

Romans

Romans Chapter Six

Romans 6:16-19

May 16, 2010

This is lesson number **41** in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Title: “The Gift of God is Eternal Life”

As we come to the end of Chapter Six, I have the same sense of awe that I have had after each of the previous chapters. Over the past forty or more years I have taught verse by verse studies from Romans at least five times. However, in this current series on Romans, the Holy Spirit has opened my understanding far deeper than ever before. Chapter Six of Romans is one of the richest treasures of truth in all of God’s Holy Book and I am encouraged to have made this fresh study. At the same time I am almost sad that we have come to the end of it. It will probably be the same with the next ten chapters.

The lesson for me is that no matter how much you read and study God’s Word there is always more to learn. Besides the unspeakable blessing of seeing Jesus face-to-face, I believe that heaven will be learning more and more of the grace of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ; endless worship without the distraction of sin.

Read 5:20 - 6:23

Rom 6:20-23

20 **For** when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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The “For” in verse 20 connects and explains what has already been stated.

Let me give you an example: “Children if you play in the street you might get hit by a car. **For** cars run on streets. Therefore, do not play in the street!”

“Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

“Certainly not!”

For those who have **died** to sin can no longer live in it.

For those who sin without repentance are **slaves** to sin.

For having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness to holiness.

Verse 19 ends with the exhortation:

“... so now present your members as **slaves of righteousness.**”

That is where the “for” in verse 20 picks up and verses 21-23 gives us **three arguments** to settle the matter; that a Christian cannot continue in sin:

- 1) Verse 20: States the way we were as a slave to sin;
- 2) Verses 21-22: Gives the comparison of the fruit produced by the two masters;
- 3) Verse 23: Shows the end or result of the service to one of the two masters.

1) **Verse 20: States the way we were as a slave to sin;**

When I was a slave to sin the main concern that I had was of being found out. As far as true righteousness was concerned, I was free. It was not that I had no moral code at all, because God has placed natural law in each of us. But through sin, we can dull the conscience until even what is inherent in us can be dulled. I was like Adam after he sinned; I wanted to determine good and evil for myself. It was very easy for me to see the speck in another person’s eye while completely ignoring the timber in my own eye. Righteousness for me was not defined by the Word of God but by what I thought. And my thoughts were entirely selfish and self-serving.

When I was 14 years old I followed some of my friends and was baptized in a Baptist Church. But to my honest recollection I never had a worshipful thought of

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Jesus Christ. The only time I said, “Jesus Christ,” was to use it in blasphemous cursing.

I was as lost and as much a slave to sin as the most wicked man you ever heard about. And so, I was “free in regard to righteousness.” Because Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God and without Him there is no true righteousness.

It is easy enough for a person such as myself to see the degradation and filth in which I reveled as a slave to sin. But what about the nice person who has behaved herself or himself all their life and really doesn't think that they are as bad as all that.

Something from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says it better than anything else that I have read on the matter.

“The Apostle makes the statement that this is true of all people who are not Christians, irrespective of how good or how moral they may be. It is a universal statement about all who do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and who are not Christian. He says categorically that all such are ‘free from righteousness.’
{verse 20}

“This troubles many, and they ask, ‘How can this be true, because every non-Christian does not live in the gutters of life? They are very good moral men, and there are unbelievers who do excellent things.’ The Apostle's assertion therefore becomes one of the best ways of differentiating between morality and a merely ethical religion on the one hand, and Christianity on the other hand. I sometimes think that this is one of the most vital distinctions at the present time {1972}, for the reason that there is no question at all but the greatest enemies of the Christian truth today are so-called good, moral, ethical, religious people who are not Christians. They are the people to whom I have referred who say, ‘Yes, I believe in the Christian ethic but am not interested in the doctrine.’ They are ultimately the greatest enemies of the Christian faith and are to be exposed as such.”

