

I Can't Choose to be a Slave, but I Can Choose My Master

9.29.24

Romans Series

Message 18

Romans 6:15–23 (CSB)

Introduction

A. There are two types of people in this world:

1. Those who believe that the Princess Bride is a great movie and then there is everybody else.

2. I admit, the graphics from the 80s were pretty terrible, but this line has so many wonderful quotes.

3. And I apologize for not using this quote sooner because it would have worked for all of Romans 5-6.

4. **Mad Max, played by Billy Crystal**, had this powerful and insightful quote: He said.

There's a big difference between mostly dead and all dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive. With all dead, well, with all dead there's usually only one thing you can do: check their pockets for loose change.

5. Are we mostly dead to sin, or are we all dead to sin?

6. Surely, we can't be mostly alive with Jesus while also being mostly dead to Jesus?

7. As long as we are only mostly dead to sin, there is still a chance (to borrow the words of Mad Max).

a. But I can't help but think that if they show movies in heaven, and they showed Princess Bride, that the Apostle

Paul might actually agree with Billy Crystal for at least one moment:

b. Mostly dead is slightly alive, and we are not called to be slightly alive to sin: we are to be all dead to sin.

B. Death is the theme of Romans 6.

1. Not just any death.

a. Paul emphasizes the importance of dying to sin.

b. Because if we do not die to sin through Christ, we will die in our sin without him.

2. Paul has a reason for writing this to believers:

a. He is concerned that those set free from the Law and sin will take their freedom and start living a life far from God's purpose and design.

b. If we were to summarize Romans 6 in one sentence, we could say:

c. God's Grace is great, but Grace is not an excuse for sin.

C. The Apostle Paul recognizes the struggle.

1. He knows that to walk in the newness of life that Jesus has given us is not easy, but it is possible.

2. Jesus already did the impossible, living a sinless life and dying as atonement for our sins.

3. Now, Paul tells us to obey sin no longer but, instead, obey God.

Romans 6:15–23 (CSB)

¹⁵ What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not! ¹⁶ Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart

that pattern of teaching to which you were handed over, ¹⁸ and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. ¹⁹ I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness. ²¹ So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. ²² But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1. For the second time in Romans 6, Paul asks, “What then?”

A. This is a fair question.

- a. What are people supposed to do who have died with Christ and have been buried with him in baptism?
- b. What should the redeemed of the Lord do?
- c. How should a person set free from slavery to sin live?
- d. Many new Christians have asked the same thing.
 1. What’s next?
 2. If I don’t go to the bars anymore, or do drugs, or gossip around the water cooler, what now?
 3. We know how to not live for Jesus.
 4. But once we are set free, what do we do?

B. The first answer is, “stop it.”

1. In the Apostle’s words, “Are we to sin...because we are under grace?”
2. NO.
3. Grace is not license or permission to sin.

- a. Grace NEVER makes sin ok.
- b. Sin is always a big deal.
- c. Any Gospel or Christian message that does not take sin seriously is not the Gospel that Jesus and the Apostle Paul proclaimed.

C. This emphasis is even stronger when we remember that Romans (and all of the New Testament) is written for believers.

1. The advice and commands Paul gives cannot be obeyed by non-believers.
2. If you are not a follower of Jesus this morning, I want to assure you that God will forgive any sin, no matter how big or terrible.
 - a. The Apostle Paul understood this well.
 - b. He was complicit in murders before he was saved and, at his orders, sent families to prison and even death.
 - c. The Apostle Paul knew the power of God to forgive and cleanse.
3. But the Apostle Paul did not understand how professing, born-again, believers could use grace as a license for sinfulness.
 - a. The Romans were not the only ones facing this struggle.
 - b. When you read Corinthians or Galatians, it appears this was a problem throughout Christianity.
 - c. And it is still a problem today.
 - d. "God has to forgive me; it's what he does" is a dangerous lie from the devil and not in agreement with Scripture.
 1. We can rest assured that God is a loving, gracious, and forgiving God.

