

# THE EPISTLES TO THE ROMANS

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Outline of Romans

1. Introduction (1:1-17)
2. The need for God's righteousness (1:18-3:20)
3. Justification: the position of righteousness from God (3:21-5:21)
4. Sanctification: from position to practice (6:1-8:39)
  - a. Concerning Sin (6:1-23)
    - 1) Start living the way God sees you (6:1-14)
    - 2) Freed to serve (6:15-23)
  - b. Concerning the Law (7:1-25)
    - 1) A Christian's relationship to the Law (1-6)
    - 2) The Law's relationship to sin (7-12)
    - 3) A Christian's relationship to sin (13-25)

### B. Review

1. Our position in Christ, justification, is not based on faith but fact. Faith is the means of access to the facts of our redemption which will last forever.
2. Sanctification is not a process whereby sin is excluded but where righteousness is pursued.
3. Douglas Moo, *Romans 6 is the classic biblical text on the importance of relating the 'indicative' of what God has done for us with the 'imperative' of what we are to do.*

## ROMANS 6:15-23, FREED TO SERVE

### A. Christians were freed from slavery to sin when they became slaves of righteousness by means of a changed heart (15-18)

1. Paul declares that Christians are under grace but not free to sin (15-16), ***What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?***
  - a. Paul returned to his opening question in Romans 6:1, *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?*
    - 1) It is different from this question in Romans 6:15.
      - a) In verse 1, Paul is speaking to the unconverted, *are we to continue in sin...*
      - b) In verse 15, he is speaking to the one who was freed from sin, *are we to sin because we are not under the law?*
      - c) Paul has transitioned from *slave to sin to slave of righteousness.*
    - 2) Paul will emphasize that release from slavery to sin does not take the person from slavery to personal freedom. What we have is a person freed from slavery to sin and now is a slave to righteousness.
      - a) John Witmer, *...there is no middle ground between being a slave to sin and a slave to obedience to God.*
      - b) Grace does not eliminate the responsibility to be an obedient slave but the difference is there is a change of master.
  - b. Paul adamantly declares that *by no means* is sin a proper choice for a Christian.
    - 1) Note Romans 3:8, *And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.*
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *A sinful lifestyle and acts of sin are both inappropriate for a believer who is living under God's gracious authority.*
    - 3) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The pains Paul is at in the following verses to drive his point home indicate that the danger of such misunderstanding was not merely hypothetical.*
    - 4) Douglas Moo, *Paul sees in God's grace not only a liberating power but a constraining one as well: the constraint of a willing obedience that comes from a renewed heart and mind and, ultimately (cf. Gal. 5:17-24; Rom. 8:4-9), the impulse and leading of God's Spirit.*

- c. He gives the general principle that a person is a slave to the one he obeys which results in either death or life (16)
  - 1) Paul introduces this verse with a question which he knows they have the answer.
    - a) Continually submitting to someone or something makes one a slave.
    - b) In the Roman world, it was not uncommon for a person to sell himself into slavery because of financial problems.
  - 2) Paul presents two options for every human being.
    - a) A person enslaved to sin is headed toward death.
      - 1] Romans 6:21, *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*
      - 2] John Witmer, *Death is the normal consequence of sin (which is disobeying God);*
      - 3] Douglas Moo, *Christians, who are no longer slaves of sin, must no longer live as slaves of sin.*
    - b) A person enslaved to obedience is headed toward righteousness by means of sanctification.
      - 1] *Slave to obedience* refers to God in whose Gospel one made a personal commitment.
      - 2] C. E. B. Cranfield, *...he wanted at this point specially to emphasize the thought of obedience (to God), because he wanted to make his readers see that to be under God's grace is to be under obligation to obey Him.*
      - 3] Douglas Moo, *The freedom of the Christian is not freedom to do what one wants, but freedom to obey God—willingly, joyfully, naturally. "Obedience," says Calvin, "is the mother of true knowledge of God."*
  - 3) There is no third alternative whereby one is master of oneself.
- 2. Paul rejoices in the fact that Christians have been set free from sin by means of a changed heart and have become slaves of righteousness (17-18)
  - a. Paul thanks God that Christians are committed to obedience due to a changed heart (17), ***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,***
    - 1) Roman Christians had a good testimony.
      - a) Romans 1:8, *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.*
      - b) Their good testimony was based on not only accepting Paul's *standard of teaching* but obeying it.
        - 1] 2 Timothy 1:13, *Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*
        - 2] Douglas Moo, *Paul wants to make clear that becoming a Christian means being placed under the authority of Christian "teaching," that expression of God's will for NT believers.*
        - 3] *Standard* probably is a contrast from the Mosaic Law to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Christianity has an authoritative code of teaching designed to mold those who have committed to it as noted by Douglas Moo.
        - 4] John Stott, *Paul evidently sees conversion not only as trusting in Christ but as believing and acknowledging the truth.*
    - 2) Their obedience was empowered by a heart change.
      - a) They had accepted Paul's teaching as spiritual truth.
      - b) John Witmer, *Hearing the teaching of God's Word, they committed themselves to those truths. That commitment was evidenced by their response to the gospel and their being baptized.*
      - c) Hebrews 10:16, *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*
      - d) 1 Peter 1:22, *Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,*
      - e) The importance of verse 17 is noted by C. E. B. Cranfield, *...to be under God's grace involves the obligation to obey Him.*

