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Freed to be Enslaved (Part 2) Romans 6:19-23

Introduction:

Alexander III of Macedon, commonly known as **Alexander the Great**, was a king of **Macedon**, a state in northern **ancient Greece**. By the age of **thirty**, he had **conquered** almost the entire **known world** with his **military strength, cleverness, and diplomacy**. He was **undefeated** in battle and is considered one of history's **most successful commanders**.

An example of his soldier's **allegiance** to him is seen in that one day **Alexander** and a **small company of soldiers** approached a strongly defended walled city. **Alexander**, standing outside the walls, raised his voice and demanded to see the **king**. The **king appeared** on the top of the wall that overlooked the invading army, and **agreed** to hear **Alexander's** demands.

"Surrender to me immediately," commanded **Alexander**. The **king** just **laughed**. "Why should I **surrender** to you?" he called down. "We have you far **outnumbered**. You are **no threat** to us!"

Alexander then said, "Allow me to **demonstrate** why you should **surrender**." He then **ordered** his men to line up **single file** and start marching. He **marched** them straight toward a **sheer cliff** that dropped hundreds of feet to the **rocks** below.

The **king** and his **soldiers** watched in **shocked disbelief** as, one by one, **Alexander's soldiers** marched without hesitation right off the **cliff**

to their deaths. After **ten soldiers** had **died**, **Alexander ordered** the rest of his men to **stop** and to **return** to his side. Realizing that nothing would **stop** the eventual **victory** of men who were willing to do **anything** their **commander** said, the **king surrendered** on the spot to **Alexander the Great**.

The soldiers' **unquestioned obedience** to **Alexander** is a **good illustration** of the kind of **obedience** to our **Lord and Master**, Jesus Christ, that we as Christians are **called** to have in the passage that we will be looking at this morning. Turn in your Bible to **Romans 6**.

In Romans 6:15-23 we are looking at ***six aspects*** of Paul's concern that we as believers should live in total submission to **Jesus Christ and His righteousness and not fall back into our former sins**. Thus far we have seen the **first *three aspects***:

- 1) ***The Introduction***: Abhorring another appalling question (v. 15)
- 2) ***The Principle***: Obedience leads to slavery (v. 16)
- 3) ***The Application***: Salvation involves changing masters (vv. 17-18)

This morning we'll be looking at the remaining **three aspects**. The ***fourth aspect*** of Paul's concern is this:

IV. *The Analogy: Comparison of two Slaveries* (v. 19)

- A. Look at **v. 19** where Paul says: I am speaking in **human terms** because of the **weakness** of your **flesh...** (Stop there)
 1. Having already used the **metaphor** of **slavery five times** in **chapter 6** (vv. 6, 16 twice, 17, 18), and another **four times** after this statement (vv. 19 twice, 20, 22), by saying, "I am speaking in **human terms...**" Paul is **pausing** to give a **parenthetical explanation** of the **metaphor** of **slavery**.
 2. **Why?** He says, "...because of the **weakness** of your **flesh**."

3. Whereas **some view** this as the Roman believers **moral weakness** or **sinful fallenness**, it is **best** to see Paul as simply referring to the **weakness** or **frailty** of his readers **finite minds** to **grasp** and **comprehend** the difficult spiritual truths of this chapter. Therefore, he uses a **familiar human analogy** to make what he was saying **understandable**.
 4. Some also see Paul as **apologizing** for using this metaphor of slavery. But **Leon Morris** says, “He is not so much **apologizing** for using an **illustration** from slavery as **explaining why** he did it. Slavery was regarded as such a **degrading state** and it was so **firmly repudiated** in the contemporary world that it would **not** normally be regarded as an **acceptable** metaphor. But it makes things **very clear** to his readers, and they needed such **clarity**.” (pg. 264)
 5. The **image** of **slavery** is **quite appropriate** in driving home the point that we as believers are **required** to have **absolute** and **unquestioned obedience** to Jesus Christ. This **total submission** is to **characterize** our Christian lives **under grace**.
 6. Jesus said in **John 14:15**, “If you **love** Me, you will **keep** My commandments.” And yet, how often do we **forget** that we **belong** to Him, we are **not our own** but have been **bought** with the **price** of His blood (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- B. Paul then goes on to **compare two kinds** of **slaveries**. Look again at v. **19**, “...**For just as** you **presented** your **members** as **slaves** to **impurity** and to **lawlessness**, resulting in further

lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”

