

WALKING THROUGH ROMANS – PART 11

ROMANS CHAPTER 6:15–23 – GRACE AND FREEDOM: SLAVES TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

The driving question remains: Has God remained faithful in a fractured world?

Throughout Romans, Paul continues addressing a fractured world marked by social, cultural, religious, and spiritual challenges. While he writes to a specific first-century audience, the question remains relevant today. As believers navigate a world filled with brokenness and uncertainty, Romans continues to affirm that God has remained faithful despite humanity's failures and struggles.

In the previous lesson, Paul addressed a misunderstanding about grace. Some assumed that if grace increases where sin increases, then grace somehow provides permission to continue sinning. Paul rejected that conclusion entirely. He argued that believers have died to sin through their union with Christ and now walk in what he called newness of life. Grace does not provide permission to continue in sin. Grace provides freedom from sin's dominion.

As Paul continues his argument, another question naturally emerges. If believers are no longer under the law but under grace, does obedience still matter? Paul answers this question by introducing the concept of freedom. Yet he presents freedom through language that may appear surprising. He contrasts slavery to sin with slavery to righteousness.

BUCKET 1 – ROMANS 6:15–18

Paul begins by addressing another misunderstanding concerning grace.

He asks, "Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Once again, his response is immediate and emphatic: "By no means."

Paul rejects the idea that grace provides permission for continued sinful living. Grace exists to free believers from the penalty and power of sin, not to encourage continued participation in it.

To make his point, Paul introduces the language of slavery. The Greek word *doulos* refers to one who belongs to another and lives under another's authority.

Paul argues that whatever a person continually obeys eventually becomes that person's master. What people repeatedly submit themselves to ultimately exercises influence and authority over their lives. Obedience reveals allegiance. Submission reveals loyalty.

This means every person serves something or someone. Everyone has a master. The issue is not whether a person serves. The issue is what that person serves.

Paul celebrates the Roman believers because their obedience has shifted. Their loyalty has shifted. Their allegiance has shifted. Through the teaching that had been entrusted to them, they had become obedient from the heart. As a result, they had been set free from sin and had become slaves to righteousness.

This introduces the theological concept of sanctification.

Salvation refers to being rescued from the penalty of sin through the grace of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sanctification, however, is the ongoing process by which believers are set apart and shaped into lives that increasingly reflect God's purposes.

Sanctification becomes the vehicle that leads to transformation.

Salvation rescues. Sanctification reshapes. Transformation changes.

Freedom is not necessarily proven by having no master. Within Paul's argument, freedom is revealed by choosing the right master. The truly free life is the life submitted to God.

BUCKET 2 – ROMANS 6:19

Paul pauses and acknowledges that his analogy has limitations.

He states that he is speaking in human terms because of their natural limitations.

Before Christ, people presented themselves to impurity and lawlessness. Their lives were characterized by repeated submission to sinful desires and sinful practices.

Now, however, believers are called to present themselves to righteousness.

Paul highlights a significant progression.

Sin produces more sin.

Righteousness produces more righteousness.

The direction of a person's life is shaped by what that person repeatedly practices.

Paul is describing what can be understood as spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation is the process through which believers intentionally grow in their relationship with God through practice, repetition, discipline, and consistency.

Whatever people repeatedly practice eventually shapes who they become.

This also leads to moral formation.

Moral formation refers to the reality that repeated choices gradually shape character.

Every choice moves a person somewhere.

The question becomes whether habits are shaping the future God intends or sabotaging that future.

BUCKET 3 – ROMANS 6:20–22

Paul now contrasts the outcomes of two different ways of living.

He asks believers to reflect on their former lives and consider what sin ultimately produced.

The outcome was shame and death.

Shame refers to that which disappoints, dishonors, and ultimately produces regret.

Paul contrasts this outcome with life in God.

Those who have been freed from sin and enslaved to God experience sanctification. The outcome of sanctification is life.

Paul emphasizes that righteousness is not merely about avoiding wrong behavior. Righteousness is about embracing a new way of life.

It produces a different mindset.

It produces different patterns.

It produces different priorities.

Ultimately, it leads toward holiness.

Holiness is becoming increasingly aligned with God's character and God's purposes.

Every lifestyle eventually produces a result.

Every choice carries an outcome.

Every pattern leads somewhere.

BUCKET 4 – ROMANS 6:23

Paul concludes with one of the most familiar verses in Scripture.

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

The word translated wages refers to payment earned for services rendered.

Sin pays wages.

The outcome of continual participation in sin is death.

The word gift comes from the Greek word charisma and points to something freely given through grace.

Paul creates a powerful contrast.

Sin pays wages.

God gives gifts.

One is earned.

The other is received.

Paul's understanding of eternal life extends beyond life after death. Eternal life is participation in the life of God beginning now and continuing forever.

Through Christ, believers receive the gift of eternal life and experience the freedom that comes from belonging to God.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

Paul presents two masters, two paths, and two outcomes.

One path leads to death.

The other path leads to life.

One pays wages.

The other gives gifts.

Freedom is not found in serving ourselves.

Freedom is found in belonging to God.

The issue is not whether people are serving something.

The issue is what—or who—is shaping the direction of their lives.