b. A Christian's slavery to sin is broken which results in slavery to righteousness (18), ***and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.***

- 1) A Christian is set freed from sin when he or she places faith in Christ alone.
  - a) Justification is that point in time when one passes from sin's slavery to that of righteousness.
  - b) John 5:24, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*
  - c) Romans 8:2, *For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.*
- 2) Freedom from sin transfers a Christian to slavery to righteousness.
  - a) A Christian is called to freedom.
    - 1] It is sanctification, to live like who we are.
    - 2] Douglas Moo, *Paul's concept of freedom is not that of autonomous self-direction but of deliverance from those enslaving powers that would prevent the human being from becoming what God intended.*
    - 3] William Barclay, *...the Greeks defined righteousness as giving to others and to God their due.*
  - b) Freedom for a Christian is not independence but slavery to righteousness.
    - 1] John Witmer, *Christians are not to give in to sin because they are dead to it and no longer slaves of it. It is totally contrary to God's plan for slaves of righteousness to become enslaved to sin!*
    - 2] It is normal for an unbeliever to live like a sinner but it is a travesty for a Christian to live like a sinner.
    - 3] Douglas Moo quotes a Puritan Confession of Faith, *The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love, and willing mind.*

B. Lawlessness and righteousness lead down strikingly different paths (19)

1. Paul repeats an important spiritual point in human terms (19a), ***I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.***

- a. Paul is putting majestic concepts (justification and sanctification) in human context to help us understand the gravity of his instruction.
  - 1) Romans 3:5, *But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.)*
  - 2) A Christian is called a slave yet he free from sin. It is better understood what Paul means by human terms when we evaluate his term *natural limitations*.

b. *natural limitations*

- 1) Was Paul speaking specifically of the Roman Christians or to Christians in general?
- 2) There is a strong case that he was speaking to church members in Rome since he used *your* in the verse.
- 3) John Witmer, *Apparently Paul felt that his readers' spiritual perception was feeble so he used this terminology from human experience.*
- 4) I would consider Paul's concern for *natural limitations* does not exclude Christians today. The struggle to separate justification from sanctification needs to be addressed now more than ever.
- 5) Douglas Moo, *Here Paul's point would appear to be that human nature produces a weakness in understanding that can be overcome in this life only by the use of (imperfect) analogies...It is just that Paul recognizes that his language could be interpreted to mean that Christian experience bears the same marks of degradation, fear, and confinement that were typical of secular slavery.*

2. An unbeliever was on a road leading to more lawlessness but a Christian is on the road leading to sanctification (19b), ***For 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.***

- a. Impurity and lawlessness leads to more lawlessness.
  - 1) *impurity* normally refers to inappropriate sexual activity which Paul addressed in Romans 1.
  - 2) The result of such behavior is more lawlessness.
  - 3) Lawlessness is an unending treadmill which eventually drops a person into hell.

