

I sometimes get a kick out churches that advertise “relevant preaching” as one of their selling points. It seems to me if the preaching is Biblical and accurate it pretty well has to be relevant.

This morning we have the epitome of a relevant sermon, not because the sermon is so good but the scripture is so relevant to day to day living.

Paul answers for the second time the question- “Why not sin?”

As Christians we will be tempted to sin. That is a certainty.

We also know that all true Christians will persevere. So we can easily think that if I am a believer I can say yes to the temptation in front of me and it is no big deal.

Paul will tell us in this passage why it is such a big deal. He will also tell us how we should think about it.

We can pretty well guaranty that all of us will have opportunity to make this teaching relevant to our lives this week.

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

First let’s look at the differences in the question in verse 1 and verse 15. Verse 1 asks, “ Shall we continue in sin **that grace may abound?**” Verse 15 asks Shall we sin **because we are not under law but under grace?**

Verse 1 asks “should we continue IN sin?” The present verb tense means should we sin and go on sinning so that grace can keep abounding over the sin. In verse 15 It says, Shall we sin and the verb tense is future and would imply “should we sin, in any given case or at all, because we aren’t under the law but under grace?” The immediate answer is the same, but the question is a little different. The way I see it Paul revisits the idea that some would have that it is ok to continue sinning. The first argument was directed to people who may have thought this because grace was abounding over sin. The second argument is to people would believe that since a believer isn’t under the law they can do whatever they want.

Verses 1-14 removes the ground that mysticism could live on. Gnosticism would try to argue that my state of being has changed, my spirit has changed, but I live in flesh and flesh is the problem. That passage shows that logically, since our position has changed, it is completely congruent and logically necessary that our operations will change. It cannot be otherwise, given the significance and extent and power of the change. If we are dead unto sin we simply cannot live continually as if we are not. The positional change cannot **be** and **not be** at the same time. A person cannot mystically be changed but

not changed in reality. They cannot be changed in spirit but not in practice. The end result of the repercussions of justification is that sin **does not** and **will not** and **cannot** have dominion over us. That is what verses 1-14 accomplish.

Having heard the logic in 1-14 a legalistic type of person could say, but if I am not under the law, if God will no longer condemn a believer for violating it... then really what is to stop me from sinning?

Before we go any further, note that the question contains the word "law", but the word "law" is not used again until 7:1. That is odd. My opinion is that being under the law is only a problem if a person is in Adam and in sin. So Paul jumps immediately to talking about being in sin. If a person is in Christ, law is not a problem. In fact, where the law addresses how a believer should live, the law is very helpful. But if a person is in a state of sin, the law is a noose around one's neck.

Let's pause here and consider what it means to be under the law.

My tendency is to over-simplify to the point of error. Mike is more thorough than I am so that provides some protection. I have abandoned an illustration I had originally wanted to use and reduced this teaching down to what is very easily known. The thing we know for sure is that when a person is in Adam and under the law, they stand condemned. They face an eternity of condemnation. The law condemns them.

Just as certain, a believer is not under the condemnation of the law. We know this from Chapter 8:1- 8 There is therefore now **no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, (now who are in Christ Jesus? Here is a little more definition- those "who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2For the **law** of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me **free** from the **law** of **sin and death**. 3For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, **God did** by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He **condemned** sin in the flesh, 4that the **righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled** in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7Because the **carnal mind** is enmity against God; for **it is not subject to the law of God**, nor indeed can be. 8So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

So, why should a believer not live however he feels like living? How do we answer that question this morning? If there is no condemnation for a believer,

what is to stop me from sinning? This idea would be a real dilemma for a legalist because a legalist avoids sin in order to avoid the penalty. He does good things to win a reward and avoids bad things to avoid the punishment. He tends to think that his actions earn his response from God. So when Paul says that we are free from the law's condemnation, when we are no longer under the law, the legalist has lost all his motivation to obey. His world has just fallen apart. You could just see a legalist getting very cynical at this point. Paul's reasoning would immediately show the legalist that all of the reasons that he had been obeying God up to this point were completely flawed. Those reasons have nothing to do with the righteousness of God revealed in Christ.

Paul uses the same word for "Certainly Not" as he did in verse 1. It is "no" in the strongest of terms. We must not commit sins in the future, even if we are tempted to reason that we will no longer be condemned for the sins we commit.

Why not? What is Paul's reasoning?

¹⁶Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

I think the easiest way to put this is that we cannot casually and persistently commit sins in the future because of our positional change in the past.

