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Romans

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:14

The Bible teaches that man was granted dominion over the beasts of the earth. This is implicit in the naming of the animals in Genesis 2. When one names something, it is because they have the rule and authority over it. Despite this rule, man is himself a being which is ruled. The original intent of man is that God would rule over him and that the two would walk in fellowship. However, the devil swayed man from the friendly rule of God to his personal, destructive rule. God's rule is one of grace and abundance; the devil's rule is one of sin and corruption. John tells us that the main reason for Jesus' coming was to correct our state to its original intent -

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

We are either under God's rule or under the rule of the devil. There are no other options. If we are under the devil, then sin has dominion over us; we are slaves to it. However, when we accept Jesus' work by faith, we move to the proper and originally-intended rule of God. We are to become slaves to righteousness and live under His grace.

The dominion of the devil, which is one of sin, is realized because of law. Where there is no law, there is no transgression. But there was a law and man broke the law, thus receiving his just condemnation. However, Jesus never broke the law, thus fulfilling it. When we move to Him, the law is fulfilled and we can never be judged by it again. We are free from the law and thus free from sin's penalty and power; we are under grace.

Because this is true, we should endeavor to live as if it is true. This is what we are instructed. We can now live to God, free from the constraints of the law and the penalty of sin. The condemnation that loomed over us is removed. This is the marvel of Christ; this is the glory of what God has done for His creatures. Let us live lives which are holy and appropriate to the exalted position to which we have been raised by the goodness of God.

Life application: Our state in Christ is unmerited and therefore we should receive it as such - with praise, honor, and right-living. Let us stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has set us free - to the glory of God the Father.

**What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?
Certainly not! Romans 6:15**

This verse introduces the second major section of chapter 6. Just as 6:1 entertained an outlandish question which was responded to with "Certainly not!" so does 6:15. Paul's second question is now given.

There is a difference between coming to Christ in order to be saved and being in Christ after being saved. When a sinner comes to Christ, there is absolutely nothing they can add to His work. The doctrine of salvation by grace through faith is set and fixed in the New Testament. Adding something to grace equates to "no grace." Expecting something more than faith means that faith alone isn't sufficient. When a person calls on Jesus, it is because they realize they cannot save themselves and that they are at His mercy.

If salvation is granted based on complete dependency, then it must be a once-for-all-time deal because Paul is quite clear that after salvation there are things expected of us. If we can become "unsaved" by the things we do or don't do after salvation, then the act of salvation wasn't really "by grace through faith." But it is.

Once the pardon is granted and once the person stands justified, then we are to live as if it is so. And so Paul asks his question starting with "What then?" This is an introduction based on the previous argument which began in 6:1 and followed through to 6:14. In essence, "Because of everything that has been reviewed, what is the conclusion?" To demonstrate the obvious nature of what is concluded, he proposes another outlandish question, "Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace?" Paul's answer is an emphatic "Certainly not!"

He has already said that we are not under the law, but under grace. The law allows no sin at all; grace pardons sin. Because this is so, isn't this license to sin? Can't we do what we wish and expect an abundance of the grace which comes from the very fountain of grace? This is Paul's "Certainly not!" Believe it or not though, this is the view of many and it is not at all what is intended by God for His people. Such a notion is contrary to His very nature which is one of holiness. It should be noted though that there are actually two extremes which could be introduced.

The first is that there is license to sin because we are not under the law, but under grace. The second is that because Paul says "Certainly not!" that we are now somehow bound again to the very law which led us to the grace of Christ. Both extremes come about by taking individual thoughts or verses out of context and without consideration to the entire scope of what he is saying.

Christians are not under the law: the law is set aside in Christ (Hebrews 7:18), it is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13), and it is fulfilled and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). However, what is also noted is that we are not free to sin. So where then does our instruction come from? If by the law sin is known and the law no longer applies to the Christian, then how can we sin? The answer is that the New Testament writings set the standards for the Christian. This is the point of the

epistles - to show us what is right and what is expected as followers of the Lord. And this is why the entire scope of the New Testament must be taken in proper context.