1. The word “**For**” (gar) demonstrates that the **imperative** or **command** in the **second part** of this verse is based on the **indicative** or **historical fact** in **v. 18**, whereby believers have already been “**freed from sin**” and become “**slaves of righteousness**” by God. Since **that** is who you are, do **this!**
2. **Verse 19** is very **similar** to **v. 13**. But whereas **v. 13** used a **double command** “do not go on **presenting** . . .but **present,**” here Paul employs a **comparison**: “**just as you presented . . . so now present.**”
3. Now in comparing these **two slaveries**, notice that Paul **first** focuses on: **Our life before Christ** by saying “**just as.**” Look again at **v. 19**, “For **just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity** and to **lawlessness**, resulting in further **lawlessness...**”
4. **Before** we became Christians we had already “**presented**” (parestesate—aorist active indicative)—we had **offered** or **placed** at the **disposal** the various “**members**” of our body—such as: our **tongue, eyes, ears, hands, feet**, etc., “as **slaves to impurity** and to **lawlessness.**”
5. Some say that “**impurity**” (akatharsia) refers to **inward** uncleanness, whereas “**lawlessness**” (anomia) refers to **outward** wickedness. However, in this case **Douglas Moo** is more accurate in saying, “Both words are **general** terms for **sinful behavior**, and Paul probably intends **no strict difference** in their meaning here.” (pg. 404)

6. Notice that when we as **unbelievers** presented the physical members of our bodies as slaves to impurity and lawless, it was “...resulting in **further lawlessness** (anomia).” In other words, our sin only **produced** more sin.
 7. **That’s how sin works!** Our lives were **characterized** by **sin** and the **transgression** of God’s moral norms.
 8. Now this doesn’t mean that we were the **worst** that we could possibly be, not at all. But since even our **good deeds**, **morality**, and **benevolence** fell **far short** of the **glory** of God, we **continually** and **willingly** sinned against God.
 9. That was our **life** before **Christ!**
- C. But things **radically changed** when we became Christians. Paul now **focuses** on: **Our life after Christ** by saying “**so now.**” Look at the end of v. 19, “...**so now present** your **members** as **slaves** to **righteousness**, resulting in **sanctification.**”
1. Now that God has already “**freed (us) from sin**” and made us His “**slaves of righteousness**” (v. 18) at the **moment** of our salvation, here we are **commanded** to make the **decisive** and **wholehearted commitment** to “**present**” (parastesate— aorist active imperative) the various “**members**” of our body “as **slaves** to **righteousness.**”
 2. As we saw last time, the word “**righteousness**” (dikaiosune) refers to our **declared righteousness** by God as we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ and our **final righteousness** when we are one day made **perfect** in heaven when the very **presence** of sin is removed. But in this **context** it is **best** taken

to refer to our **moral** and **ethical righteousness** in transformed behavior that is **pleasing** to God.

3. It is living to **glorify God** in our body (1 Cor. 6:20). And as we do what is **right** before God, notice that it is “...resulting in **sanctification.**” The word “**sanctification**” (hagiasmon) here does not refer to a **state** of **holiness** but to the **process** of continually being **made** more and more **holy** and **loving** in the **likeness** of Jesus Christ.
4. So here we see in **comparing** these **two slaveries** the **drastic contrast** between them: **Slavery to sin**, which begins at **birth**, brings the **grim reality** of **moral deterioration**; while **slavery to righteousness**, which began at **new birth**, brings the **glorious reality** of **moral transformation.**
5. Therefore, we as believers are **commanded** to continually **choose** to **present ourselves** in **total submission** and **unquestioned obedience** to Him, so that we will live in a way that is **increasingly** Christ-centered and world-renouncing.
6. **Douglas Moo** said it best, “(Paul) makes clear that Christians should **serve righteousness** with all the **single-minded dedication** that **characterized** their **pre-Christian service** of such ‘**idols**’ as self, money, lust, pleasure, and power. Would that we would **pursue holiness** with the **zeal** that so many of us **pursued** these other, **incomparably less worthy goals!**” (pg. 404)
7. **How serious** are we in **obeying** Jesus Christ? Since the **downward pull** of **sin** is **ever-present**, we can never **drift** into spiritual maturity in our lives.

