

Romans 6:15-7:6  
Judges 2  
Psalm 124

"From Slavery to Freedom"

August 31, 2008

**The Question: Are We to Sin Because We Are Not under Law but under Grace?**

**1. You Are Slaves to the One Whom You Obey (6:15-19)**

**2. So Consider the Fruit of Your Service (6:20-23)**

**3. You Have Died, so that You Might Serve and Bear Fruit by the Spirit (7:1-6)**

We ended last time with Paul's promise:

"Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

And this provokes another, "What then?"

**What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? (6:15)**

What does it mean that you are not under law, but under grace?

Paul has been talking about the reign of Sin and Death in Adam (5:14, 21)

and the reign of Grace in Jesus Christ (5:21).

Paul has said that the dominion of Sin and Death

was broken by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again;

death no longer has dominion over him." (6:9)

And so Paul says that "sin will have no dominion over you,

since you are not under law but under grace." (6:14)

If the *dominion* of sin has been broken,

if the *reign* of sin and death is over,

then we are no longer *under* law.

The law no longer has power *over* us.

But this does not mean that we can do whatever we want.

In the ancient world everyone acknowledged that they were under someone's authority.

In the modern world we do not acknowledge it – but it is still true!

You are no longer *under* the law.

You are no longer *enslaved* to sin.

Sin will have no *dominion* over you.

But grace will have dominion!

Christ has set us free from the power of sin and death.

But that does not mean that you are your own master.

No, you have now become slaves of God.

You are under the dominion of grace.

Christ is King.

Sin is not your master –  
but neither are *you* your own master.

Paul lays this out in three parts:

First, you are slaves to the one whom you obey.

So are you a slave to sin? Or a slave to righteousness?

Second, consider the fruit of your service:

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

And third, you have died with Christ so that you might be fruitful in the service of God.

### **1. You Are Slaves to the One Whom You Obey (6:16-19)**

We like to think that we are “free.”

No one can tell me what to do!

All you have to do is look at the fashion industry to see how much of a lie this is.

“Be yourself”

“It’s all about you”

Don’t let the rhetoric fool you.

It’s not about self-expression.

It’s about buying their product.

It’s about enslaving you to what someone else thinks –  
mastering you so that you will obey their wishes.

Whether it is the “modern classics” of Calvin Klein

or the unnatural “otherness” of Goth fashion,

the trends of modern fashion illustrate vividly what Paul says in v16 –

*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,  
you are slaves of the one whom you obey.*

We like to think that we are our own masters,

but Paul tells us you are slaves

*either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness.*

Last time we saw a contrast in verse 13:

*Do not present your members to sin as instruments (or weapons) for unrighteousness,  
but present yourselves to God ... and your members as instruments for righteousness.*

Paul has already said that our old self was crucified with Christ  
in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing –  
that it might be rendered inoperative.

So you cannot present *yourself* to sin.

You *belong* to God.

You are under the dominion of grace.  
You are under the rule and authority of Jesus Christ.  
The problem is that you seem to prefer the rule of your old master, sin.

You keep presenting yourself as an obedient slave to sin.  
But sin is not your master anymore!

*But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*

Notice the way Paul puts this:

You have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching  
*to which you were committed.*

Doesn't he mean "the standard of teaching which was committed to you?"  
After all, the verb here is the word that Paul frequently uses to refer to the "tradition" that was handed over to you.

Isn't Paul saying that the Roman Christians have obeyed from the heart  
the teaching that was delivered to them?

You heard the gospel – and you believed it,  
and so you are now obeying the teaching that you believed.

No.

That is not AT ALL what Paul is saying.

For Paul, the Word of God is not some "teaching" out there that you can take or leave.  
The Word of God is not some "doctrine" – some compelling intellectual argument.

No, the standard of teaching – the "pattern of doctrine" – has not been delivered to you.  
You have been delivered to it.

Jesus did not die for you so that you might be self-fulfilled.

Jesus did not free you from bondage to sin and death so that you might be your own master.

You have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which  
*you* have been delivered.

