

## Set Free Romans 6:15-23

**These verses magnify the liberating power of Jesus Christ.**

Paul once again drops his beloved “**once/but now**” contrasts. (see 17-18; 20-23)

- **An interview with Adam Muhtaseb**
- **No Christian testimony is boring.** Going from a slave to sin to a slave to righteousness is astonishing. It’s miraculous. **Let’s pray for eyes to see...**

Why did Paul writing Romans?

- **Situationally**, we have discussed how he is unifying this diverse church around the gospel so that Rome could be a launching pad for his mission to Spain.
- **Spiritually**, we might say, the purpose of Romans is given at the end of the book: **Romans 16:25** – “**may God strengthen you according to my gospel**”
- He has written this letter that they may be strengthened by his gospel. He couldn’t preach, but he could write– to strengthen them.
- I pray our study is doing that in you.

What Gospel truths are strengthening us?

Chapters 1-5 were mainly about “**justification**” by faith.

- We are declared righteous by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- We are **saved from the penalty of sin**.
- That should strengthen you!
- Justification by faith alone is a **one-time declaration**.
- **We can't be any more justified than we are.**

Chapters 6–8 now deal with the doctrine of “**sanctification**.”

- Sanctification is the **lifelong process** of being transformation into the likeness of Christ.
- We are being saved **from the power of sin**.
- A good bit of Romans 8 will deal with glorification – **we will be saved from the very presence of sin**.
- **Do you have this kids? Justification, Sanctification, Glorification?**

**All of this should strengthen you – and fill your affections with love for and praise to God.**

Still looming in the background is Paul’s provocative statement about God’s *justifying* grace:

- “**where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord**” (5:20-21).
- In **chapter 6**, he’s **defending** and **explaining** grace.

**Whenever you exalt grace, questions inevitably follow.**

- Some interpret Christian liberty **as license to sin.**
- The Apostle Paul was well aware of this view. Remember **Rom 3:8?** (If sin brings more grace, and glorifies God for his grace, then why not sin a lot?!)
- **But that's the abuse of grace.** It's a misunderstanding of grace and Christian liberty.

**Christian liberty does not mean that you are free to do whatever you want to do.**

**Christian freedom means that you are free to do what God wants you to do.**

**Because God has set you free from sin's *penalty*, and given you power over sin's present *dominion*, you are now free to serve God wholeheartedly.**

### **5 Truths that Should Clarify Grace and Strengthen the Christian**

#### **#1: Grace is not a license to sin (6:15)**

**6:14:** "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

**6:15:** "Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?"

- Answer: "**By no means**" (*me genoito*)
- A thousand times "no!"
- **That grace is a license to sin is morally and spiritually absurd!**

We are *not* "under law"

- We have been removed from the old Mosaic era.
- **We were guilty law-breakers.**
- **We couldn't keep the law.**
- **And the law actually intensified sin (3:20; 4:15; 5:20).**

We are "under grace."

- We have entered the new era in which we have been declared righteous by grace.
- Christ kept the law fully, died in our place.
- Christ is our righteousness.
- We **don't fear** the penalty of sin, and **we have power** to overcoming remaining sin.
- "God is at work in us to will and work according to His good pleasure."
- Grace is not just a **gift** but a **power!** We have power to live in righteousness.
- **Grace not only justifies, but also transforms.**

- Grace gives us new “**want tos.**” It changes our **desires.**
- **There’s a willing obedience that comes from a new heart and a renewed mind.**

The **Exodus account** is the background of much of this chapter.

The Israelites were freed from Egyptian bondage, but they were **not just freed from something** – **they were freed for something; namely, to serve God!**

- In Nairobi, I met a guy named, “Let my people go.” I said, “Come on, is your brother’s name, “Strike the Rock?” He said, “No my brother is named Son stand still!” I’m not sure he was telling the truth; I think he just wanted me to buy a picture. He kept saying, “Come see ...not to buy, but for your eyes.”

“Let my people go” is what Moses said, and **we know the better Moses, the Lord Jesus.** Through his death and resurrection, he ushered in a new Exodus.

- He made us a new people, and we delight to serve our God now.

Grace is not a license to sin.

Grace has liberated us from sin, and set us free to serve God.

## #2: You cannot serve two Masters (6:16)

The metaphor of **slavery** dominates these verses – words related to it are **used 8 times.**

- Paul is **not condoning** slavery here, but assuming a familiarity with it, and is saying he's using an analogy to make a point (v. 19).
- The point: **a slave serves his or her master.**

**The Master we obey is evidence of whose we are.**

- You can serve **Sin**, or “**righteousness**” (v. 18-19)/ “**God**” (v. 22).
- Jesus: “**Every person who commits sin is a slave to sin**” (**John 8:34**)
- **Schreiner: “Those who think that freedom is attained by jettisoning obedience to God opt for sin as their lord.”**

Sin doesn’t bring freedom; it’s slavery/bondage/prison.

