

A Strange Dichotomy
Romans: God, Grace & Culture
Romans 6:15-23

The idea of being freed from slavery only to be immediately enslaved to someone else as a result is not very enticing. But this is what is expressed to us in Scripture. How can this be beneficial to us? It's simple, one leads to death, the other well, to eternal life!

A Familiar Question with a Slightly Different Response (v 15-16)

v15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! v16 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?

- "Should we keep on sinning since we are under grace and not bound by the law?", Paul quickly and emphatically answers the same way he answers in v 2: μή γίνομαι - By no means!

- The response in verse 16 is anything or anyone that you obey, you are a slave to the one you are obeying. The word present (παρόστημι) means to yield to, provide or offer. Obedient (ὕπακοή) implies a compliance or a submission to. The issue here is the object of our obedience, not the actual obedience itself.

- We are either slaves (δοῦλος - giving oneself over to someone else's will; devoted to another - used 6x in this passage) of sin, which results in death; or slaves of obedience, obedience in Jesus.

The Natural Progression of True Obedience (17-19)

v17 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,

- The word thanks is the word for grace (χάρις). What should we specifically be so thankful for? That we are no longer slaves of sin.

- Through justification, we have become obedient. What is a true sign that we have been justified? Our hearts have been changed. Our hearts are now inclined to a different standard τύπος - impression, print). Our lives follow a different pattern now: One that follows sound doctrine, teaching (διδασχία - didactic instruction. This is what we were committed (παραδίδωμι - handed over to custody).

v18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

- What has actually happened? We have been set free (ἐλευθερώω - liberated). Grace makes us free & made us slaves at the same time.

v19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations...

- The explanation is given through this metaphor because of our natural limitations (ἀσθένεια - frailty, weakness, infirmity). He has to speak in man's terms (ἀνθρώπινος) because of our mental weakness.

- The understanding is clear here; you used to voluntarily offer yourself up to sin and impurity, you now offer yourselves up to righteousness leading to sanctification (ἀγιασμός - holiness).

- We've already seen that a heart change is required and it is what initiates the sanctification process. But sanctification also must include us presenting our members (μέλος - parts of our bodies) as slaves to righteousness.

The Benefits of Progress (v 20-23)

v20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

- Here's the issue. When we were (were - εἰμί - a state of existence) controlled by sin and under it's dominion both naturally and voluntarily, righteousness had absolutely no control.

v21 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.

- What fruit (καρπός) or vegetation was being produced as a result of the things that you are now ashamed (ἐπαισχύνομαι - super disfigured or morphed)? Death is the end of those things...And the word for end (τέλος) implies an eternal end or outcome.

v22 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.

- Enslavement to sin results in death. Enslavement to God (grace, righteousness, truth) results in sanctification (holiness, productivity, meaning) and eternal life (αἰώνιος - this is life that has no beginning and no end - so really we begin to reap the benefits of eternal life NOW!)

v23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- The payment of our enslavement to sin is death. That is bad news. But the good news, the greatest news is that God gave us a free gift. It is a free gift (χάρισμα - grace)! And this grace which we are now slaves to, has given us eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

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