

## LESSON 7- LAWLESS BUT NOT FREE

### MAY 17, 2020

**Background Scripture: Romans 6**

**Lesson Passage: Romans 6:15-23 (HCSB)**

**Introduction:** If professing believers were honest, many would say their lives bear little resemblance to the Christian life described in Scripture. They struggle repeatedly with the same sins, feel that God rarely answers prayers, and wonder why He hasn't given them the desires of their hearts. How is this possible? The problem may be a lack of submission to Jesus Christ. People often want the forgiveness of sins and the promise of heaven; but are not willing to place themselves under the lordship of Christ. Therefore, they are disconnected from what He wants to do in their life. In refusing to submit, they forfeit the blessings that come to those who know Christ as Savior and Lord.

Although we strongly dislike the concept of *slavery*; that is the reality for every person who enters the world: We are all born as slaves of sin. Thankfully, that doesn't have to be the final word. Anyone who turns to Christ in repentance and faith is set free. However, this is not freedom to simply do whatever we want. In fact, doing so would naturally head us back to our old slave master of sin. Avoiding submitting to God results in wasted years of chasing after His blessing through our own cunning ways. True freedom and blessing are found only in being a slave to God, who is always good, wise, and loving. In obedience to His will, we find freedom from sin, answers to prayer, and new desires that come from a changed heart.

**Scripture Reference: Romans 6:15-23 (HCSB)**

*15 What then? Should we sin because we are not under 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 you were transferred to, 18 and having been liberated 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 moral 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 from allegiance to righteousness. 21 So what fruit was produced then from the things you are now ashamed of? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now, since you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life! 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Memory Verse:** *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 moral impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification.* (Romans 6:19) HCSB

**Topic Explored:** “*Lawless but Not Free*” ~ Near the end of Gandhi’s life he made the following comment: “*What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha (spiritual deliverance)...I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him...For it is an unbroken fortune to me that I am still so far from Him...I have not seen Him, neither have I known Him.*” But because of Jesus Christ, the Christian knows God and has been spiritually delivered from sin. Therefore, Christian, live like it is so, for the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!

**Lesson Focus: Romans 6:15-23 (HCSB)**

**Verses 13-14** ~ Paul says that Christians are under grace and are no longer under law. This statement, however, has been misunderstood to mean that Christians are free to be lawless. There is always the danger that the doctrine of grace might be misunderstood to mean license; but Paul’s gospel will have none of it. If a person gives themselves to sin, under the pretense of grace, they will soon find themselves a slave to sin and all that goes with that, i.e., death in all its aspects.

Christians are to refrain from sin and live a righteous life because they have been united with Christ in his death and His resurrection to new life.

**Verses 15-16** ~ Paul says, “What then”? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? If grace increases where sin increases; then why not continue in sin? Or, if Christians are no longer under the law, but under grace, then why not sin freely? After all, it was Paul who just finished saying that where there is no law, sin is not taken into account, i.e., there is no punishment ([Romans 5:13](#)). So then, if the demands of the law have been set aside and no longer have any real application to the Christian, then why not sin to our heart’s content? Again, Paul’s response is an emphatic denial of such nonsense: Absolutely not! Contrary to the opinion of some expositors, Paul is deeply concerned that Christians not become enslaved to sin through a misunderstanding of the role of the law in their present experience of salvation. The fact that Christians are not under law, does not mean that it no longer has any validity in the life of the Christian ([Romans 13:8-10](#)).

Being “under grace” is to be united to Christ in his death and resurrection and to possess the Spirit as key resources for the overthrow of the reign of sin in one’s experience ([Galatians 5:18](#)). While believing Israelites certainly experienced the salvific and sanctifying grace of God ([Romans 2:28-29](#)), the new age inaugurated with the death and resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Spirit, is vastly superior in its new covenant resources ([John 14:17](#); [2 Cor 3:1-18](#)). The righteous demands of the law remain for the Christian ([Romans 13:8-10](#)), especially as it is fulfilled, properly interpreted and applied by Christ and the apostles, and lived out according to the leading of the indwelling Spirit ([Romans 8:4, 9](#)).

**Verse 17** ~ Having emphatically denied that being “under grace” and not “under law” leads to license, Paul begins to set up a stark contrast between slavery, sin, and death, and obedience, righteousness, and eternal life. For Paul there is no middle ground. Everyone is a slave. The question is not, “Are you a slave?” but “to whom are you enslaved?” If it’s to sin, the result will be death. If it’s to obedience (to God), the result will be righteousness and eternal life.