- “**The Merida’s house was like a concentration camp! 6am get up. 6:30 eat breakfast. 6:40, Bible study.**” He’s a bit dramatic. (His brother, who didn’t get to stay all night said, “I want to go to the concentration camp!”)
- He preferred a different Master.
- Now, he **couldn’t live in two houses at one time!**
- And he had to obey the Master of each home.

Paul says here there are **only two options.**

- One is actually like an enslavement camp
- The other involves freedom and fulfillment.
- **Being a slave to righteousness/God, doesn't mean *slavish fear*, but child-like love, obeying with a glad heart.**

Jesus: "No man could serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24).

- Paul, like Jesus, is emphasizing **the impossibility of compromise.**
- Here are your two options: sin or God. It cannot be both.
- Paul shows us that **everyone is a slave to sin before they become believers in Christ.**
- **They are in bondage of sin.**
- **We were not all slaves to the same sin, but we were all alienated from God.**

Titus 3:3

<sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Please understand Paul is not saying that one who has submitted to the Lordship of Jesus **will never commit a sin** (just wait to Romans 7:7ff)

- **Rather, we are no longer under condemnation and no longer in bondage to sin.**

**Christian: You are not a slave to sin, so don't live like you are!**

**The Outcomes** - Paul drops this in here, but develops it later in the passage in 21-23...

- **Being slaves to sin results in death.**
  - Death here is more than physical death: the loss of everything eventually.
- **An obedient servant of God leads to righteousness.**

Look at this phrase again, "**Do you not know?**"

- Before you **do something**, you need to **know something**: who you are.
- **Many don't have the patience to stop doing, and begin internalizing the gospel.**
- **Slow down, and think, read, internalize, put the phone away, stop and think.**
- **The results of the failure to meditate on the gospel are disastrous.**
- **It's easier to be busy than internalize Romans.**
- But this is how we are **strengthened**. By knowing who we are.

**#3: God freed us from slavery to Sin (6:17-18)**

**17A: This little outburst of thanksgiving is very important!!**

**17b:** “once slaves but have become obedient from the heart”

**How did we get free? God did it!**

**18a:** “having been set free from sin...”

- **God in His grace** has broken the shackles of sin, and so we glorify Him.
- **“Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty I’m free at last!”**
- **By his death, Jesus has destroyed the enslavement camp and rescued us.**

One of the signs of conversion is that **you give thanks to God** -- all the time.

- **You love Him.**

### **The Romans’ Testimony (17-18)**

**Conversion (17b).** “have become obedient **from the heart**”

- The **aurist tense** points to **the decisive act** of obedience (an obedience that springs from faith, 1:5) **when they turned to God.**
- **He’s speaking of their conversion.**
- Paul does not use the expression **“from the heart”** anywhere else.
- **“He’s clearly referring to a deeply felt experience, one that is “voluntary and sincere” (Hodge).**
- **Conversion is not just a mental ascent to the facts; but a heart transformation.**
- The prophets spoke of this regarding **the new covenant** that would come (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Jer 31:33)

**17c:** “to the standard of **teaching** to which you were committed” – or “to which you were handed over” (CSB)

- This **“teaching”** refers to teaching of **the gospel, accepted Christian teaching.** (cf., 1 Cor 15:1f)
- **“This is not seen as a series of bright ideas some early believers thought up, but as God-given teaching which grips people.” (Morris)**
- **“Pattern”** carries the idea of being **“molded.”** The Scripture **forms** us.

**“You were handed over to it.”**

- **God delivered us from slavery to sin to a new pattern of teaching.**
- **“Our obedience to this teaching is the outgrowth of God’s action of handing us over to it” (Moo).**
- **Being a Christian involves being under the authority of Christian teaching.**

This verse reminds us of the importance of sound teaching, theology, expository preaching, catechisms, creeds, gospel-centered songs, good books, etc.

- **Kenya: “Abraham’s Church” – pastor had multiple wives, as did the men...**

Paul calls this becoming **“a slave of righteousness.” (18)**

- We are free from the condemning power of sin, **and** from its enslaving power.
- **Now we give ourselves to God.**

Paul uses the Christian idea of freedom more than anyone else in the NT.