Paul starts with "Do you not know?" and probably there were those that did not know this truth about the Christian life even though it is kind of obvious about life in general. This is a truism. You can tell who a slave's master is. Just watch who the slave obeys. There is no mystery there. And Paul is making it simple for those asking the question in verse 15. It's like saying you can easily determine which company a man works for. Just follow him in the morning and see where he punches in on the time clock. This isn't exactly rocket science.

You show who's slave you are by which Master you serve. There are only 2 masters available- Satan or God, rebellion to God or submission to God, sin or obedience. We will consistently present ourselves to one of them and that will reveal our master.

We also see the nature of the choices. When sin is our master it leads to death. When God is our master whom we obey, it leads to righteousness. It leads to the righteous living that is a result of the imputed righteousness we

have already been given. Paul doesn't leave a third option of a positional slave to God that doesn't result in righteousness.

See too, that it is a process. We present ourselves, which leads to what happens to us, both along the way and at its end destination. When a non believer serves sin, he is dead while he lives and eventually eternal punishment in death.

When a believer submits to God he will live more righteously and in the end, at glorification is made 100% righteous. His or her righteous living will finally match the imputed righteousness of Christ. When a person is justified God will deliver His own righteousness to that person progressively through life, and then completely in an instant sometime after death.

Note too, that we all present ourselves. This is not something that happens to us. It is something we do. It is an act of the will. It is a volitional act. Some would teach that our wills are not engaged. They would say our wills are robots of God's greater will. But here we see humans choosing to present themselves to their masters. We cannot change our masters by choosing, but choosing reveals the master that we have.

¹⁷But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

God be thanked- Paul is very clear that all the credit for the change that happens to a believer belongs to God. It is God that should be thanked for the believers obedience. It is not the believer that should be thanked. The change did not come from the believer. It came from God. No one comes to Christ except Christ draws them. If you are a believer, it is God that should be thanked for this.

Though you were slaves to sin. The tense of the word "were" here means a continual unbroken pattern. We were habitually and actively slaves to sin. We were very congruous in our position and operation. The slavery here doesn't refer to their position as much as to their operation. That is what every unbeliever does. They will not describe themselves that way. But the Holy Spirit doesn't even hesitate to make this description. Every non believer is a slave to sin. And that is every one of our histories. Now, one would think that a slave to sin is beyond hope. Think about the word. Slave. This means that sin was our absolute master. And we were living in that condition. We would have been content to stay in that condition except that Christ intervened. He called us. He convicted us. He changed us.

you obeyed from the heart- When a person believes for justification, this is what happens. They obey from the heart. This is an impossibility to someone who is a slave to sin. But God does this miracle and changes us. We go from being slaves of sin to obeyers of God from the heart. How can that happen? God be thanked. It is only His work that would allow such a thing. And any true obedience after this point is more of the same. We will wrestle with the flesh. This obedience won't be on any kind of auto-pilot. But when a believer trusts God and believes God, they will obey from the heart, just like they did at their initial salvation. A believer is drawn to Christ and they cannot for long resist his draw. They want to obey, not because they are forced to. It is something inside of them put there miraculously. They will be conflicted. They will ebb and flow. But there is something in them that causes them to obey from the heart.

What did they obey? That form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Form- a figure formed by a blow or impression

the teaching which embodies the sum and substance of religion and represents it to the mind, manner of writing, the contents and form of a letter

So these Romans obeyed the sum and substance of the teaching of the gospel. They obeyed the heart of the gospel from their hearts.

And notice how important doctrine is. Some people will say, we like Jesus, it's just that doctrine stuff we don't like. Well Paul didn't think that way. Doctrine is what the Romans obeyed. It wasn't cold liturgy. It wasn't merely a confessional doctrine. They obeyed the sum and substance of the teaching of the gospel.

And note too, this is not the gospel that was delivered **to** them, although that would have been true. Surely the gospel was preached to the Romans. But that is not Paul's emphasis. Here it is the teaching to which **THEY WERE DELIVERED!**

When a believer is brought to Christ, he is delivered to the Gospel. The word for delivered here means this:

- 1) to give into the hands (of another)
- 2) to give over into (one's) power or use
- 2a) to deliver to one something to keep, use, take care of, manage

There is a sense that the Gospel was not delivered to us. We were delivered to **it**. That goes hard on the human ego. But that is how it is. God takes us and gives us to the care and power of the gospel. And he removes the controlling power of sin.