And having been set free from sin you have become slaves of righteousness.  
You have been *enslaved* to righteousness.

"You are not your own. You were bought with a price." (1 Cor 6:19-20)

As long as you think that you belong to yourself –  
that you are your own master –  
you are believing a lie!

Paul uses the imagery of the master/slave relation to great effect here:

*I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations*  
(literally, because of the weakness of your flesh).

Paul understands that we are weak.  
While we belong to God in our inner man,  
in our flesh we are weak.

The old man was a slave to sin.  
And so there was no war between the old man and the flesh.  
The old man was a slave to sin,  
and so you presented your flesh (your members) to sin.

But now  
6:6 – the old self was crucified with him.  
In your inner man, you have died with Christ – you are dead to sin.  
But you have not yet been fully sanctified.  
Your flesh is still weak.  
And so your new man – who you are in Christ –  
must now wage war against your old master.

Remember, your old man is dead.  
It is not as though there is both an old man and a new man within you.  
There is only one of you!  
But *just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness*  
*leading to more lawlessness,*  
*so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

Yes, you are a slave.  
You are either a slave of sin, or a slave of righteousness.

But while you are a slave either way,  
there is a big difference between these two slaveries.  
And Paul gets at this through the theme of “fruit” –  
what is the result – the harvest – of these two slaveries?

## **2. So Consider the Fruit of Your Service (6:20-23)**

*When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

It would probably be better to translate this,  
you were a “freedman” in regard to righteousness.  
The terms “slave” and “free” were used in the Roman world to refer to your legal status.

A slave belonged to his master.

A freedman had no such obligation.

So a Roman audience would hear Paul as saying,  
“when you were slaves of sin, you had no obligation to righteousness.”

*But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you now are ashamed?*

Brothers and sisters,  
let me ask you:  
what fruit are you getting from sin?

Does sin bring happiness?  
Don't look at the surface of your life.  
Look down deep.  
What fruit do you get from sin?  
When you lose your temper and yell – what fruit does it bring?  
Does it make everything better?  
When you bop your sister over the head with a toy,  
does it bring peace and happiness?

*The end of those things is death.*

Proverbs 1-9 speaks of this as the father shows his son the path of wisdom  
and the path of folly.  
The path of Wisdom leads to life.  
The path of Folly leads to death.

Sin always results in misery and death.  
Righteousness always results in holiness and life.

*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God,  
the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

You have now been emancipated from your old master, Sin.  
You have become slaves of God.  
Some people don't like being told that they are slaves.  
“Doesn't Jesus say, ‘no longer do I call you slaves, but friends!’ (Jn 15:15)?”

That is true, we are *more* than slaves.  
And Paul will go on in chapter 8 to say that we are children of God.  
But Paul's point here in Romans 6 is that whether you are children, slaves,  
or whatever you want to call us,  
you belong to God.

You are either under the dominion of sin and death.

Or you are under the dominion of grace and life in Jesus Christ.

And in this context, Romans 6:23 may take on a new significance.

For the whole chapter Paul has been emphasizing the *parallel* between being *either* a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness.

But now he returns to the parallel of chapter 5.

In chapter 5 Paul had shown that the gift is *not like* the trespass.

Yes, Adam and Christ are parallels – but they are opposites!

And even so, the dominion of sin and grace are parallels – but they, too, are opposites:

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

After all that Paul has said about presenting your members as slaves to one or the other, and after all that Paul has said about getting “fruit” from sin or righteousness, you would probably expect Paul to say

“the wages of sin is death, but the wages of God is eternal life.”

But he doesn't!

At precisely the moment when you are starting to think that Paul is laying a heavy burden on your shoulders, he reminds us that eternal life is not a wage – but a gift!

But in your gratitude for the grace and mercy of God, do not overlook another point that we often miss:

*The wages of sin is death.*

Who pays this wage?

All through this passage Paul has been talking about the “realm” or “dominion” of sin. He keeps talking about sin as a power that had enslaved us.

Sin was your master.

And Sin pays wages.