2. However, as Paul points out, to continue sinning with the expectation that Grace will keep flowing is not what the Gospel has in mind.

2. Paul applies this truth with an illustration of slavery.

A. Slavery was a common part of life in Rome.

1. The population of Rome could have been as much as 1/3rd slaves, and we can assume that the Church in Rome was at least 1/3rd slaves, with some scholars saying that up to half of the people were either in slavery or former slaves.¹

2. This deep understanding of slavery was why Paul chose this example.

B. Slavery in Rome was not racial.

1. Two common entrances into slavery were through poverty and the capture of prisoners during war time.

2. You couldn't differentiate a slave from a free person simply by looking at them.

1. A great example of this is in Acts 22:25, where the Apostle Paul is preparing to be whipped, and he asks if it was lawful to punish a citizen without a trial.

2. The Romans could not distinguish a freed person or a slave just by looking at them.

3. Someone could look like you and talk like you and be in a totally different place in life from you.

3. I submit to you that there are people who look like Christians, talk like Christians, and attend the same Christian functions that you do, and yet they are not followers of Jesus.

a. The mark of a genuine Christian is in their allegiance and their fruit.

¹ PTW Romans. Hughes, 130.

b. Who is their master, and what are they producing?

C. What's the difference?

1. Paul explains in verses 17-18 (Reading from the ESV)

2. Romans 6:17–18 (ESV)

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, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

3. Our New Life will demonstrate a Change of Heart

A. Paul emphasizes the importance of obedience from the heart.

1. Law does not require heart.

2. Law requires action, but not heart.

3. A great example of this is the difference between taxes and tithing.

a. The IRS does not care if you are a cheerful giver, just as long as you pay.

b. But Scripture says God loves a cheerful give, a reflection of heart.

B. For some, Law is easier.

a. It is far easier to change our outward actions than it is to allow God to change our hearts.

b. Behavior management is easier than heart change and transformation.

C. Yet, one of the first signs that we are living under grace is that our hearts begin to change.

1. You may be more aware of what you think and feel and how those things are not God-pleasing.

- a. A rebellious child is not bothered by grieving their parents' hearts.
- b. But a son or daughter in relationship with their parents will have an awareness of when they are hurting their parents.
- c. This is why Scripture tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit.
- d. A sign of a relationship is the possibility of grieving the other.

2. Perhaps you find yourself loving better or giving more.

3. Maybe you notice you are liking people more or having more compassion for them.

4. If your heart isn't changing, you are not under grace.

D. Our thoughts, actions, and attitudes are excellent indicators of our condition.

1. So when we are angry, ask ourselves and the Lord, "why"?

2. When we are anxious, ask the Lord to reveal why we are anxious.

3. When we are snippy and snarky, take time to determine the root.

4. But also consider those moments when you are genuinely happy, feel loved, or are joyous or at peace.

- a. Examine what it is about that moment, that person, or that season that has put you in a place of love, joy, or peace.

- b. Emotions are part of God's original design for us, and He created them for good reasons and purposes.

- c. And as we give our lives to Jesus, we will see our emotions and attitudes redeemed and changed.

4. Our New Life will demonstrate a change in our Teaching

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,

A. The heart demonstrates our motivation.

1. Obedience to the right standard is the action.
2. Salvation and righteousness are not merely about change.
 - a. It is about a new life with Jesus, for Jesus, and to Jesus.
 - b. A good heart that is not directed to Jesus will still result in hell.
 - c. A person who modifies their behavior, but doesn't follow Jesus through the standard of teaching passed to us through Scripture will still go to hell.