¹⁸And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Having been set free- this is the aorist tense. It is once and for all we have been set free. This is speaking of the position we are in in Christ. We are set free of sins power to control us. And that is in the past. Having been set free we became- This too is the aorist tense. This again is talking about our position. In justification we became positional slaves of righteousness. Christ bought us and we are his slaves. There may be times when we don't act like it but that doesn't change our ownership. Christ owns us and we are slaves of righteousness. We are owned by the righteousness of Christ.

The whole emphasis of this verse is to declare the miracle of our condition, the miracle of our position. We **have been** and **we became**. This is all done by Christ in the past.

¹⁹I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves *of* righteousness for holiness.

I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh- It may be that what Paul is saying is that being a slave of righteousness is an imagery that is necessary to make the point. There are other ways of describing this relationship and in much more positive terms. Normally Christians are not described as slaves to God. Scripture did not often use the idea of slavery in this way. Being spiritual slaves is only used in II Peter 2, and its focus is on slavery to sin.

II Peter 2: ¹⁸For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. ²⁰For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²²But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "*A dog returns to his own vomit,*" and, "*a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*"

Peter in this passage describes men who are free in some sense being entangled back into sin by influencers who are slaves of corruption. Slavery is

usually seen in a negative light. This teaching in Romans is, as far as I know, the first time that Christians are described as slaves to God.

Paul reduces our standing to a slavery to make the point about how our flesh works. Our flesh is weak. And the point Paul is making here is best understood by the concept of slavery.

How is it like slavery?

For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves *of* righteousness for holiness.

It is like slavery in that slaves serve their masters. And as a result, the service they give shapes them and defines them. The same is true of spiritual slavery.

Humans are always in the process of exercising their wills. Those who think otherwise are simply mistaken. Scripture says God directs our paths. It does not say that he forces our paths. When we leave the church parking lot this morning we can go left or right out of the driveway. We have that freedom to exercise our wills. He here says **just as you did, so do now**. What unbeliever would describe the deeds he did as being automatic pilot with no decision making of the person doing the sinning? When we lived as a slave to sin, we decided to sin. We sinned because we wanted to. We picked which kind of sin we liked best and decided to do it. The fact that we were not free to do otherwise was of no concern to us. We were deciding to go down a path even though, unknown to us, God says it was the only kind of path we could have gone down. Now he says, **just like you did that**, now live out the things that are true to your new nature. **Now** actively decide to use your body parts as servants of God. **Now** do the right things that your new nature gives you freedom to decide to do. Live as slaves of the condition that God finds acceptable. And we do it for holiness. The reason we present our members as slaves to righteousness is for holiness. The slavery displays a holy result. It displays a person set aside for God's purposes. And his purpose is righteousness revealed. Do you want to be holy? It isn't some mystical state. It is by **the process of presenting your members willingly, minute by minute, as slaves and servants of righteousness, slaves willing and enabled to do the right things**. As we present our members in that process, holiness is the result. We display operationally that which God has already declared positionally. We display a congruence of position and operation.

Presented- Proffered- very similar to our English word.

Slave- Duolos- A Voluntary or involuntary slave

Uncleanness- the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living

Now lets go back to the phrase- and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness. This is the exact opposite of righteousness for holiness. When we presented our members as slaves of uncleanness, we were exhibiting lawlessness. Lawlessness means illegality or violation of the law. We were under the law acting as if we had no law. And what was the result of that life? More and more lawlessness. We spiraled down. They may have been socially acceptable sins. Maybe they weren't. But we were getting worse and worse. We were breaking more laws. And the longer we went, the more we would break.

²⁰For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Remember Pauls question in verse 15? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Paul here reminds us that when we were under the law as a sinner we were free in regard to righteousness. Righteousness had no claim on us. Although we were tightly linked with the law, it wasn't declaring us righteous. It wasn't making us righteous. In fact, we had no righteousness. Righteousness had no link to us whatsoever. All our righteousness was like filthy rags. We were not under the dominion of righteousness. As slaves of sin we were enslaved to sin but we could not be righteous.

So what sense would there be in choosing to live in sin, to keep on sinning, as if we were free from righteousness. The whole gospel is righteousness revealed. Are we to chose a course of action that is anti-righteousness, free from righteousness? That is absurd. It is contrary to all reason.

This state of being is so opposite to the state that Christ has provided for us, why would we even think to operate in that sphere? I believe that is Paul's reasoning.

²¹What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death.