Life application: We are not given license to sin. Our salvation is a one-time event and it is eternal. Therefore, what we do after that moment falls under another category - rewards and losses. The imprudent soul would squander Christ's rewards for earth's temporary, fleeting vanities. Don't be imprudent with your few moments of this life... eternity awaits.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? Romans 6:16

The word translated as "slaves" is appropriate. It comes from the word *doulos*. The King James Version translates this word as "servants." Both should possibly be used though. In the matter of sin, "servant" doesn't carry either the force, nor the intent of the matter. However, in the matter of righteousness it is acceptable. This verse's objective is to show the state we were in and the state we should be in. Humans are born into slavery; slavery to sin. It is inherited and it is a bondage which we cannot free ourselves from. Jesus Himself shows us this in John 8:34 -

"Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

Because we were born into Adam who sinned, we are thus a slave to sin; it is our station as humans. Having said that, there were different types of slaves in the ancient world, those who were the property of the house with no rights at all and those who had, in one way or another, become "bond" servants. A bondservant is a person who works without pay for various reasons. One of these reasons would be a person wholly devoted to another to the disregard of their own interests. This is the concept that a "bondservant" of Christ would carry.

As this is so, it should be clear that the change Christ has made in us is one which requires obedience. "Do you not know" is a way of saying, "Of course you know." It is a rhetorical question which is being asked to simply help us think clearly on the matter. And the follow up is given in the same thought - "To whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey." Again, Jesus gives clear insight into this concept in Matthew 6:24 -

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Master-ship or ownership doesn't have divided loyalties. If you are bound to one master, then that is where your work is to be directed. If you are bound to another master, then that is where your work should be directed. When we were freed from the slavery to sin and the ownership of the devil, we moved to the headship and authority of Jesus. Are we now "slaves" of Christ in the sense that we take our directions without thought, or are we "bondservants" of Christ where we have (or should have) ourselves wholly dedicated to His headship? The answer, based on the surrounding text, is that we are "bondservants" who can choose to ignore His headship, but that leads to Paul's conclusion.

We are slaves "of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness." As you can see, the word "obedience" is crucial and it shows that we can be disobedient; the will is involved in our actions. We were slaves to sin and death and the devil had ownership over us. We have moved to the authority of Christ and now have choices to make. Will we be obedient or will we hold on to the past? If we continue in the sins of the past, even after having been freed from sin's power, then we will suffer the death which that sin produces. Alcohol, for example, will destroy our liver.

We now have the ability, through the process of sanctification, to depart from these things and live in the freedom for which Christ has set us free. Here is the continuation of Jesus' words in John 8:35, 36 -

"And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."

Life application: If you have called on Jesus, then who is your Lord? It is Jesus. Do you want to be entangled again in a yoke of slavery? Of course not. Therefore, live as a bondservant of Christ, wholly committing yourself to His glorious headship. He has set you free. Now live in Him as if you believe it!

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Romans 6:17

In his customary excitement over the greatness of what God has done through Christ, Paul interjects a note of gratitude for what has occurred in the believer. "But God be thanked..." He has just previously shown the contrast between being a slave of sin to that of being a slave to righteousness and now his thanks go forth because, "though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered."

Yes, before hearing the gospel we were all slaves to sin. This includes all people and was what necessitated the cross. But through allowing the truth of the Christian message (that form of doctrine) to enter our heart, we have been delivered from this bondage. The word for "form" is the Greek word *typon*. This is a pattern or a mold. In Hebrews 8:5, it is used in this way -

"...as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.'"

As you can see, Moses was instructed to use the exact pattern he was shown. There was to be no deviation from the instruction. The reason why is because they were "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." We should have the exact same idea in our heads about our New Testament instruction. We are delivered

and we are sanctified through the pattern which is set. The question is, what is that pattern? The answer is simple, the teachings found in our instruction manual - the New Testament epistles.

The gospels show us who Jesus is, what He did, and the what transpired based on His work. The book of Acts shows how these things became established among the various people groups and some of the "why" of what Jesus did, but they contain little instruction on the "how to apply" what has been revealed. It is the epistles which show us how to do so. They give shape to the "form."

One could think of the epistles as a portion of the mold into which was poured a substance. This would then conform to the shape of the mold. The substance is the believer; the word is the mold. Our doctrine for conversion, and our doctrine for continued growth, must come from the mold or it isn't at all the pattern set down by God!

For this reason, it is imperative to read, ponder, and conform to these letters. That which fails to conform to the mold must be chiseled away, sanded, and smoothed out. And that which is poured into the wrong mold is an unacceptable vessel; it will be rejected entirely. This was seen in the Old Testament temple worship and it is no different in the church. Conformity to the doctrine of Christ must be realized in order for us to conform to Christ as individuals. It is conforming to this form which delivers us, directs us in sanctification, and which will lead to glorification.

Life application: If you want to be conformed to the image of Christ, read and apply your Bible to your life.