What wage does Sin pay?

Death.

What wage does God pay?

God does not pay wages.

There is nothing you can do to earn God's favor.

He gives to his slaves eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord – not as a wage, but as a free gift.

### 3. You Have Died, so that You Might Serve and Bear Fruit by the Spirit (7:1-6)

Some people have expressed surprise that Paul moves from the illustration of a slave to that of a wife, but in the ancient world a wife was no more “free” than a slave.

And quite frankly, that hasn't changed.

What do I mean by that?!!!

Well, listen to Paul:

*Or do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to those who know the law – that the law is binding on [literally, “has dominion over”] a person only as long as he lives?*

In other words, the law does not bind a dead man.

And then he uses the example of a married woman.

*Thus a married woman [literally, an under-man woman] is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage.*

He could have said the same thing about a married man.

After all, a married man is also bound to his wife.

Nowhere in this passage does Paul say that a woman is enslaved to her husband.

Rather, both husbands and wives are *bound to each other*

(they are both under the dominion of the law of marriage).

But he uses the woman in order to make his point more clearly – as we'll see!

If the husband dies, his widow is abolished from the law of the husband.

This word “released” in verse 2 is the same word that Paul used in 6:6 when he said,

*Our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.*

-- that the body of sin might be abolished – or emancipated.

*so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*

Now he says that the woman is emancipated from the law of the husband through his death.

Now, in order to get what Paul is doing in the next two verses,

I will need to read it slightly differently than you have it in your ESVs.

*Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress*

*if she **becomes** to another man while her husband is alive.*

*But if her husband dies, she is free from that law,*

*and if she **becomes** to another man she is not an adulteress.*

*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ,  
so that may **become** to another, to him who has been raised from the dead,  
in order that we may bear fruit for God.*

I know that this is not great English.

What does it mean to “become to another man”?!!

But do you get the point?

If you are under the law of marriage,

then you are *bound* to your husband – you are *bound* to your wife.

That is why we vow, “‘til death do us part.”

That’s why while I’ll let the bride and groom do all sorts of things in their wedding,

I will *not* allow them to write their own vows!

When you enter marriage you are coming under the dominion  
of the law of marriage.

And that is not something that an individual couple can redefine.

The only way out from under that law is death (or lawful divorce).

But Paul uses this to make a point:

*You also have died to the law through the body of Christ,  
so that you may belong (or become) to another,  
to him who has been raised from the dead,  
in order that we may bear fruit for God.*

This is why he chose to use the woman.

“that we may bear fruit to God.”

In relationship to Christ, we are all feminine.

He is our bridegroom – he is the “other” to whom we now belong.

But notice that it is not our first husband who died.

Rather, it is we who died.

God did not kill our old husband, Sin.

No, rather, he united us to the death of Jesus.

We were bound under the law (not just of marriage – but the whole law).

*For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law,  
were at work in our members to bear fruit for death.*

*But now we are released from the law...*

Here is that same word used in 6:6 and 7:2,

translated “brought to nothing” in 6:6 and “released” in 7:2.

Now we are emancipated from the law – we are rendered inoperative from the law.

*having died to that which held us captive,*

*so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.*

John Chrysostom comments on this verse:

“Paul does not say that the law was discharged or that sin was discharged

but that we were discharged.  
How did this happen?  
It happened because the old man, who had been held down by sin, died and was buried.”

And his friend Theodore of Mopsuestia added:

“Now everything has changed, Paul says.  
We have died to this life and are no longer under any obligation to keep the law.  
Our life no longer has anything in common with that,  
because we have been renewed by the power of the Spirit  
and have become different people.  
We have crossed over from this present life to life eternal  
and cannot tolerate any captivity of the flesh.”

You have died to that which held you captive.  
You are no longer under the dominion of sin and death.  
You have crossed over from death to life.

So, shall we sin because we are no longer under law, but under grace?

*Me genoito!*  
How can we who have died to sin live any longer in it?!  
If you understand who you are in Christ,  
then you cannot use your freedom in Christ to serve sin!  
That dominion – that lordship – has been broken.