Fruit- that which originates or comes from something, an effect, result. When we are considering whether we should sin because we aren't under the law, we've got to ask these questions. When we were slaves to sin and continually lived in sin, what fruit did it produce? Were they things we were pleased about? Were they things we look back on with pride and admiration? No. The fruit was rotten. It is a part of our lives of which now we are ashamed. That ought to tell us something. Living in that slavery did not

produce anything good and worthwhile. We were a slave to it then. Isn't it absolutely absurd to go there by choice? Isn't it nutty to chose that destruction when we don't have to? And those things lead somewhere. We were on that course. They lead to death. By God's grace we are on a completely different path. How could we possibly go back? It is insane and it is incongruous.

²²But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Should we sin because we aren't under the law? No. Absolutely not. Why? When we are set free from sin, when we are slaves of God, we have different fruit. And this fruit has a different effect and a different end. It does not make us ashamed and lead to death. It makes us holy and leads to eternal life. It does only good things. It does only things we want. Why would we chose otherwise? Why would we chose those things that are against us? Given the change that has happened in a believer's life, the natural by product of our position is fruit to holiness. The stuff that comes out of who we are leads to doing what we do. We have fruit to holiness. We display by our actions that we are set apart by God. And the end of that path is life forever. The fruit of a sinful life is death. The fruit of a Godly life is life.

I think Paul is showing us that a person has to be an idiot to think that because a Christian Could Theoretically sin without condemnation, that they **would** or **should** sin. The risk of proving ourselves to be unregenerate is simply too great. If we had the Lamb's Book of Life and knew whose names were written in it, maybe this would be a logical risk. But we do not have that book. We have to base our assurance on that which we see. Scripture defines what a believer is like. As we see those things true about us we are assured of our standing. But when we live in rebellion like a non-believer, we have no assurance. Nor should we. And in the end, living in sin is completely counter to what a believer **IS**. Once the believer has tasted the fruit of holiness, to return to a life of sin is like Peter's quote of a dog returning to vomit or a pig returning to the mud. It won't happen to a true believer.

²³For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Wages- a soldier's pay, allowance- that part of the soldier's support given in place of pay [i.e. rations] and the money in which he is paid These wages that sin pays are dealt out a little at a time every waking moment. This isn't simply the end result. This is the daily stipend. Sin is dealing out a little bit

of death every day. That is what sin is good for. Now let's ask that question again. Why not sin since we are not under the law? Are we insane? Do we want the installments of death? Do we want the final installment of eternal death? No. A believer couldn't settle for that.

Notice too that is the wages of sin, not sins that is being spoken of here. It is talking about the position, not the operation. If a man is in sin, under sin, he will receive the wages of that condition. He will receive death.

A believer, instead of wanting to be again in the state of sin would by faith want the gift of God. The word for Gift here is charisma. It is a favor that one receives without any merit of his own. It is a gift of grace. And a believer will desire the eternal life that is offered in Christ. It is offered once and for all. Its effect will show evidence over the lifetime of a believer but he is once and for all destined for eternal life. It is not like sin in that he gets it's stipends a little bit at a time. Eternal life is the believer's possession. And he is given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee.

So this week, when temptation to sin knocks at our door, **why** should we **not sin**? Should we not sin because if a person is a believer and they sin, they will be condemned? No. That is **not** the reason to **not** sin.

Should we **not** sin because there is **not** enough grace to cover sin? No, that is not the reason we should not sin.

The reason that Paul is giving to not sin is because sin is so counter to that which a Christian is and what Christ is. An employee of Christ doesn't keep showing up at the Devil's workshop. They are not enlisted on the Devil's time clock. We are free from that life and it is so incongruent that it cannot even be imagined, none the less tolerated. The Devil is paying his wages of death every day. That is not the Christian's destiny or fortune. The believer has eternal life in Jesus Christ his Lord and he has that as his possession, now and forever.

The reason a believer does not live in sin is based on identity, who a believer **is** in Christ. As we reckon by faith **who we are, who's we are, and what possessions we have**, we cannot and must not live under sin's dominion. This is the essence of Paul's reasoning. So as we face temptation this week, will we refer back to what Paul has said?

We aren't Sin's slave. Why should we show up for service?

We were delivered to a teaching which we obeyed from the heart.

We were set free from sin and made to be slaves of righteousness.

We are no longer bearing that bad fruit that we were ashamed of.

We now have fruit to holiness and eternal life.

Sin's daily stipend is death and it dishes out eternal death in the end. How can we possibly choose it? When we have the gift of life promised to all who believe. How can we be so foolish as to serve sin for a second when it is so counter to who we are in Christ and what Christ has done for us?

I hope this will encourage us to walk obediently in the identity that we have been given in Christ.