

FREE FROM SIN AND ENSLAVED TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

PASTOR MARC D. WILSON, ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, LAS CRUCES, NM

Romans 6:15-23 (Luke 11:14-28)

Prayer: Collect for the Third Sunday in Lent.

While in a restaurant in El Paso with Michael Kelshaw, Bishop Felix and Myles Calvin, our server, because Michael and I had our Bibles, asked which Christian “sect” we belonged to. We all took turns casually asking her some questions in response, and she at one point stated, “I just try to be a good person.” I then asked, “How’s that working for you?” She said, “Pretty good.” Then, I stated it worked horribly for me. I pressed her on her self assessment after which she admitted to falling short of being “good.” Michael affirmed the truth that no one is good and that we deserve punishment for the bad things we do. We both went on to proclaim that Jesus was good for us and bore our guilt for our badness. At some later point she responded, “At least I do not think I can continue in my bad behavior; because, someone else was ‘good’ for me.” I responded, “Oh, I certainly do not want to continue in my sinning or in any bad behavior; because, that would dishonor Jesus.” You see, in that exchange, she falsely believed that Jesus fulfillment of the Law meant that the moral obligations of the Law were somehow no longer applicable; that I did not have to love the God-man Jesus with all my being and others as myself. This is the kind of misunderstanding behind a question such as the one Paul rhetorically asks in ***Romans 6:15 (READ)***. Note Paul’s response, which we have seen before. The answer Paul gives demonstrates it is a misinformed question coming out of our fallen inherent attempts to justify ourselves or to excuse our unrighteousness.

Last time, Paul addressed those who might foolishly attempt to justify sinning so that God’s grace would increase. Now the apostle addresses those who may foolishly think one would continue sinning; because,

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they are not under the Law but under God's grace. Paul affirms that the Christian is **Free from Sin and a Slave to Righteousness**, and he gives arguments to support why a Christian would never approve of continuing to sin; because, they are under the reign of God's grace and not under the Law.

1. **Everyone is Enslaved (READ Verses 16):**

a. To Sin?

i. Where does this lead? Death

1. In Adam where sin reigns in death.

b. To Obedience?

i. Obedience to what?

1. To "the pattern of teaching" in verse 17, which is the Gospel and its implications in the lives of Christians. This means, in our lives, we desire to serve God and others out of love - seeking others' best interests above our own interests - because Jesus did the for us. This is ethical living by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God enables us to obey His own righteous standards by circumcising our hearts (**READ Verse 17**). The Law is now not something the Christian is under; because, God's Law has been written on our hearts. We obey, not out of fear or thinking it merits us any righteousness before God, but out of love by the Holy Spirit poured out into our hearts.

2. Where does it lead? Righteousness. This is the visible display of living a life to God as sanctified servants of King Jesus set apart for the Gospel - that pattern of teaching we obey. Jesus has claimed our allegiance. We follow our King on the path of righteousness He paved and that we talked about in Proverbs, and we do so with the

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“fear of the Lord” as the beginning of wisdom in all that we do in our relationships. Whereas the path of foolishness and sin leads to death, this righteous path leads to life because of the abundant grace of God by His Word and Spirit.

a. In Jesus where grace reigns in life.

c. These two categories of Enslavement Coincide with our understanding that there are really only Two Groups of people in the world with two very different destinies, and that is seen in their present living. But...

2. ...God's Grace Frees us from Deadly Enslavement to Sin (READ Verses 17-18):

a. We learned that enslavement to sin leads to death in verse 16. In *Verse 19*, Paul continues to use the imagery of slavery to help us understand, in our ignorance and idolatry, that enslavement to impurity leads to increased wickedness (aka: “lawlessness”). (**READ Verse 19a**) You see, Paul would never advocate that God's grace leads to lawlessness, wickedness, or doing bad things as our server falsely presumed. On the contrary, the Apostle now encourages those Who have been made alive in Christ to pursue righteousness leading to holiness (**READ Verse 19b “so now”**).

i. This “holiness” is our sanctification. It means being increasingly transformed into the image and likeness of God as we conform to the pattern of King Jesus. We grow more and more into the sanctified servants of Jesus - that we are - who are set apart for His Gospel to grow His kingdom and to live lives that honor Him. This is by God's abundance grace in Christ through our mutual encouragement in one another's faith; even amid suffering, because we are assured of eternal resurrection life and our ruling inheritance over the world.

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- ii. How do others see you: As a slave to sin being conformed to this world, or as a slave to righteousness being transformed into the pattern of your Savior and King whose life was centered on doing the will of His Father?
 - b. God's grace frees us from enslavement to sin that leads to increased lawlessness and death, and we are free to serve Jesus as King. Serving Jesus is enslavement to God, and this enslavement to God has wonderful benefits!
3. **Enslavement to God Leads to Eternal Life (Verses 20-23)**
- a. Wages = Sin = Death
 - i. Sin pays its slaves with the wages they earn, death.
 - 1. **READ Verses 20-21** These verses describe who we were as unbelievers dead in Adam under the reign of sin. We look back at who we were before God made us alive in Christ with shame.
 - a. Our **status**: We were slaves to sin and free from righteousness.
 - b. Our **fruit**: We reaped shame.
 - c. The **result**: Death.
 - 2. Unfortunately, this describes the unbeliever NOW; the non-Christian, even the person thinking they can be good.
 - 3. **READ Verse 23a**
 - b. Gift = God = Eternal Life
 - i. God freely gives His slaves the gift of eternal life.
 - 1. **READ Verse 22** This verse describes the reality of who we are as Christians now in Jesus under the reign of abundance grace. We can look forward with the assurance of eternal resurrected life in glorious bodies co-ruling the world with King Jesus.
 - a. Our **status**: We are free from sin and slaves to God.

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b. Our **fruit**: We are reaping holiness.

c. The **result**: Eternal Life

2. Fortunately, as Christians, we enjoy all this because of the work of Jesus. Therefore, we work for Him joyfully by spreading the Gospel of His death for our sins and His resurrection for our freedom so those presently in Adam where sin reigns in death can be delivered into Christ as Members of His Kingdom where grace reigns in eternal life that begins now and is assured for the future.

As Christians, we are called to use our freedom as obedient slaves to righteousness; because, it brings holiness and results in eternal life as a gift of God. Christians are free from sin to do as we ought to do for our good and God's glory. Because of God's gift of righteousness that we receive by faith, we now obey from our heart the pattern of teaching which reveals Jesus as King Whom we serve as slaves of God.

In today's Collect, we asked God, to Whom we are now enslaved, to look upon our heart desires and to be our defense against all our enemies. Let us pray, "As we have looked at today's passage from Romans, we give thanks to You, Lord God, that we have a desire to obey, from our hearts, the pattern of teaching that has now claimed our allegiance. May Your Word search our hearts and convict us of any lingering sin, so we may repent and serve You as obedient slaves assured by Your promise of eternal life. Holy Spirit, fill us with Your abundant loving grace, so we may be slaves to righteousness and grow in holiness, especially during this season of Lent. Lord and King Jesus, You are the strong man in Whom we take refuge. In Your mercy, defend us against all our enemies, keep us on the path of righteousness You paved for us, and deliver us from every evil". AMEN.