So stop thinking that you are a slave to sin:

*Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

And stop acting like a slave to sin:

*Stop presenting your members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness,  
but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life,  
and your members as weapons of righteousness.*

Or to put it another way.

Repent of your sin.  
Believe in Jesus.  
Love God and love neighbor.

That’s all there is to it.

You may say,  
“but Pastor, you don’t understand my situation!”  
To which I reply,  
“my dear congregation, you don’t understand your God!”

And unless you come to believe what Paul says in Romans 6-8,  
I don’t see how your situation will ever really change.

As Paul started all of this by saying, in 6:3-4

*Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?  
We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death,  
in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,  
we too might walk in newness of life.*

Notice, it is not that “just as Christ was raised from the dead,  
we also might be raised from the dead someday.”

The life-changing power of the resurrection is not just a “someday” sort of power.

There is a “someday” – *we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (v5),*  
but there is also a “today.”

And today sin’s dominion has been broken.

Today, you are dead to sin.

Today, you have become slaves to righteousness.

Today, you have the fruit that leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

Today, you have new life in the Spirit.

And that is why *today* we come to the baptism of Joshua Philippe Cabaltica.

Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world.

All these graces are conferred upon us when God is pleased to incorporate us into his Church by baptism. For in this sacrament he testifies to us the remission of our sins. And for this cause, he has ordained the sign of water, to signify that as by this natural element the body is washed of its bodily odors so he wishes to wash and purify our souls. Here we have a sure witness that God wishes to be a loving Father, not counting all our faults and offenses. To this end God promises that he will assist us by his Holy Spirit so that we can battle against the devil, sin, and the desires of our flesh, until we have victory in this, to live in the liberty of his kingdom. Peter told us in Acts 2 that we are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins so that we might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those two things are accomplished in us, through the grace of Jesus Christ: it follows that the truth and substance of baptism is comprised in him. For we have no other washing than in his blood, and we have no other renewal than in his death and resurrection. But as he communicates to us his riches and blessings by his word, so he distributes them to us by his sacraments. (CF 28.1; Geneva, 1542)

## **2. significance of baptism for the congregation,**

And it is useful for us to remember our own baptism as well. Because in our baptism God claimed us, as Heinrich Bullinger said:

"For as the water washes away all the dirt of the body, the stains and spots and any kind of impurity, so also the one over whom the baptismal waters have been poured, is received by God's grace, washed by the blood of Jesus, and obligated to live a new life."

The needful but much neglected duty of improving our Baptism, is to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others; by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of, and walking contrary to, the grace of baptism, and our engagements; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace; and by endeavoring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ; and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same Spirit into one body. (Larger Catechism 167)

### **3. the reason for baptizing children,**

**For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. (Acts 2:39; Gen. 17:7; Acts 16:31)**

Infants as well as their parents, belong to the covenant and people of God, and through the blood of Christ both redemption from sin and the Holy Ghost, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to their parents. Therefore they are also by Baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be ingrafted into the Christian Church, and distinguished from the children of unbelievers, as was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, in place of which in the New Testament Baptism is appointed. (Heidelberg Catechism 74)

Remember that Paul says that we become obedient to the standard of teaching *to which* we were committed. Whether you were baptized as an adult or as a child, you did not choose God, he chose you.

### **4. and to pray that the reality will accompany the sign**

Therefore, let us pray to God that **Joshua** might receive a true and living faith and that the outward baptism be, through the work of the Holy Spirit, inwardly accomplished with the cleansing water of grace. (Strasburg, 1525-37; Zurich, 1526; etc.)

As our Confession says, the efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time (Confession 28.6)

Let us pray:

**Baptismal Invocation** (silent prayer, then):

Almighty, merciful God and Father, who has promised us in Abraham,  
the father of us and all the faithful,

that it is your will to be not only our God but the God of our children as well.

So also your Son, our Lord Jesus, received the children which were presented to him,  
graciously accepting them, bestowing upon them his blessing  
and declaring that to such belong the Kingdom of Heaven.

