

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Choose Your Master

Romans 6:15-23

2000

Introduction

In Romans 6:1-14, Paul taught that the key to living a life free from sin's dominance was to:

1. Know the corporate solidarity we have with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection!
2. Count yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus
The power of sin has been broken and we now have a new nature
3. Offer your bodies as instruments of righteousness

Paul anticipated that the statement that we are "not under law, but under grace" would create a firestorm of controversy. The Jews believed that without the law, not only would salvation be impossible, but it would also lead to a rejection of the Law and result in ungodly behavior.

I The Two Responses To Salvation By Faith

A. Go on sinning because we are:

1. Not under law but under grace? **NO!**

1 Jn 3:9-10 "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

As FF. Bruce says, "To make being under grace an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really under grace at all."

B. Stop sinning because we are:

1. Not under law but under grace? **YES!**

II The Contrast Between Two Responses

A. The **illustration** for the change is found in slavery

Slavery was a concept that would have been readily understood by Paul's readers.

Approximately fifty percent of first century Rome's population was made up of slaves. Slavery was commonplace and a social norm in Roman society.

1. We are slaves to the one we obey

Obedience is the ultimate evidence of ownership. Either we are slaves to sin which leads to death or we are slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

1. Some people are slaves to their work [Everyone is a slave]
Their allegiance is to their job. It takes precedence over family, over God and at times, even over their own health.
2. Some are slaves to their possessions
Every free moment is spent taking care of their things or planning their next purchase, the next toy, the next house or car.
3. Some are slaves to life-dominating habits
Anger, drugs, bitterness, gossip, pornography, immoral relationships
4. Some are enslaved to money
They think about it, worry about it, and obsess about it. Notice, this a problem that transcends income levels.
5. Some are slaves to people
Children, parents, spouse, friends – people that they desire to please more than they desire to please God.

2 Pet 2:19 “They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity-- for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.”

There are two options:

a. Slavery to sin leads to **death**

Jesus declared that “everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” John 8:34

No one enjoys the final fruit of sin. And in spite of the fact that most people desperately want to escape the unpleasant and destructive consequences of their sin, they refuse to give up the sin that produced the miserable consequences.

Illustration: Richard DeBusso (as told by Jon Courson)

He had a pet lion, which slept on his bed. Although he was warned that lions could never be completely tamed, he justified keeping a lion because, as an entertainer, he used the lion in his act – until the night of 1977 when the lion jumped on him and literally bit his head off.

Be very careful! The sin you are casually playing with – that you think you have under control – is going to turn on you one day and eat you alive!

The scripture warns us that our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

You may have a pet sin. A sin that you think you have under control. But be forewarned, your pet sins will eventually kill you.

b. Slavery to obedience leads to **righteousness**

One of the amazing ironies of life is that slavery to Christ results not only in righteousness, but freedom. Obedience to God liberates us to be all we can be. In fact, this is the key to a full life – absolute, uncompromising slavery to Christ expressed in obedience to His Word.

Slave = Doulos = “A slave or bondservant”

Every Israelite, who had become a slave could be redeemed (set free for a price) at any time by relatives. But if there was no one to redeem him, then he was to receive his freedom without payment after six years of service. However, if at the end of 6 years, he said, "I like it here. I love my master and his family and I'm well treated." He was brought before the elders of the city and his ear was pierced by his master against the master's doorpost with an awl signifying he was a "doulos", a permanent slave by choice (Ex 21:6; Dt 15:17).

Paul gave himself wholeheartedly to God and presented himself as a doulos, a servant by choice, to Jesus Christ for a lifetime of service.

Illustration: My dog Christy [Obedience leads to freedom]

Freedom to Christy was the privilege of:

1. Jumping up on people who came to visit
So we had to lock her in the basement when people came over.
2. Running away when we let her outside
So we had to make sure she was always on a leash
3. Constantly pulling at the leash when we took her for walks
So the choke collar would constrict her neck making breathing hard.

Her bad behavior limited her freedom!

Some believers are like my dog Christy. They take the freedom that they've been given by God and abuse it.

1. They treat others who are made in the image of God poorly
2. They run away from God's presence when it suits their purposes.
3. They constantly strain against God's guidance and commands

The truth is that you will never be freer or more content than when you are a slave to Jesus Christ.

B. The **power** for the change is found in God

Notice that Paul does not praise the Roman believers for the dramatic change in their lives. It wasn't their intelligence or their wisdom or their moral and ethical determination that transformed them. It was the power of God!

1. Thanks be to God!

Rom 8:3 “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”

a. You wholeheartedly **obeyed** the Word

Ps 119:32 “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”

This wasn’t forced or coerced behavior imposed on the Roman believers. It was a powerful expression of their wholehearted love for God demonstrated in total commitment, total accountability, and total devotion.

The desire to know and obey God’s truth is one of the surest marks of genuine salvation.

1. That you were entrusted with

This is evidence that the early church obeyed the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” So when a person became a believer he was taught the teachings of Christ to show him how to be a disciple of Jesus.