B. What is the standard of teaching?

1. These are the truths, principles, and doctrines of Scripture.
2. When some of the Jews were giving their lives to Jesus, it's likely that they were not only putting aside the Law with all of its commands but also all of the commands of Jesus and Scripture.
 - a. By being set free from the LAW (capital L) they were feeling released from all forms of law and standard.
 - b. This is not so for them or for us.
3. Shall we continue in sin? Absolutely not.
 - a. The American Church is just as guilty.
 - b. We proclaim, "I am under grace not the law," so don't tell me what to do.
 1. They take the commands of Jesus as divine suggestions.

2. The result is a group of people who are not willing to follow any standard except the standard they establish for themselves.

C. But the Apostle Paul won't permit this.

Romans 6:17–18 (ESV)

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, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

1. There are no “free-agent Christians” out there.
2. You are either a slave to sin, and its standard of teaching.
3. Or, you are a slave of righteousness.
 - a. There are no spiritual free agents.
 - b. You are either signed on to team Jesus, or you are signed on to team Satan.

5. To surrender to a thing is to become its slave.

¹⁶ Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷

A. The Apostle uses contrasts to drive this point home one more time.

1. Are we slaves to sin or obedience?
2. Again, no middle ground here.
 - a. Who are you obeying?
 - b. Who are you serving?
3. Who is your master, because your master is heading in a direction.
 - a. If your master is sin, he is leading you to death.

1. He may be promising you life.
2. He may be promising you fun.
3. He may be promising you freedom.
4. He may even be telling you, "Walk with me for a little while, and if you don't like it, you can always go back."
5. But if sin is your master, he is leading you to death.

b. But if your master is Jesus, He is leading you to life.

1. He is leading you on paths of righteousness (which means right living according to God's standard).
2. He is leading you on a path where the fruit of the Spirit replaces your fruit of the flesh.
3. He is leading you in a life that includes pain, denial of self, the painful waters of baptism, and the constant cry of picking up your cross and following him.
4. Whereas sin promises you a life that leads to death, Jesus promises death that leads to eternal life.

B. The other contrast Paul uses is between impurity and righteousness.

¹⁹ I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness. ²¹ So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. ²² But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life!

1. Paul asks if we are Slaves to impurity or righteousness.
 - a. The fruit of impurity is shame and death.
 - b. When we live in and under sin, we are producing.
 - c. But what we produce we are not proud of, but instead we are or should be ashamed of.
2. The fruit of righteousness is sanctification.
 - a. Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Jesus.
 - b. Sanctification is the stripping away of what I used to be and the putting on of who Jesus has called me to be.
3. Sanctification has a private and a public element, called fruit.
 - a. The fruit of sanctification expresses itself inwardly and outwardly.
 - b. The change on the inside cannot be contained, but flowers and produces fruit.
 - c. **Let me show you this!**

²² But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life!

C. What is a fruit:

1. Merriam-Webster: Anything that grows on a plant and is the means by which that plant gets its seeds out into the world is a fruit.

2. Seeds are internal, fruit is external.
3. Everything that you produce is fruit.

- a. All that you are and all that you are becoming is being offered by you for a purpose.
- b. When people interact with you in any shape or form, they are partaking of the fruit that you are producing.
- c. That fruit is either one of increasing holiness and righteousness or fruit of increasing wickedness.
- d. What you are giving people will either produce an outcome of eternal life or will rot and produce eternal death.

Apply: What do we do with Romans 6?

A. We take a deep inventory of what is happening in us, through us, and around us.

- 1. What is the fruit of our lives?
- 2. Who are we obeying?
- 3. Whose standard of truth are we following?

B. Ultimately, the question is, "Am I right with Jesus?"

- 1. Where am I failing?
- 2. Where is God challenging me?
- 3. What is God calling me to?

C. This morning, I want to invite anyone and everyone who will to come to the altar area and spend time with God.

- 1. I want us all to ask the Spirit to show us where we failing and then pray for the power to walk in holiness and righteousness.
- 2. It's time for us to ask if there are any areas in our life where we are only mostly dead to sin.
- 3. Then, once the Spirit reveals that in your life, ask for His help to empower and strengthen you to walk in righteousness, freedom, and eternal life.