O good God and Father, trusting in this your promise and your example,  
we presume to appear before the sight of your divine majesty  
in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus,

and pray that you forgive us for never having been truly thankful for your grace toward us  
and the redemption of your Son which you have imparted to us in baptism  
and that we have never really striven to die to ourselves  
and to live alone to you our heavenly Father.

O merciful Father, we pray and beseech you,

grant to us and increase in us your Holy Spirit

that we may recognize more and more your unspeakable grace,  
demonstrated in baptism, whereby you have accepted us as your children,  
that we be truly thankful and show ourselves to be your people and children.

Graciously accept from us **Joshua Philippe Cabaltica**, born of your own people,  
whom you have given to them and whom you have created in your image.

Since no one can be pleasing to you except that your Spirit live within him,  
we pray that you grant your Holy Spirit to this child.  
and with that same Spirit establish and seal his heart.

Also grant that as I, your servant and minister of the new covenant,  
do now administer this holy baptism according to your command and promise,  
so may you grant to **Joshua** inner renewal of spirit and true regeneration,  
making him your child.

Through your name bestow and bequeath that **Joshua** be baptized into the death of Christ Jesus,  
that he be buried with him, that he die to all sins,  
and through Christ be raised up to life, to the service of righteousness and all that is good.  
As we baptize him in your name,

we ask that you completely forgive all inherited sin through our Lord Jesus Christ  
and never reckon it to him.

Truly impart to him sonship and in all things receive him as your heir  
—and fellow heir of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, grant in such faith,

that as we baptize this child we might be inclined and impelled  
to receive him as a fellow members of the body of Christ,  
to faithfully pray for him, and earnestly educate him,  
that through him your name might be glorified, your Kingdom increased  
and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And to these spiritual graces grant to **Joshua** physical health,  
minister to all his needs and grant to him your fatherly protection,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Admonitions--To the church:**

The Reformers didn't like the practice of having godparents stand up front with the parents. Because if the child is baptized into Christ and becomes a member of his church, then the whole congregation becomes the godparents. All of you are responsible for **Joshua**, and for all other baptized children who will ever come into this church. Whenever a child is baptized into the one body, that child becomes a part of the body—he or she becomes a part of you. Christ calls you to receive this little child as a member of His Body—for Jesus said, “whoever receives this child in my name, receives me.” **Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?** If you will receive this child in Jesus' name, then please stand.

### **To the parents:**

Because this child is being received into the church of Jesus Christ, you are to set before him a godly example, that you will pray with and for him, and that you will teach him what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us, in order to bring him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Therefore teach him the faith and confession of true Christians, instructing him in the principles of our holy religion as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as summarized in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church.

### **Apostles' Creed**

Also teach him all that Christ has commanded us, to love the Lord his God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind and all his strength, and to love his neighbor as himself.

### **The Ten Commandments (TH 724)**

Teach this child also to put his whole confidence in God, to honor and serve him alone, and as a true Christian renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, denying himself and abandoning all to follow Jesus, bearing his cross. Do you so promise?

### **To the child:**

God did not say to Abraham, "would you like me to be your God"? But rather, "I will be your God and the God of your children after you." And because God has called your parents to be his people, so now he calls you to be his own.

### **Baptism**

**Joshua Philippe Cabaltica**, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Baptismal Thanksgiving**

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, we give you eternal praise and thanks, that you have granted and bestowed upon this child your fellowship, that you have washed and cleansed him by water and the Word, and made him now your child and heir, according to your faithful promise. Grant, most loving and faithful Father, that we in the whole course of our lives might prove our thankfulness for your great grace, faithfully bring up this your child through all the situations of life and that we with this child as well, might more and more die unto the world, and joined to the life of your Son, our Lord Jesus, daily grow in grace, that we might ever praise you and be a blessing to our neighbor, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying, Our Father.... Amen.

### **Benediction to the child**

"May God grant to you that, as you have been cleansed by water and the Word, that even so you may at the last day appear before Christ the judge with a pure conscience. Amen"