8. **John MacArthur** correctly observes, “No one **stands still** morally and spiritually. Just as **unbeliever’s** progress from sinfulness to greater sinfulness, a **believer** who is **not growing** in righteousness, though **never** falling back altogether out of righteousness, will **slip** further and further back into sin.” (pg. 350)
9. **Where are you at** this morning in your **allegiance** to your **Lord and Master**, Jesus Christ? Are you really **presenting** your members as **slaves** of righteousness?
10. The **fifth aspect** of Paul’s concern is this:

V. The Paradox: Freedom in our Slavery

- A. Look at **v. 20: For when** you were **slaves of sin**, you were **free** in regard to **righteousness**.
 1. Reinforcing the **urgency** of the **command** just given (v. 19c), the word “**For**” (gar) here introduces **vv. 20-22** as the ground or basis of this command. In other words, in **vv. 20-22** Paul gives **three reasons** why we should **present** our members as slaves of righteousness instead of as slaves of impurity and lawlessness:
 2. The **first reason** is because: **Who we once were**. Once again Paul focuses on **our life before Christ** in saying, “...when you **were slaves of sin**, you were **free** in regard to righteousness.”
 3. During the **entire time** that we were **unbelievers** we were persistently “**slaves of sin**.” And as **sin’s slave**, we were also persistently “**free** in regard to **righteousness**.”
 4. In other words, we had **absolutely nothing** to do with it. This means that even though **unsaved people** can be very **moral**,

honest, law-abiding, and religious, in God's sight their freedom is not true freedom.

5. As **unbelievers** we were **free** from the **power** and **influence** of God's **moral** and **ethical righteousness** in our lives. We were free from **doing right** in a way that **pleased** God.

6. That's **who** we once **were**. What a **terrible freedom** to have!

B. The **second reason** why we should **present** our members as slaves of righteousness is because: **The consequences of sin**.

Look at **v. 21**: Therefore what **benefit** were you **then** deriving from the things of which you are **now ashamed**? For the **outcome** of those things is **death**.

1. It is possible to **construct** the first part of this verse like this:

“Therefore what **benefit** were you then deriving? Paul then answers: “Things of which you are now **ashamed**.”

2. Both constructions are possible. But regardless of which one you choose, **two things** are **true** about the **consequences of sin** that **follow** in the wake of being **slaves of sin** and **free** in regard to righteousness: **First**, believers are **ashamed** of their **past life**.

3. The word “**benefit**” (karpon) here literally means “**fruit**.” Paul is asking, “What **good fruit** did you gain from the **sinful things** you did in your life before Christ.” The implied answer is, “**Absolutely none!**”

4. The **fruit** of our **sinful lives** in the past was all **bad** or **rotten fruit** in the sight of God. It included such things as **sinful desires** and **thoughts** that led to **sinful words** and **deeds**, that only led to **sinful habits**.

