a slave of righteousness. He is your new Master. You no longer have authority over your body. He does. He enables you to obey His Word. Remember your shameful past as a slave of sin before He redeemed you. Keep in mind your blessed present, enjoying all of the unfathomable riches of Christ. Look forward to your glorious spiritual future of eternal life free from all sin in the presence of the One who died to save you. You won't be sinlessly perfect in this life, but if you are in Christ you can and will grow in holiness.