

Are You a Slave to Sin or to Righteousness? (Part 3)

Romans 6:15-23

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: Salvation is a free gift from God but as believers, we must exercise ourselves unto godliness.

In Romans 6:15-7:6, Paul addresses the objection that his emphasis on grace gives people a license to sin.

15 What then? Shall we sin [are we free to sin] because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

- We are all slaves to something or someone and true freedom from sin is found in bondage—bondage to righteousness, to God and to His Word.

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

- We must train ourselves (“gymnasium” ourselves) to be godly. (1 Timothy 4:7)

20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

- As we begin to grow in the Christian life, we begin to recognize that sin is a very deceptive master.
- Sin has convinced a lot of people that the Christian life is boring and laborious, the greatest kind of bondage. And even now, sin promises us freedom but the more we indulge it, the more it enslaves us.

21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

- Are we ashamed or are we comfortable with those behaviors that we know are displeasing to God?
- Guilt and shame are very powerful, uncomfortable feelings. But as unpleasant as these feelings are, they can serve as indicators that we need to seek the Lord’s forgiveness.
- It should be a real warning sign to us when we are able to commit sin but we’re not ashamed of it! At that point, we’re getting into a spiritual condition that Paul described as “having a conscience that has been seared as with a hot iron.” (1 Timothy 4:2)
- When we are no longer embarrassed or ashamed of our sin, we have drifted far from the Lord and it’s time to repent!

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

- Paul is not saying here that holiness produces eternal life; rather, that the pursuit of holiness enables us to enjoy the benefits and blessings of eternal life.

- Eternal life is not just something we are looking forward to when we depart planet earth; rather, it is a new quality of life that we begin to enjoy in this life and that will only intensify when we step out into eternity. (Cf. John 10:10)

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

- The best way to think of death is in terms of separation. Our sin has earned us eternal separation from God.
- God's free gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus Our Lord. There's nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it. (Cf. John 1:10-12; Titus 3:4-5; Ephesians 2:8-9)

CONCLUSION

I. The Contrast

- A. Slavery to impurity leads us to ever-increasing wickedness
- B. Slavery to righteousness leads us to ever-increasing holiness

II. The Consequences

- A. The fruit of sin is shame
- B. The fruit of righteousness is holiness

III. The Climax

- A. The wages of sin is death
- B. The free gift of God is eternal life

(Adapted from J. Lyth)

In Christ, we are set free:

1. From disgraceful impurity to true holiness (vss. 19-21)
2. From dishonorable servitude to true freedom (vss. 20-22)
3. From death and condemnation to eternal life (vss. 21-23)

(Adapted from W. Hauck)

A Four-Step Process for Dealing with Temptation:

Offering Ourselves to Righteousness Rather Than to Sin

1. *Flee temptation*; that is, change your circumstances. Physically move from where you are and quickly go somewhere different, even if it's just for a few minutes.
2. *Do something that brings honor to God as an alternative.* Prayer is good, but I suggest adding something more tangible. Systematically answer the urge to sin with a godly activity.
3. *Thank God* for providing the freedom to choose Him over wrongdoing and *ask Him for encouragement.* Spiritual warfare is exhausting!
4. *Try to discern what triggered the temptation* and take practical steps to steer clear of the same situation.

(Chuck Swindoll, Insights on Romans, pp. 146-47)