2 Tim 1:13-14 “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you-- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”

b. You were set **free** from sin

Free = Eleutheroo = “To liberate or deliver”

Rom 6:7 “... anyone who has died has been freed from sin...”

Rom 8:2 “... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”

We have a new relationship to God and a new nature. We also have a new relationship to sin. For the first time, we are able **not** to live sinfully and are able also for the first time to live righteously. We are no longer bound by sin!

c. You have become slaves to righteousness

We have to make a choice as to whom we will serve. [Joshua 24:15]

Bob Dylan: “*You got to serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you got to serve somebody.*”

If we serve sin we will die. But if we serve God we will know His righteousness and eternal life.

C. The **fruit** of the change is found in our lives

A person's general pattern of living proves who his true master is. If his life is characterized by sin, then he is sin's slave. If his life is characterized by obedience, then he is God's slave.

There are only two choices. Either a person is mastered by sin, which is to say they are under the lordship of Satan, or they are mastered by righteousness, which is to say they are under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Mathew Henry: "If we would know to which of these two families we belong, we must inquire to which of these two master we yield our obedience."

We have one of two choices:

1. Offering our bodies in slavery to sin leads to:

Offer = Paristemi = "To present, give, yield"

Many people are afraid to yield their lives to God because they are unwilling to give up their freedom to do whatever they want. But the reality is, an unsaved person has no choice but to sin. He is bound and enslaved to sin, and the only thing he can do is to sin. His only choices have to do with when, how, why, and to what degree he will sin.

a. **Impurity**

Akatharsia = "Physical or moral uncleanness"

Inward sin manifested in inner uncleanness

Eph 5:3 "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

b. Ever-increasing wickedness

Outward sin manifested in ungodly words and deeds.

c. **Shame**

There is no lasting benefit that people experience from slavery to sin. One of the consequences of sin is a terrible sense of shame.

I Jn 2:28-29 "And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him."

d. Death

Rom 7:5 “For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.”

Gal 6:7-8 “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Free = Eleutheros = “Unrestrained; exempt (from obligation or liability); at liberty”

2. Offering our bodies as slaves to righteousness leads to:

Being freed from sin does not mean that a believer is no longer capable of sinning but that he is no longer enslaved to sin, no longer its helpless subject.

Because of temporary unfaithfulness, sinful disobedience may at times appear to dominate a Christian’s life. But a true believer cannot continue indefinitely in disobedience, because it is diametrically opposed to his new and holy nature, which cannot indefinitely endure sinful living. Obviously, some believers are more faithful and obedient than others, but Christians are equally freed from bondage to sin and equally enslaved to God, equally granted sanctification and equally granted eternal life.

Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1 to “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.”

a. **Righteousness**

b. Ever-increasing holiness

Holiness = Hagiasmos = “Purity or sanctification”

2 Cor 7:1 “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Heb 12:14 “Make every effort ... to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

c. Eternal **life**

Our past slavery to sin brought impurity, ever-increasing wickedness, shame and death. But yielding ourselves as doulos servants of God brings not only freedom from sin but sanctification and eternal life.

Rom 5:21 “... so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: “As you go on living this righteous life, and practicing it with all your might and energy and all your time ... you will find that the process that went on before, in which you went on from bad to worse and became viler and viler, is entirely reversed. You will become cleaner and cleaner, and purer and purer, and holier and holier, and more and more conformed into the image of the Son of God.”

III The Summary Of The Two Responses

A. The **wages** of sin is death

Wages = Oponion = “A soldier’s rations, stipend or pay”

Spiritual death is the just and rightful compensation for a life characterized by sin.

Prov 10:16 “The wages of the righteous bring them life, but the income of the wicked brings them punishment.”

1. In our corporate Champion – Adam

B. The **gift** of God is eternal life

Gift = Charisma = “A (spiritual) endowment”

Eph 2:8-9 “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Your salvation was the motivation behind God’s gift of Jesus Christ.

Jn 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

If a person wants what he deserves – eternal death – God will give that to him as his just wages. And if a person what he does not deserve – eternal life – God offers that to him as well, but as a free gift, the only source of which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. In our corporate Champion - Jesus Christ

Jn 14:6 ‘Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”’

Acts 4:12 ‘Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.’

John McArthur: “Jesus Christ is calling men and women who are willing to be inwardly transformed by Him, who desire an entirely new nature that is created in His own holy likeness. He calls to Himself those who are willing to exchange their sinfulness for His holiness. He calls to Himself those who are willing to die with Him in order to be raised with Him, who are willing to relinquish slavery to their sin for slavery to His righteousness. And when men and women come to Him on His terms, he changes their destiny from eternal death to eternal life.”

Conclusion

1. Everyone is a slave to something or someone
2. We have a choice to whom we will be enslaved
 - a. Either to sin that leads to death
 - b. Or righteousness that leads to life
3. The key to freedom is found in our union with Christ that comes as a gift of God's grace and results in abundant life and eternal life.
4. The fullness of that life comes from God and manifests itself in joyful and willful surrender to God through Jesus Christ.

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