Don't Be Ashamed of Your Fruit

Turn in your Bibles to Romans 6:15-23 and I'll read our verses for today where we are going to concentrate. This is a continuation of the discussion we had last time about sanctification, and really we are going to be on this topic for quite some time. A lot of space is devoted to the life of the believer in Paul's writings because it is where we are in life. It doesn't get any more relevant than this, instructions about how to live your life, and why you should live a particular way. So, let's prepare our hearts by reading and concentrating on God's Word. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! 16 Do you not know that when you present vourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pray

The Garden

There is nothing like a good garden around late July and into August. The plants are green, and full of fruit. If the ground is properly prepared the nutritional value of the food found in a good garden just can't be beat. All the vegetables are ripe or in the process of ripening. In a really good garden there are all kinds of different plants, with different types of vegetables on them. There are tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, beans, peas, potatoes, pumpkins, broccoli, and spinach. Some of the plants grow tall, some of them are close to the ground, some of them grow under the ground. There are plants with hard leaves like garlic; and there are plants with fragile limbs like tomatoes. There are so many different colors in a well-kept garden as well; there are green, red, yellow, orange, some pink turnips, purple eggplants. Wonderful rich soil is the key to a good garden, and, oh yeah, there's one more thing a good garden needs, lots of hard work. The result of that hard work is a bountiful harvest in the late summer and fall. The gardener is rewarded with nutritious, delicious live giving fruit. Now, if that work is not done in the garden the result is very different. There are weeds that grow taller than the plants, and keep them from getting any sunlight. The weeds will take all the moisture out of the ground depriving the plants of the water they need. Some types of weeds will actually wrap themselves around the plants and choke the life right out of them. Sometimes you can still find some fruit from the garden that hasn't been kept, but you've got to dig for it, if it is there at all. There can be fruit in there, but it is small, and compared to the weeds, it is really insignificant. The gardener gets very little benefit from this type of garden and it is really more of a burden to him knowing that the plants are being choked out, and that he should be out there working to make the garden better. When it comes to gardens, unfortunately, the gardens at the Obermeyer house have tended to be like the latter more than the former. That is going to be different this year though, I'm sure of it. Well, those gardens can be a lot like our lives. We can either bear fruit for the Lord abundantly, or we can bear fruit for Him almost by accident, like in the second example. That kind of fruit is really kind of an embarrassment, and should not be the way we want our lives to be. Today the goal is to see how we can have a life like the first garden I mentioned that is abundantly full of healthy fruit for the Lord that we don't need to be ashamed of.

Three Types of Sanctification

If you remember last week we talked about the three types of sanctification that are in the Bible. First of all, we need to remember that sanctification is being set apart, or holy. There are two types of sanctification that apply to this life we live here on the earth. The first is positional sanctification, and we receive that from the Lord at the moment that we are saved by Him. He gives us a righteous standing with God the Father when we put our faith in Christ's atoning death on the cross. When we believe that He died on the cross for our sins He gives us a holy standing before God; that is positional sanctification. We just get that from the Lord as a blessing of putting our faith in Him. The second type of sanctification that has to do with this life is progressive sanctification. I read this week that it is also known as experimental sanctification. Now, that doesn't mean that it is like a science experiment where we are trying to make some sort of discovery. It means that we actually experience this sanctification while we live. This is the Christian life, or at least what the Christian life should be, it is living in obedience to our Master, and we are going to see more of that today. The last type of sanctification is perfected sanctification. This is what we are promised in the future. It is the state that we will be in for eternity, and it starts when we receive our new bodies at the Rapture; again that is 1 Cor 15. This is our hope that we talked a lot about in chapter 5. Paul devotes a lot of space in his writing to the first two types of sanctification. Many of his epistles start by describing our position with the Lord as a result of our faith, and then move into how we should then live; Ephesians and Colossians are two examples. These two types are very interrelated, and that is why it seems like Paul is going back and forth between the two here in this book. Basically, though the formula for his writing is a) we have a position, and then b) we should live a certain way, and that is in obedience to Christ.

