

Romans

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
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Romans 6:15-23



Vss. 15-16

- In this ongoing debate with the imaginary Jewish opponent, Paul begins to sum up this part of his argument by returning to and reiterating his first point: that continuing to sin in order to trigger more of God's grace, or continuing to sin because you are presuming on God's grace, is all nonsense. Both here and in vs. 2, he declares, "May it never be!". The problem lies in the truth of free grace. Because we cannot earn God's grace and He gives it to us freely, we are often blind to the real cost of that grace: the very life of Jesus of Nazareth, God's only Son.
- Paul further counters by lifting the curtain on another Truth that all lost people (and many in the church) are blind to: that we are all slaves; that individual freedom is an illusion; that we are in fact either slaves to Satan and sin or slaves to Christ and obedience to Him leading to righteousness.

Vss. 17-19

- Remember that Paul is writing to the church, people who once were lost, but now have been found. "You **were** slaves to sin...", but now you are not. When you lived as slaves to sin, righteousness was not possible and could have no real power or claim over you. The same is true now that you have been saved. Now you are a slave to Christ and His righteousness, so Satan and sin have no power or claim over you.
- William Barclay does a good job in helping to understand this further by helping us to better understand who and what a slave was in Paul's time by contrasting the difference between a servant and a slave: "When we think of a servant, we think of...(an employee) who gives a certain agreed part of his time to his master and who receives a certain agreed wage for doing so. Within that agreed time he is at the disposal and in the command of his master. But, when that time ends, he is free to do as he likes. During his working hours he belongs to his master, but in his free time he belongs to himself. But, in Paul's time, the status of the slave was quite different. Literally he had no time which belonged to himself; every single moment belonged to his master. He was his master's absolutely exclusive possession. That is the picture that is in

Paul's mind. He says: "At one time you were the slave of sin. Sin had exclusive possession of you. At that time you could not talk of anything else but sinning. But now you have taken God as your master and he has exclusive possession of you. Now you cannot even talk about sinning; you must talk about nothing but holiness."

- Paul somewhat apologizes for the illustration. "I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh." This is not merely a physical or mental truth whereby some determined self-discipline is required. This is really a spiritual matter, but Paul realizes that their faith is still so thin, so "fleshly", that he has to literally dumb-down his explanation so that they can begin to grasp it. Simply put, you cannot only give part of your life to God, you cannot "clock out" as a slave to Christ, as a disciple. It is 24/7 down to the smallest molecule of your being.

Vss. 20-23

- Paul concludes with a great thought: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord". In today's language, as one person is explaining how he's handling the mess he's made of his life, someone will ask in return, "How's that working out for you?". This is what Paul is asking his imaginary opponent. The ultimate benefit of sin is death. Paul says this is your wage, that which is due you. Paul here uses a military word, "opsonia", which was a soldier's pay and it was something the soldier could not refuse. But on the other side, the free gift of God, Paul uses another military word, "charisma", which was an unearned gift the army would offer for the emperor's birthday or coronation. It may be a month's pay or a home in a colony like Phillipi, given simply out of the emperor's kindness.
- As Stuart Briscoe puts it, "The believer does not have to go on sinning and treating righteous living as something that that is good if you can get around to it, but rather he does **have** to live righteously and take care to live triumphantly over sin in the power of the Lord".