

Servants of God (6:15-23)

- Every person is a servant or slave, either to sin or to Christ. Paul affirms that believers can be victorious over sin because they are now slaves of God.

1. The Law & Grace (6:15)

- Since the believer is not under law but grace (v14), does that mean that sin does not matter, that we may sin since we are not under the law? Again, the instinctive reaction of the apostle is, “God forbid!” To accept this idea is a perversion of the doctrine of salvation by grace - known as “antinomianism” (cf 2 Pet 2:1; 1 John, Jude). Antinomianism means “against the law.” An antinomian maintains that the moral laws of God are no longer binding & that he has a free license to live however he wants to live.
- The Christian can never say that sin does not matter.
 - We are not under the law in the sense that we do not have to obey it in order to earn our salvation (Gal 2:16) because its demands have been fully met in Christ (Rom 10:4). We are free from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13) but not free to be lawless.
 - As believers, we are under the law of God to obey it in our sanctification. The moral laws of God are still binding upon our lives (1 John 5:3; 2:3-6). True conversion yields a greater desire to obey, not a lesser one.
- There are two extremes that Christians can fall into concerning the Law:
 - Legalism - emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for achieving both salvation and spiritual growth. The Pharisees and the Judaizers were the leading proponents of this false, superficial spirituality (Matt 23).
 - Licentiousness - disregard of accepted moral rules and standards; lack of moral restraint (Gal 6:13).
- Legalism and licentiousness are two sides of the same coin whose operating principle is the flesh. The legalist, acting in the flesh, imagines that by keeping the law, he can commend himself to God. Likewise, the licentious person is operating in the flesh, giving in to the lusts of the flesh and justifying it by equating grace with tolerance for sin. God’s grace is opposed to both legalism and licentiousness.
- Grace is not license (freedom to sin), but it is liberty (freedom not to sin). Grace does not condone or justify sin because grace transforms the life that is saved. If you are truly saved, you have the Holy Spirit indwelling you to help you battle temptations and sin (Eph 4:30+; Titus 2:11-12).

2. Slaves to God (6:16-22)

- Every person is a servant or slave, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness. A slave is someone whose entire life is to be given in servitude & obedience to his master, who has paid a price to purchase him. Paul’s point is not so much that a slave must obey his master, but rather that the master

we obey shows whose slaves we are. If we obey sin, it shows that we're slaves of sin. If we obey God, it shows that we're His slaves. If sin is your master, you will obey sin. If Jesus is your master, you will be living in obedience to Him. So, the master you obey shows whose slave you are.

- Paul emphasizes the impossibility of compromise - either you are a slave of sin **OR** you are a slave of obedience. There is no middle ground. You cannot have both Christ and sin as your masters (Matt 6:24). The best defence against sin is to make a decision to present yourself as a slave to God.
- Paul describes the great change that came over the Roman believers when God saved them. They were slaves to sin, but God unlocked the chains and delivered them from the control of sin. This release from sin immediately produced a new life of obedience to Christ. So real was this new obedience that Paul said it was "*from the heart*" – it came from deep within. They have yielded a hearty or willing obedience to what they have been instructed, or "*form of doctrine.*" Becoming a Christian means being put under the authority of God's Word. A person who has come under God's grace in Christ submits to God's Word. Only grace can fuel a joyful obedience to God.
- V18 is a statement of fact. The moment we were saved, we were freed from sin to become "*the servants of righteousness.*" As believers we are no longer our own but have been bought with the price of the blood of Christ (1 Cor 6:20). We are now the property of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a change of lordship, from Satan's domain of sin to God's domain of righteousness. God has freed us from sin but not to live as we please. Rather, He frees us from sin to make us "slaves of righteousness." True freedom is not freedom to sin; rather, true freedom is slavery to God's righteousness.
- Paul explains his use of slavery as an illustration to make his position clearer due to the dullness of understanding of those to whom he wrote. Paul knew this was an accurate and meaningful illustration, in that God has bought us with the blood of Christ and so we belong to Him and owe Him total, unquestioning obedience. Paul makes the point that the Roman Christians are to be just as wholehearted in walking in the ways of God as they used to be in their previous bondage to sin. They had given themselves wholeheartedly to sin in the past; let them now give themselves equally wholeheartedly to righteousness. Now that we are believers, we must present the members of our body to God in obedience to His Word.
- Paul describes a principle ingrained in human nature. Lawlessness leads to more lawlessness. Righteousness leads to holiness, which is more righteousness. Sanctification (the process of being made holy) involves the co-operation of believers, ie., the diligent employment of the means of sanctification, yielding to God & separation from sin. Sanctification is something that God does WITH us. We must pursue holiness in our lives (Heb 12:14; Phil 2:12). God works in us to give us victory over sin (Phil 2:13) and helps us to live sanctified lives. This does not happen overnight. It is a lifetime process.

- When we were slaves of sin, we were free from righteousness. There was a moral inability within us to be righteous. The end of this slavery, Paul emphasizes, is death (v21). If we go the sin route, it heads toward death. "*But now,*" we have been delivered out of our former slavery to sin and have become servants of God. It was by the mighty work of Jesus Christ that our chains were unlocked, and we were delivered out of our former slavery to sin. When we are freed from one bondage, we are bound to the other, to Christ. The result of all this: "*fruit unto holiness.*" We have been ordained to such fruit (John 15:8,16). The present possession of fruit gives assurance that eternal life will in due course be attained. This is proof that grace can never be a licence to sin. The believer does sin at times, but he hates sin and endeavours to keep it out of his life, and if he does commit an act of sin, he deals with it in confession to the Lord.

3. Conclusion (6:23)

- V23 is the triumphant conclusion to chapter 6. Slavery to sin leads to death, while slavery to Christ leads to eternal life. The wages sin pays is death. Death is earned, a payment – it is what sin deserves. In contrast, God is willing to give us what we do not deserve – eternal life.
- So how do we win over sin? How do we experience consistent victory?
 - First, receive the gift of eternal life. You must be born again in order to conquer sin.
 - Then, present yourself to God as a slave of righteousness. God is your new Master. Obey His Word. You will not be sinlessly perfect in this life, but you can grow in holiness and consistently win over sin.

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