So says Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

That is a still greater problem in the religious world today. Religious pluralism has become the accepted rule. Any religion or no religion is thought to be a way to be right with God. Even in what passes for Christianity, there seems to be few lost people. Many have found the broad way that leads to destruction and the broad

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way can run right through a Baptist Church. Where is repentance and godly sorrow? Where is commitment to meet with the saints? There are many who believe that they are saved who are still slaves to sin.

One of the ways that I have used over the years to help people see the Gospel is to urge them to be honest with themselves and to answer the question:

“Would God be just if He sent you to hell?”

No one but the Holy Spirit can convince you that you deserve to be in hell. Any one who rejects the proposition that they really ought to be in hell has never seen their just condemnation and the one who is not condemned sees no need to be justified. They have a righteousness of their own imagination. The person who is not justified by God, is not a slave to righteousness; but is still a slave to sin. Would that God the Holy Spirit would make this true for you if you cannot honestly agree with God that you are justly condemned!

Every time in this series of studies I have told you theme of the Letter to the Romans. It is important that you remember this theme when you read Romans, or indeed, any part of the Bible.

So someone tell me, what is the theme of the Book of Romans?

**The theme of the Book of Romans is
the Righteousness of God in Jesus Christ!**

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ”

Later, when we get to Chapters 10 and 11, Paul teaches us about how God deals with the Jews. But Cf. **Romans 10:1-3**

10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

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And so those who are slaves of sin are free from the righteousness of God because they are ignorant of God's righteousness and vainly attempt to establish a righteousness of their own.

2) Verses 21-22: Gives the comparison of the fruit produced by two masters: The master of sin, or God as our Master.

Before we examine fruit, notice again how Paul guards our minds against the error that he is dealing with throughout Chapter Six.

Verse 22,

"... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God,...."

Grace can never lead to license. Cf. Jude 4, 10

When we are made free from sin, we are instantly obedient to righteousness.

Now to look at fruit. Jesus warned about false prophets and said we could know them by their fruits. Matthew 7:13-23

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

context!

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 **You will know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 **Therefore by their fruits you will know them.**

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?

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Again we will look at what Jesus preached. Where does the bad fruit come from? Bad trees produce bad fruit. Slaves of sin are the bad trees.

Matthew 15:10-20

10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." 12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" 13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch." 15 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us." 16 So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 **For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man,** but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

And the end of that way of life is death.

Paul, in Galatians, gives us a comparison of bad fruit and good fruit:

Gal 5:16-26

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. **[Romans Seven is a commentary on Gal 5:17. In fact Romans is Paul's commentary on Galatians]** 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 **Now the works of the flesh** are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love,** joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

There is no punctuation marks in Greek so we depend on the translators. One suggestion is that all of the traits that follow love are a parenthetical explanation of love.

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But the fruit of the Spirit is love, {joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.}

Borrowing another thought from Lloyd-Jones: verse 22 defines what it means to be a Christian; he has been changed – “But”

Remember Romans 3:21? But now! Is there a “but now” for you?

Let me be cautious here, someone who says they have always been a Christian may be the moralist we talked about earlier. Jesus warned about the “whole who have no need of a physician.” What I am teaching is that this text and many others demands a change from being a slave of sin to being a slave of God.

Let’s take an example: Suppose someone offends you. Something is said or done that you don’t agree with. What do you do? Do you pout? Tell other people how you were mistreated? Hold a grudge? Maybe even quit church?

Or, do you obey the Lord who gave us an infallible way to handle offenses.
Matthew 18:15-18

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him **alone**. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you **one or two more**, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, **tell it to the church**. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

What you do when you are offended will reveal whether you are a slave of sin or a slave of righteousness. Do you handle the matter in your own way or do you obey the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let’s talk about holiness or sanctification. Holiness is not a religious experience, some estatic wave of emotion. I don’t wish to be harsh, but jumping around and shouting, “I’m sanctified, I’m sanctified,” is not the real thing. That wave of emotion will go away. Holiness will guide you day by day.

Will you always do the right thing immediately? No, but you will not persist in stubborn resistance to God’s word. The Holy Spirit who dwells in you will not permit you to resist Him to the point of complete failure.