5. Although an **unbeliever** may **boast** about his sin, when he becomes a Christian all of those **past sinful things** are now a cause of **shame**. Notice that Paul says, “...the things of which you are **now ashamed**.”
6. This **shame** over past sins is one of the **marks** of true salvation. **John Calvin** rightly states, “As soon as the **godly** begin to be **enlightened** by the Spirit of Christ and the **preaching** of the gospel, they freely acknowledge that the **whole** of their past life, which they lived without Christ, is **worthy** of **condemnation**. So far from trying to **excuse** it, they are in fact **ashamed** of themselves. Indeed, they go **farther**, and continually **bear** their disgrace in mind, so that the **shame** of it may make them **more truly** and **willingly humble** before God.” (Mac. 351)
7. The **second thing** that is **true** about the **consequences of sin** is: **Sin** always brings about **death**. Look at what Paul says at the end of **v. 21**, “For the **outcome** of those things is **death**.”
8. The “**outcome**” (telos)—**end, goal, or target** of sin in all of its manifestations is “**death**” (thanatos). Sin is a **deceiver**.
9. It **promises** life, happiness, and fulfillment, but it only **delivers** disharmony, destruction, and death. Although sin can be **pleasurable** for a **season** and may **taste** like **cherry Kool-Aid**, it is laced with **cyanide**.
10. It tells us that the **grass is greener** on the other side of God’s moral fence, but when we hop the fence we find out that it’s a **lie**. I hear the heartbreaking stories of this every week from many of those that I counsel.

11. Sin **always** brings about **death**. This is **death** in all of its aspects: **Spiritual death** or separation from God, relational death to those who sin against each other in their relationships, **physical death** or separation of the **soul** from the **body**, and ultimately **eternal death** or separation from God forever in the “**lake of fire**,” which is called the “**second death**” (Rev. 20:14; 21:8).
 12. Those who have **rejected** Jesus Christ as their **Savior** and **Lord** in this life will experience **eternal death** in the next. This may be Paul’s emphasis here since it stands in contrast to **eternal life** in v. 22.
- C. However, **receiving** Jesus Christ as **Savior** and **Lord** reverses everything. The **third reason** why we should **present** our members as slaves of righteousness is because of: **Who we are now**. Look at v. 22: **But now** having been **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, you derive your **benefit**, resulting in **sanctification**, and the **outcome, eternal life**.
1. Paul says that as born-again Christians we were “**freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**. The words “**freed**” and “**enslaved**” are **orist passive indicatives** in the Greek, indicating that these are **already accomplished facts** that we have received **by God** at the moment of our salvation.
 2. It is a **done deal** that we are “**freed from sin**.” This doesn’t mean that **we never sin**; it means that **we don’t have to!**
 3. As believers, the **power of sin** is **broken** in our lives. This is **true freedom!**

4. It is also a **done deal** that we are “**enslaved to God.**” We have been **transferred** from the **tyrant master, sin**, to the **merciful Master**, Jesus Christ.
5. What a **paradox**: As believers we have **freedom** in our **slavery!** We are **freed** to be **enslaved** to God.
6. Therefore, **true freedom** being “**under grace**” doesn’t mean that we are **free** to whatever we want. **John MacArthur** correctly states, “God’s purpose in redeeming men from sin is not to give them freedom to **do as they please** but freedom to **do as He pleases**, which is to **live righteously**....God delivers men from enslavement to sin for the **sole purpose** of their becoming **enslaved** to Him and to His righteousness.” (pg. 350)
7. Now because we are **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, notice that Paul goes on to say, “...you **derive** your **benefit** (or **fruit**).” In other words, **you’ve got fruit** in your life!
8. Although Paul does not say exactly what this “**good spiritual fruit**” is, every true believer bears **some fruit** in his life by the **Holy Spirit**, even if it is a shriveled up **raisin** (Matt. 13:8; Jn. 15:1-5, 16; Gal. 5:22-23).
9. You cannot be a Christian without bearing some **fruit**. Since we are now **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God** for the **first time** in our lives we as believers can do what is **morally** and **ethically right** before God and **please** Him by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.
10. And notice that this **good spiritual fruit** of our slavery to God is “...resulting in **sanctification.**” As we saw in **v. 19**, again this

refers to the **process** of being changed more and more into the **holy** and **loving** likeness of Jesus Christ.

