



16.
'Freedom'
Romans 6.15-23

Background

Sin remains an issue for believers. But the boundaries have been changed and the situation is now markedly different. It's this significant change that's taken place which Paul is explaining through the course of chapter 6, using two different 'pictures' to illustrate what he means.

He begins the chapter by explaining that as a believer you are now a new person (vv.1-14): the old, 'sin-loving' person died with Christ on the cross, and the new person, the new 'you', has been raised with Christ from the dead and is one through whom the risen Jesus now Himself lives His life. Sin is no longer the natural mode of the new you.

In this next section (vv.15-23) Paul takes that first 'picture' a step further and insists that you are now not just a new person but effectively under new ownership. A central part of his thesis is the fact that we are not our own masters: we are either slaves of (and to) sin – or slaves of God. The language may be harsh, but it points to the core truth of the gospel, well-expressed in the earliest and simplest credal formulation: namely, 'Jesus is Lord' – an affirmation declaring not only who He is (nothing less than God Himself), but, more significantly, the nature of the relationship we have with Him through the exercise of faith.

It's for precisely that reason that Paul often speaks of himself as the servant (lit. slave) of Jesus Christ (see Rom.1.1, for instance). The perspective of our contemporary culture argues that true freedom is being 'free from the control of righteousness' (v.20), the freedom, in other words, to be yourself – a form of self-rule whose origins can be traced back to the garden of Eden! To be the slave of self, however, is simply to be a slave to sin. Our truest freedom, by contrast, is found in the glad service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's this contrast which Paul is expounding through this second half of the chapter – being slaves in Egypt under the tyranny of a Pharaoh; or being the bond-servants of the covenant God who has pledged and proven to be your rescuer. The one brings shame, misery and death. The other issues in obedience, righteousness and life.

Death .. or life. Curse .. or blessing. Law .. or grace. The gospel is always binary – and for those with eyes to see the choice is a no-brainer!

Be sure to read the whole passage. If you're short of time in your CG then **'days' (2), (3) and (4)** are the ones with which perhaps you're best to begin.

1) Monday 6th May – grace not law

Read [Romans 6.15](#)

“.. shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? ..” (Rom.6.15)

The law, being a matter of regulation, requires from us performance – to a degree we cannot produce. Grace, being a matter of relationship, still involves performance, but such performance is driven now by our love of the Saviour not by our fear of failure.

What are your motivations or incentives for avoiding sin in your life?

How would you counsel someone who validated their ‘loose living’ by declaring that they’d trusted in Jesus and were now forgiven?

Prayer: *Keep me close to Yourself through the course of this day, my Lord. May my words be full of grace and my actions infused with kindness. Glorify Your name in me.*

2) Tuesday 7th May – saved to serve

Read [Romans 6.16](#)

“.. you are slaves of the one you obey ..” (Rom.6.16)

There’s no escape from slavery! Delivered from the slavery of Egypt, the freedom enjoyed by the Israelites didn’t make them ‘free agents’: they were bound now to the Lord as His covenant people. The key issue is simply whose slave or servant you are.

How might Paul have answered someone who objected that he/she is a slave to no one, they’re in charge of their own lives?

In what sense(s) does being a slave to sin lead to death?

What does Paul mean when he speaks about being a ‘slave to obedience’?

Why is that not a form of legalism?

Prayer: *O Lord my God, what wonderful security there is in knowing that I am Yours! And yet what onerous responsibility, too. Show me today how I may serve You well.*

3) Wednesday 8th May – conversion

Read [Romans 6.17-18](#)

“.. set free from sin (you) have become slaves to righteousness ..” (Rom.6.18)

Conversion is a work of God, a miracle of His grace for which we give Him thanks. At its heart is a new allegiance: we now own the lordship of Jesus and that finds expression in our patterning our lives by the power of the Spirit in line with His Word.

What characterised your living when you ‘used to be (a slave) to sin’?

How were you 'set free from sin' (v.18)?

In what ways is your life markedly different from the lives of those who are not believers?

How do you go about ensuring that in all things you are obeying 'from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance'?

Prayer: Teach me, Lord, the way of Your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep Your law and obey it with all my heart (Ps.119)

4) Thursday 9th May – offering yourself

Read [Romans 6.19](#)

".. offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness .." (Rom.6.19)

What God in His grace is working in us, we now seek to work out. The transforming work of the Spirit in our lives takes place as day-by-day, moment-by-moment, we very deliberately offer our time and energies and gifts in the service of the righteous God.

What might be illustrations of the way in which, prior to conversion, people 'offer' themselves 'as slaves to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness'?

A devout church-attender, relying on their own good deeds, might argue that they have never offered themselves as a slave to impurity: how would you answer them?

Read [Rom.12.1-3](#): what does Paul mean by urging his readers to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice?

How might you make a point of deliberately offering yourself afresh each day to the Lord and to His service?

What is the sort of 'holy' living to which Paul is alluding here and how will that find expression in your daily life?

Prayer: How grateful I am that You have offered up Yourself for me, my Lord and Saviour: I now offer myself afresh to You – make me an instrument of Your grace.

5) Friday 10th May – a dead-end way of life

Read [Romans 6.20-21](#)

".. what benefit did you reap at that time .." (Rom.6.21)

Check out your options on 'Trustpilot'! Paul provides a cost/benefit analysis of sin and our slavery to it. Sin advertises itself as freedom, but in truth it's a bondage. Sin costs you everything and benefits you nothing. It's a dead-end way of life. Don't buy the lie!

How does what Paul writes in these two verses find expression in our contemporary society?

What does Paul mean when he states that “those things result in death”?

Prayer: Lord, You alone set people free from the slavery of sin. Help those who experience that slavery in their struggles with addictions, and please set them free.

6) Saturday 11th May – abundant life

Read [Romans 6.22](#)

“.. the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life ..” (Rom.6.22)

Whose slave or servant are you going to be? Being the slave of God issues in an experience which, instead of being steeped in shame, now pulses with the radiant, vibrant beauty of holiness, and results in the fulness of God’s own everlasting life.

How did you become the ‘slave of God’?

The psalmist urges us to ‘forget not all His benefits’ ([Ps.103.2](#)): what would you tell a friend are the benefits of being the slave of God are?

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, that it is life in its fulness that You came to bring Your people. Help me today to remember all Your benefits and to show my gratitude in all things.

7) Sunday 12th May – the great free gift

Read [Romans 6.23](#)

“.. the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord ..” (Rom.6.23)

Here in this single verse the lines are drawn and the gospel is show to be fundamentally binary. On what are you basing your future – your poor performance or God’s rich provision? This is the choice to be made – death, or life. Choose life!

What enabled you to grasp that the message of the Bible is about the gift that is *given to you* rather than the reward that is *earned by you*?

God’s gift of eternal life is “*in Christ Jesus our Lord*”: what is the significance of each of those five (six in the original!) words?

Prayer: Almighty God, how rich You are in mercy, how abounding You are in compassion and love! I was dead in my transgressions and sins and You made me alive!