Paul says that if you present yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves to the one you obey. The illustration from slavery would have been readily understood by all who lived in Rome, since many people in the city and in the church, were either slaves or freedmen. Thus, Paul casts life

into an “either-or” category. The meaning of the term “death” here refers to death in every sense. However, the grace of Christ is strong enough to keep the Christian who sins ([Romans 8:38-39](#)), though loss of fellowship with the Lord is a consequence. Indeed, Paul gives thanks to God that though these people were once, as he was, enslaved to sin, they had through the gospel, obeyed Christian teaching. The “pattern of teaching” refers to teaching regarding salvation through Christ and a lifestyle commensurate with the claim to have become a follower of Jesus.

**Verses 18-19** ~ The result of having given themselves over to Christian teaching was that they had been freed from sin and become enslaved to righteousness. By obeying from the heart that form of Christian teaching to which they had been entrusted, the Roman Christians were experientially realizing freedom in their lives from the power of indwelling sin and freedom, on the other hand, to live for righteousness. They were set free from sins and were constantly growing in Christlikeness (Galatians 5:16-24). Paul says: “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of their flesh”. The reason Paul is using the concept of slavery is because they are unable to grasp spiritual truth very easily and illustration affords a modest way of clarifying otherwise complex spiritual truths.

**Verses 20-25** ~ Paul encourages the Roman Christians to continue in their obedience to apostolic doctrine. They are to show the same zeal for righteousness that they once had for sin. In the past they presented themselves and their bodies as slaves to impurity and lawlessness. Both descriptions offend the holiness of God as they constantly transgress His holy law and invokes His wrath. Therefore, the zeal we once had for sin should now be brought to bear in moving in the direction of righteousness. As we do this we are embarking on a new course toward greater and greater sanctification which will culminate in glorification (Romans 8:30).

A person who sins may think they are free, but in reality they are slaves to an evil, accusing conscience and can never have the “glorious freedom” God envisions for His children (Romans 2:14-16; 8:21). They reap no benefit from the sin they commit. It is a lie to think they do. Indeed, the opposite is true. They reap ruined lives and estrangement from God—the source of life, righteousness, and freedom. In the end they are ashamed of what they have done. Since the Romans Christians had now been set free from sin and were enslaved to God “the benefit they received” is sanctification and the pure conscience.

**Verse 26** ~ This last verse further explains vv. 20-22 and closes out the entire paragraph by way of summary. The summary does have a new element, however, for God and sin are now contrasted, not as slave owners, but as different generals. The term “payoff” alludes to compensation paid to a soldier for services rendered. So, sin promises to pay a wage to its soldiers, to take care of their needs, but in the end, it is a lie and death is the payment, not provision for life. Eternal life, however, is not earned, but comes as the radically free gift of God. The gracious nature of God's provision is like that which we found in 4:4-5 in which Paul was talking about imputed righteousness. Eternal life is completely according to the grace of God; he has not asked us to try and earn it and only curses any so-called arrogant efforts in that direction.

**Let's talk about it. . .**

- **If we are freed from sin, no longer slaves to unrighteousness, why do we keep on sinning? Answer: a. We still have our old sin nature; however, it has been rendered inoperative by the cross, but it is still there if we are alive on planet earth. *It no longer***

*has authority over us in that we can overcome but its potential is there until we are with the Lord. b. We still have free will. Our salvation from sin has given us the freedom and desire to live righteously but we are not forced to do so. We make choices. We can choose to obey sin when it tempts us or reckon it dead and refuse to respond. Every day we come to forks in the road. The Lord calls us to make the right choice and through the power of the Holy Spirit, He enables us to carry through with that decision. However, we must first choose what's right.*

### **Making it personal:**

- “You’ve just said God’s grace is so great, forgiveness is for every sin, so if we sin more, more grace grows” Yes. “Grace is the most wonderful gift in the world” Yes. “OK, if that is true, let’s keep on sinning so grace can keep on growing” (Romans 6:2) - NO. The first step in living as a Christian is knowing we are dead to sin. We’re like businesses, restaurants, that put up new signs, “under new management”. Through faith we have passed from the old management (sin) to a whole new management headed by Christ. The sin nature we inherited from Adam that once ruled our lives, no longer has complete authority, no managerial power to keep making the directives of our lives. The new management brings new power to live a new way. It would be to Paul unthinkable for a Christian under new management to live as if sin is still in control. We don’t have to keep on living defeated or discouraged because of sin, we now have the power of the Holy Spirit to live alive to God and dead to sin.

**Closing Prayer:** *“Lord, we confess there is sin in our life we can’t seem to shake. We’ve dismissed it, justified it, tried to convince ourselves it isn’t as bad as we know it really is. Lord, we know Satan desires me to succumb to it; but we confess it to You because we need Your strength to overcome. Thank You, that Your power is made perfect in our weakness. Thank You, Lord for rescuing us and saving us from our sinfulness. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen!”*