

“SLAVES OF CHRIST”
ROMANS 6:15-23; MATTHEW 25:14-30
AUGUST 10, 2008

MEMORY VERSE

“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.” Romans 6:22

INTRODUCTION

Paul’s letter to the Roman Church is the clearest and fullest explanation of the Gospel in the Bible. These new believers had no New Testament because the Gospels were not yet being circulated in their final written form. Paul’s letter most likely was the first piece of Christian literature that these new believers had ever seen. In his letter, Paul masterfully and skillfully provides these Christians with a systematic presentation of the Christian faith.

Beginning in chapter six of Romans, Paul focuses on sanctification – the change God makes in our lives as we grow in the faith. The emphasis in chapter six is that believers are free from sin’s control. In the first 14 verses, Paul states that Christians have died to sin and it is no longer master over their lives. The power and the penalty of sin died with Jesus on the cross. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we have been freed from the grip and clutches of sin in our lives. Paul says to “count yourselves dead to sin.” This means we should regard our old sin nature as dead and we are no longer obligated to carry out those old motives, desires and goals. Sin is not our master because we are now under the grace of Jesus Christ.

In the remaining verses of chapter six (15-23), Paul addresses the question: if we are no longer under the law but under grace, are we now free to sin and disregard the Ten Commandments? The contents of this study will focus on how Paul refutes this aberrant idea. In verse 14, Paul clearly states we are no longer under the law, but through Christ we are now under grace. When we were under the law, sin was our master. The law does not justify us or help us overcome sin. Because of our union and identification with Christ, He is our master and he gives us power to do good rather than evil.

As a result of God’s grace extended to us through Christ, we have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. In the final verses of chapter six, Paul points out that it is impossible to be neutral. Every person has a master – either God or sin. A person who has given their life to Christ may still sin, but he/she is no longer a slave to sin. This person now belongs to Christ. We are free to choose between the two masters, but we cannot change the consequences of this choice. Paul says the wages of sin is death. This is all you can expect or hope for in life apart from God. If you choose to follow Christ, the result will be eternal life – a new life that God begins on earth and continues forever. The ultimate question for every person is what choice will you make? Who will be the master of your life – either God or sin?

LEARNING FROM GOD'S WORD

1. Paul compares both our old life of sin and our new life in Christ to slavery. According Romans 6:15-18, why is this analogy appropriate in each case? How does our slavery to Christ differ from our slavery to sin (Romans 6:19-23)?
2. According to Romans 6:16, 18, 22, what are the ways Paul describes for being "under grace"?
3. What evidence can you present to support or disagree with Paul's claim in Romans 6:21 that sin has no benefit that outweighs its costs (see Ecclesiastes 5:10-15, 17, 11:9- 12:8)?
4. From a theological and practical perspective, how is slavery to Christ freedom from sin?
5. Read the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30. What was the main point Jesus was conveying through this parable? Why was the servant who hid the talent called wicked and rejected by his master?

OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. Because of the grace extended to us through Christ, believers are no longer under the power and penalty of sin. Paul says that sin is no longer our master and we should wholeheartedly be devoted to and obey our Lord. How do you honestly rate your heart's obedience? What changes in your attitude, devotion and commitment do you need to make concerning your relationship with Christ?
2. Think about the gifts and talents God has blessed you with. How are you using them for Christ's kingdom? What will you do this week with the talents God has given you to prepare for His coming? How can your Small Group help you in this regard?
3. If you could rewind this past week and view yourself as God's willing servant, what would have changed in your attitudes and actions? In what areas of your life do you particularly want to work on during the coming week?

GOING DEEPER

1. Read Romans 12 and 13. Based on the truths in these two chapters, how can you show your whole-hearted obedience to Christ rather than sin this week?

2. Why are the results of choosing Christ a “gift from God” (Romans 6:23), rather than a wage earned for obedience (see Romans 3:23-24, 5:19, 6:6-7, 18)?