- Galatians speaks much about this doctrine.
- This freedom is **not** designed to make us "**self-centered**" but **slaves of righteousness**.
- **Conversion should lead to a concern for others and ultimately for God's glory.**

#### #4: Living out your new identity involves daily sacrifice (6:19)

**19:** Paul uses this phrase "human terms" 3 times in **Corinthians**.

- He is explaining why he's using an illustration. It's simply a teaching tool.

#### **19b: "just as so now"**

"Now" is an important word here.

- **Now that Christ has come, now that atonement has been made, now that they have a new identity, now that they are living in a time of eschatological significance, they must live differently.** (cf., **Galatians 2:20**)

#### **Paul challenges believers to live out their identity.**

You used to **live passionately for sin**, "presented your members for impurity to lawlessness."

- How many of you could say that about your former life? You were passionate about sin, folly, and the things of this world? You were creative, crafty, good at it?
- But now you must live passionately **for God** by "presenting your members to righteousness."
- **This is a repeat of verse 13 essentially.**
- It's a call **to act.**
- It's a call against **passivity**. Sanctification involves action.

This "presentation of our members" involves a **holy sacrifice**.

- Romans 12:1-2; Romans 6:12
- Holiness involves offering yourself to God **as an act of worship**.

**Rom 6:12**, "Don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies to make you obey its passions."

#### **1. Remember who you are!**

- In the book of Exodus, they wanted to return to Egypt.
- That's a great picture. We often want to go back, but we must remember who we are and that have been delivered from that life.

#### **2. Realize that you're in a war.** It's a war on the **passions**.

- **“The Village”**
- **Passions are expressed in actions (members)**
- **What would these passions involve?**
  - **Greed**
  - **Materialism**
  - **Sexual Immorality**
  - **Addictions to Substances**
  - **Anger**

<sup>49</sup> Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. (Ezek 16:49)

- **Does this not sound familiar?**
- **Slaves to pride, slaves to food, slaves to comfort, and an unconcern for the poor and needy.**
- **We must fight these passions, and pursue humility, self-control, a life of sacrifice, and a real concern for those in need.**
- **Those would be the marks of a slave to righteousness.**

### **3. Realize you are not powerless!**

- **You have entered a new relationship.**
- **You have new power to fight sin and walk in holiness.**

### **4. Realize this war won't end in this life – “sanctification.” (19)**

- **We believe in progressive sanctification, growth in Christlikeness.**
- **We offer ourselves daily to God as an act of worship.**
- **He is worthy of our lives.**

### **#5: Remember the superior benefits of serving God instead of Sin (20-21)**

In case you are tempted to think that it's better to serve sin instead of God, Paul makes it clear that **being a slave to God is better than being a slave to sin.**

**V. 20:** Paul reflects back to **their pre-Christian days.**

**They had been “free with respect to righteousness.”**

**Morris, not Samuel, but Leon!:**

"This did not mean that they had never done anything that was right (evil people do good things). But it meant that they were not subject to the rule of righteousness; they saw no compulsion to do what was right. Their freedom was a grim one."

**V. 21:** There are corresponding fruits to serving one of these two masters.

**A. Slaves of Sin: “shame” and “death”**

- When they were the slaves of sin they were not ashamed of those things (cf. Jer. 8:12).
- **A mark of a sin-dominated life is shamelessness.**
- When they became Christians they saw things different.

## 22: The Superior Benefits

### B. Slaves of God: “sanctification” and “eternal life.”

"But now"

- Being a Christian means that all things are made new (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).
- “You **have** your fruit”
- **There is no such thing as a Christian who does not bear fruit**
  - John 15 Jesus speaks of “fruit”, “more fruit”, and “much fruit”
- Paul does not say what the fruit is, but only what it leads to **sanctification**, the process of becoming holy.

### Eternal Life

The end of it all – eternal life... This leads to verse 23

V. 23 – This is a fitting conclusion to the whole chapter.

- **Sin pays wages.**
- **What God offers is not payment for works rendered; but rather a gift in the form of eternal life.**
- **Eternal life is undeserved.**
- “Gift” vs. “wages” reappears again – Rom 4:4-5; 5:15-17

The whole contrast made here reflects much of Romans (Lloyd Jones):

The Master That Is Served	Sin vs. God
The Outcome of That Service	Death vs. Eternal Life
How That Outcome Is Reached	A “Wage” Earned vs. A “Gift” Received

So, whom do you serve?

Do you see the outcome of that service?

Will you receive the gift of eternal life?

How do all these benefits come to us? – “**in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”

Our Master is full of grace.

Our Master laid down his life for us.

In Him, there is liberty and fulfillment and eternal life.