11. And Paul goes on to say about this **sanctification process** at the end of v. **22**, “...and the **outcome, eternal life.**” The **end, goal, or target** of a **righteous life** is **eternal life** because it is **evidence** that **proves** that one is **truly saved**.
12. Now “**eternal life**” is not just a **quantity** of unceasing life in the future; it is also a **quality** of life in the present. It is both a **present possession** and a **future consummation**.
13. It is a **supernatural** kind of life that **belongs** to God and is that which we **receive** the moment we are saved. It is **God’s life** in us, which is **abundant life**.
14. In His **high priestly prayer** to the Father in **John 17:3**, Jesus declared, “This is **eternal life**, that they may **know You**, the only true God, and **Jesus Christ** whom You have sent.”
15. It is this **eternal life** that is “life for our soul.” And in having this **life of Christ** we **already** have **all** that we **need**!
16. The **sixth aspect** of Paul’s concern is this:

VI. The Conclusion: Summary of three Contrasts

- A. Look at v. **23**: **For** the **wages of sin** is **death**, but the **free gift** of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 1. The word “**For**” (gar) here restates the **outcome** of **vv. 21** and **22** and brings **vv. 15-23** to both a **solemn** and **triumphant conclusion**. In this verse we see a **summary of three contrasts**:
 - The contrast between **two slave-masters**: “**sin**” and “**God.**”

- The contrast between **two outcomes**: “**death**” and “**eternal life**.”
 - And the contrast between **two means** by which each outcome is attained: a “**wage**” earned and a “**free gift**” received.
2. Look again at the first part of v. **23**, “For the **wages** of **sin** is **death**.” Now the word “**wages**” (opsonia) can refer to an allowance or pocket money given to a slave by his master, but here it is probably **better taken** to refer to the **money paid** to a **soldier** by his commanding general.
 3. Paul pictures **sin** here as a **general** who **pays wages** to his soldiers. In other words, sinners get what they **deserve**; they receive what they have **earned**.
 4. And the **wages** that **sin** pays is “**death**.” That’s not what anyone wants when they sin, but that’s what they get.
 5. And once again **death** here is **death** in all aspects: spiritual, relation, physical, and eternal death or separation from God. This is no **arbitrary sentence**, but is simply the inevitable consequence of sin.
- B. But in **stark contrast** to sin’s wages of death, Paul says, “...but the **free gift** of God is **eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
1. Whereas **death** is the **deserved wage** paid by **sin**, **eternal life** is the **underserved “free gift”** (charisma) or **grace gift** bestowed by God. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, “For by **grace** you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the **gift** of God; not as a result of **works**, so that no one may boast.” (Jn. 3:16, 36; 17:3; Tit. 3:5)

2. And as we saw in v. **22**, **eternal life** is not just a **quantity** of unceasing life in the future; it is also a **quality** of life in the present. It is both a **present possession** and a **future consummation**.
3. And Paul **closes** by saying that this **eternal life** that God gives as a **free gift** is only “...in **Christ Jesus our Lord**.” Once again we see **Christ’s full title**.
4. “**Jesus**” means Savior; “**Christ**” means Messiah, Anointed One; and “**Lord**” means Yahweh or Jehovah. As our Lord and Master He alone is worthy of our total submission and unquestioned obedience.
5. Only the **Lord Jesus Christ** can **change** anyone from being a **slave of sin** who **deserves death** to being a **slave of God** who receives **eternal life** as an **undeserved** free gift of grace. Is Jesus Christ your Savior and Lord? (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

Conclusion:

In closing, as believers who are “**under grace**,” God calls us to a life of **total submission** and **unquestioned obedience** to Him. Are you living out who you really are this morning? If you are, **thank God** for all He had done for you in Christ. If not, ask His **forgiveness** for **obeying** your **old master of sin** who no longer has any claim on you. And **rededicate** yourself to obey your new Lord and Master.

And if you are **not a Christian**, I encourage you to **receive** Jesus Christ as your **Savior** and **Lord**, so that you too can experience **true freedom from sin** and the **free gift** of **eternal life** that only He can

give. **Do today** what **one day** you will be **glad** you did when you stand before Almighty God.