- b. Righteousness leads to sanctification.
  - 1) *Now present* is Paul's call to live what you believe.
  - 2) Douglas Moo, *He thus 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!*
  - 3) *Sanctification* has a view toward the final goal of ultimate sanctification or glorification.
  - 4) John Stott declares this verse depicts *the grim process of moral deterioration and the glorious process of moral transformation.*
  
- C. Slavery to sin leads to death but slavery to God leads to eternal life (20-23)
  - 1. Slaves of sin are not bound by righteousness but are destined for death (20-21), ***For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.***
    - a. *for*
      - 1) It reinforces the point of Romans 6:19:b that what a person submits to is what controls that person.
      - 2) C. E. B. Cranfield, *The general sense of the verse would seem to be that one cannot be the slave of sin and the slave of righteousness at the same time.*
      - 3) A slave to sin has no gain in righteousness (moral and ethical behavior)
      - 4) Douglas Moo, *As "slaves to sin," people are "free" from the power and influence of the conduct that pleases God; they are deaf to God's righteous demands and incapable of responding to them even were they to hear and respect them.*
  
    - b. Paul repeats the principle for emphasis concerning the fact that slaves to sin are free concerning righteousness.
      - 1) Romans 6:13, *Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.*
      - 2) Romans 6:16, *Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?*
      - 3) Grant Osborne, *The only thing they are really free from is the ability to do that which pleases God and is right in his sight. However, this does not mean non-Christians are incapable of doing good. Calvin's doctrine of "common grace" points out that sinners are able to perform good deeds and think good thoughts. What non-Christians cannot do is overcome sin and find God.*
      - 4) Warren Wiersbe relates the concept of false freedom to the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-24, *What he thought was freedom turned out to be the worst kind of slavery. It was only when he returned home and yielded to his father that he found true freedom.*
  
  - C. Paul asks a question of those freed from slavery to sin.
    - 1) What is the *fruit* or benefit from slavery to sin?
    - 2) He responds by declaring the result for those enslaved to sin.
      - a) It was shame, C. E. B. Cranfield, *...to be ashamed of one's past evil ways is a vital element in sanctification.*
      - b) It is eternal death contrasted to eternal life (note verse 22) and declared in Revelation 20:13-15.
      - c) Thomas Constable, *His readers reaped no benefits from their slavery to sin. Shame was its immediate result and death its final fruit.*
  
- 2. Slaves of God are not bound by sin and are destined for eternal life (22), ***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.***
  - a. Paul's equation for Christians is that freedom from sin results in slavery to God.
    - 1) It is an equation with promise as will be seen in the second half of this verse.
    - 2) 1 Peter 2:16, *Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

- b. Sanctification is a promise and a practice.
    - 1) It is a promise from God, Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
    - 2) It is a practice to be pursued.
      - a) Colossians 3:1-2, *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*
      - b) John Stott, *So, in practice, we should constantly be reminding ourselves who we are. We need to learn to talk to ourselves, and ask ourselves questions: 'Don't you know? Don't you know the meaning of your conversion and baptism? Don't you know that you have been united to Christ in his death and resurrection? Don't you know that you have been enslaved to God and have committed yourself to his obedience? Don't you know these things? Don't you know who you are?' We must go on pressing ourselves with such questions, until we reply to ourselves: 'Yes, I do know who I am, a new person in Christ, and by the grace of God I shall live accordingly.*
  - c. The benefits of slavery to God.
    - 1) They are holiness in this life and eternal life in the next.
    - 2) 1 Peter 1:9, *obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*
    - 3) Grant Osborne, *We plant righteousness and harvest holiness, that is, sanctification, and this has its own harvest, eternal life.*
3. Slavery to sin earns death but slavery to God results in the gift of eternal life (23), ***For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.***
- a. Paul summarizes Romans 6 in this beautiful verse.
    - 1) All the components and contrasts are evident.
    - 2) Thomas Constable, *It contrasts the masters, sin and God, with the outcomes, death and eternal life. Paul also distinguished the means whereby death and life come to people. Death is the wage a person earns by his or her working, but eternal life is a gift free to those who rely on the work of Another.*
    - 3) H. W. Heiland, *Man has rights only in relation to sin, and these rights become his judgment. When he throws himself on God without claim, salvation comes to him.*
  - b. All is summed up in the name of Jesus.
    - 1) Paul completes this important chapter by ending with the means of salvation, *Christ Jesus our Lord.*
    - 2) John Stott, *The only ground on which this gift is bestowed is the atoning death of Christ, and the only condition of receiving it is that we are in Christ Jesus our Lord, that is, personally united to him by faith.*

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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Douglas Moo, *We may summarize the verse by noting, with Lloyd-Jones, its three contrasts: the master that is served—sin versus God; the outcome of that service—death versus eternal life; and the means by which this outcome is attained—a “wage” earned versus a gift received.*