Holiness, then, is simply a life devoted to obedience to God; to be the slave of God, living in Galatians 5 with the fruit of the Spirit.

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In a way, I don't want to get to verse 23, because it means we will be leaving Chapter Six. I have already confessed that I have personally been strengthened by chapter Six. It leaves us with only one of two conclusions about ourselves:

Each of us, especially this preacher, must come face-to-face with who is our master - sin or God?

Verse 23 is one of the greatest Gospel verses in the Bible.
It is the Gospel in one verse.

Verse 23 is a summary of Chapter Six. Paul, in two powerful and irrefutable arguments, has completely destroyed the idea that a Christian can continue in sin.

The **first argument**, in verses 2-14, he shows that a Christian cannot continue in sin because we died to sin. When we were baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ Jesus, regenerated and born again; we died with Christ. Since Christ died to sin and we are in Christ, we too have died to sin.

This is UNION WITH CHRIST!

The **second argument**, in verses 16-22, Paul proves that a Christian cannot continue in sin because we who were slaves to sin are now slaves to righteousness.

We have a NEW MASTER!

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Verse 23 serves as a bookend, it virtually repeats 5:21, which is the other bookend.

Rom 5:21

...so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rom 6:23

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

3) Verse 23: Shows the end of the service to one of the two masters.

Each one of us has one of two and only one of two possible ends; death or life. Death and life have various meanings. As we assemble here all of us have physical life and we all have spiritual life. But physical death is not what the Apostle is referring to here.

At the end of our physical life our spiritual life will continue forever. It is not a question of how long your spirit will live, the question is what will be the quality of that existence.

We will all live as long as God lives!

So the question is not are you a moral person, but who is your master, sin or God?

Or, on what have you built your house, sand or rock?

Have you entered the broad way that leads to destruction or have you entered the narrow gate and follow on the narrow way?

Do you serve mammon or God?

Are you a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness?

These two possible outcomes are completely different.

The word “wages” is a Greek military word that means “rations.” In the military, rations are food and a little money. Basically, rations are what you earn. You will be rewarded appropriately for your service. The wages of sin is death.

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Cf. Genesis 2:17

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**"

The wages of sin is death.

Cf. Rev 20:7-15

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death.** 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The wages of sin is death.

Justification is by faith alone but judgment is according to works.

The second death is death to God's presence. Eternal existence in torment, beyond human language to describe, and never to know the blessings of God evermore!

But now! But now there is eternal life! And eternal life begins when we are born again, baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ Jesus.

Sin is rewarded with what is earned, the wages of sin is death.

The only thing that God owes me or anyone else is death, what we earned!

But eternal life is a gift. If you earn it, it is not a gift.

That is message of grace!

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Anything that you imagine that you can do to earn God's grace is self-righteous works that will lead to death. The wage of sin is death.

Grace is a gift.

There is no Mormon heaven and another Islam heaven and yet another Hindu heaven. And bad news for the Jehovah's Witness; no annihilation!

There is only one God and there is only one heaven.

There is life only in Jesus Christ and that life is a gift from God.

Eternal life is always expressed in relation to Jesus Christ.

Verse 6:23 ... but the gift of God is eternal life in **Christ Jesus our Lord**.

Verse 5:21 ... even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through **Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Verse 6:11 ... but alive to God in **Christ Jesus our Lord**.

John 17:1-3

17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 And this is **eternal life**, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Look again at our verse 6:23

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

Verse 23 sums it all up. It doesn't matter who your parents were, it doesn't matter how many times you have rededicated your life to God, it matters not if or how many times you have been baptized in water, it matters not if you have been confirmed, or done any other religious act, as appropriate as those things may be.

The test for you and for me is how is our life characterized right now.

Who or what is our master?

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How can anyone, man, woman, boy, or girl listen to what has been taught:

disobedience and sin and eternal death;
obedience and holiness and eternal life;

and continue in sin?

The only answer is that they are dead in trespasses and sins.

How can you explain the life of those who follow obedience to life eternal?

GRACE!

Next week Romans Seven The Law: It's Purpose and It's Limits