

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

March 29, 2023

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

*The Letter to the Romans*

*The Righteousness of God*

Text – Romans 6:15 - 23 – *The Doctrine of Sanctification, continued – Whom Do You Serve?*

### Introduction

We are continuing the subject of sanctification in this second part of chapter six. We have already seen in the first fourteen verses that we are to “reckon” ourselves dead to sin, and if we are dead to our old, sinful flesh, then we can also reckon ourselves alive to walk in newness of life, through the power of the resurrected Christ.

Illustration – When Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water, he could do so only in direct proportion to his faith in Christ. He faltered and sank when his faith weakened due to the storm and the violence of the waves. His ability to stand firm on the surface of the water was consistent with his faith in God. Our ability to walk in newness of life will be proportional to our faith in Christ as well. When the Bible tells us to reckon that we are dead to sin and reckon that we are alive to walk in newness of life, it is based on our belief that it is so. Belief determines behavior. If you believe that the new nature within you is not due to regeneration by the indwelling and omnipotent Holy Spirit of God, you will constantly be instead yielded to your old sinful flesh.

Now, in this second half of the chapter, Paul will personify sin, and liken it to a master. We had no choice but to serve sin before we were saved, but now that we are new creatures in Christ, and have a new nature, we can choose to no longer yield to the old master, sin, but instead, now yield to righteousness through the presence and power of a new Master, the Holy Ghost of God.

*"14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14)*

Verse 14 tells us that sin shall not have dominion over us anymore. It doesn't say that sin should not have dominion over us, it says that it shall not, meaning that God's grace is more powerful than the flesh, and the forces of the world and the devil combined.

I. **Before Salvation We Were Slaves to Sin (vs. 15 – 18)**

*"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." (Romans 6:15)*

This is the second time that this question was asked and answered in this chapter, though there are slight differences. In v. 1, Paul asked, "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound", which was also like the hypothetical objection he raised in Romans 3:5 – 8. Basically, Paul was diffusing the concept that the more we sin, the more grace we receive. Paul's rebuttal to this argument is that even though we are forgiven from sin, we don't have a license to sin. Our freedom from the penalty of sin also frees us from the power or authority of sin, which frees us to serve God.

*"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16)*

The idea here is that if we are yielded to sin, we are still sin's slaves. Either we belong to sin, or we belong to Christ. Let me illustrate it this way:

A bully controls a schoolyard. He keeps everybody under his thumb, and nobody can break free from his grip because he is the most powerful kid in the yard. But all of a sudden, a new kid comes to the school who is tougher than the bully, and not only does the bully have no power over him, but this new kid also provides protection to the other kids. The bully has lost all his authority because there is a greater power in the schoolyard. The bully is no longer the master, but he is not kicked out of the yard, either. The new kid encourages the other kids to do right and not yield to the will of the bully, but he does not force them. Now, for a kid to conform to the will of the bully, they must do so voluntarily. The bully is our old sin nature, and the new kid is the Holy Spirit of God within us. We must choose to sin once we are saved, but we are not compelled to do so, because sin is no longer the master. The devil, the world, and even our flesh cannot force us to yield to sin. We do so by our own choice.

Is Christ your master? If He is, you should obey Him, and the more you have faith that He truly is your Lord, the more you will obey Him.

*"If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)*

*"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)*

***"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." (Romans 6:17)***

Paul now states that since they had believed, they were set free from the master of sin, and no longer are under compulsion to serve him.

Notice - "ye were the servants of sin":

*"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you:** but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)*

Notice the phrase, "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." This is a reference to their believing the gospel and placing their faith in Christ. The word "obeyed" in no way implies perfect obedience to the Law. Notice that this obedience is "from the heart".

*"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28-29)*

*"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36)*

***"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Romans 6:18)***

The saved are no longer the servants of sin because Christ has made them free. This is both positional and practical. Positionally, we are completely righteous, but practically, we are new creatures who have a new nature, and we have within the Spirit of God who produces a desire within us to serve righteousness.

*"13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."  
(Philippians 2:13)*

## II. After Salvation We Are the Servants of Righteousness (vs. 19 – 20)

***"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."*** (Romans 6:19)

Paul states here that because we are completely sinless positionally, then we should yield our members (our individual parts - our minds, mouths, eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc.) to God.

*"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."* (Matthew 18:8-9)

Notice the phrase *"the infirmity of your flesh"*. This is a reference to our old, sinful, human nature. God knows that we are weak in the flesh, and He is encouraging us here to follow Him.

***"For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness."*** (Romans 6:20)

A lost person is free from righteousness because all that they can do is sin. Sin is not just the breaking of a specific law, it also includes acts or even thoughts that are not done in faith:

*"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."* (Romans 14:23)

Sin also includes not doing what we know to be right:

*"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17)

We are commanded to love (ἀγαπάω - agapaō) the Lord our God with all our hearts, but how can we do that if we do not have love in us. God is love, but He doesn't come to dwell in our hearts until after we are saved.

While a saved person can certainly still sin, a lost person cannot do anything but sin: he has no choice. A saved person does have a choice, however.

## III. Our Former Master Gave Us Death – Our New Master Gives Us Life (vs. 21 – 23)

***"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." (Romans 6:21)***

Notice the phrase – “whereof ye are now ashamed”. We ought not brag about what we used to do before we were saved, it ought to cause us to be ashamed.

The former life could only bring death, but through the Holy Spirit of God, we can now produce fruit that brings life.

John 15 speaks of the fruit that the branches (believers) can produce if connected to the vine (Christ). Fruit refers to what our lives produce. Galatians 5 refers to the fruit the Holy Spirit will produce through the believer that is walking in Him:

*"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."*  
(Galatians 5:16, 22-25)

***"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Romans 6:22)***

Notice here again, that it is a foregone conclusion that the believer’s life will produce fruit unto holiness, and everlasting life. True believers produce fruit, not that they will be perfect, because the old sinful flesh is still a reality as well.

***"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)***

This verse is one of the most familiar in the entire Bible. It is part of the *Romans Road* and is used by most soul winners to prove that our sin earns us death, but it also teaches that we can have hope through the free gift of Christ’s salvation. We commonly use the verse to teach justification, but God uses it here to conclude his arguments regarding sanctification. The context here uses this verse to teach that we who are believers and possessors of eternal life are no longer the servants of sin, because sin brings death. Conversely, eternal life is the fruit of those who have received the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. We are perfectly righteous positionally, and someday our sin nature will be gone completely, but for now we live in a sin-cursed world that is desiring to mold us into its image, along with the devil who wants to sift us like wheat, and a flesh that is in

bent on having its way. But thank God, *greater is he* (The Holy Spirit) *that is in [us], than he that is in the world.* (1 John 4:4)

*"6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"* (Philippians 1:6)

### **Concluding Practical Points**

- 1 The battle that rages within us is a good indicator that the Holy Spirit of God is indwelling us.
- 2 Don't think because you still have a desire at times to sin that you are not saved. Get concerned, however, if sin does not bother you, or if you have no desire to do right.
- 3 Galatians 5:16 tells us to: *"walk in the Spirit, and [we] shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."* This means that the more we fill our lives with the spiritual, the less we will be attracted to the carnal (the fleshly - sin). The carnal world with all its fleshly desires is filling our minds and homes with temptations to sin. We must separate from the world to limit its influence on our flesh.