Under grace

Here at the start of our section today we see another question with the same answer as the question that started chapter 6. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! If you look back up to verse 1 it looks a little different in your translation, but I noticed this week that they are exactly the same form in the Greek. Verse 1 is literally something like, "What then? Shall we say that we are to continue in sin that grace may increase?" There are some important things to notice about these two questions. You can see the difference between these two sections of the chapter when you notice this. Verse 1 says, shall we say. In other words, it is something

like, are we to believe. This is an operation of the mind. Paul is talking about the believer's position in the first section of the chapter. If you remember the first part was mostly about knowing things, and he used figurative language to show us our position in Christ. We were crucified with Him, we died with Him, we were buried with Him, we were baptized with Him. Those were all things to show our position in Christ. Verse one also asks if we are to continue IN sin. Notice here in verse 15 that it asks, "What then? Shall we sin. Before he asks if we are to continue in the state of sin, as if we do not have our position, now he asks if we are going to keep committing sins because we are under grace instead of under the Law. May it never be, Paul says. Again, this phrase is something like literally, may that thought never have been born, don't ever let the thought enter your mind, don't even consider it. No, we can never commit sins for the simple fact that we aren't under the Law anymore. If anything, we should be more motivated to not break the Laws because God has been so gracious to us. Like we've talked about before. we don't just go crazy because we aren't under the Law anymore. God is just as upset with us when we sin against Him whether the Law is in effect of not. The Law of Moses was the equivalent of the police catching them doing something. It set up a series of punishments for breaking the laws, as well as just enumerating the laws. Now, when the police aren't around the rules are still in effect, you just don't receive the punishment for breaking them. Notice it says also, "under grace" in verse 15. You can think of that as being under the influence of grace, or under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is like Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. That is getting a little ahead of where we are now, as that pretty much is the whole thing, but being under grace is like the first part of that, don't be under the influence of wine, be under the influence of the Spirit, and all those wonderful things he talked about will be the result.

Present yourself

Next, we see verse 16, which is a parallel of verse 13 from last week. Here in verse 16 we see the results of doing what it says in verse 13. Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in **righteousness?** There are a couple of interesting things in this verse as well. First off we see that there is a choice here. We can present ourselves to one of two things. We can present our self to sin, or if you notice we can present our self to obedience. Do you see that? You are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, or of obedience. This is just like in verse 13 where he said to stop presenting your bodies to sin, and start presenting them to God. So, we have sin on one side, and this is the concept of sin, or the sin nature, that thing inside of us that makes us commit sins. And on the other side we have obedience, and that is obedience to Christ. So, it is like we saw in chapter 5, we have Adam and Christ here again, we can either present our self to sin, the old man, our sin nature to be a slave, or we can present our self to Christ, the new life of obedience to be a slave. Notice also that he is talking about slaves for obedience. So, when you present yourself here, you are going to obey. This word slave is one that conjures up all

kinds of images in our minds. Typically, we may think of people who were captured and taken against their will into captivity, but that isn't really what is being talked about here. It says, "when you present yourself." That doesn't sound like being taken against your will; that seems voluntary. This looks more like a person who is giving himself to another to be their slave, which is something that people used to do. They would either do it to pay a debt, or to be trained in a skill so they could get out of poverty. Their master would take care of them, provide them food, clothing and shelter in return for their work. This doesn't say that we are being taken captive into slavery here; it says we present ourselves. We see the results of this presentation here also. If we obey sin the result is death, and if we obey obedience, or God, the result is righteousness. This is also like chapter 5, in that we saw that the sin of Adam brought death, but the free gift of Christ brings life. Here, when we present our self to sin, the result is death. When we present our self to obedience, the result is life. What does that really mean, "to present yourself to obedience"? Well, we know that if we obey obedience the result is righteousness, and the result of righteousness is life, and the way to have life is through faith. Remember the theme verses for the whole book, Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, But the righteous man shall live by faith. The righteous will live by faith. Romans 3:26 speaking of God the Father says, He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. So, to obey obedience from our passage today means to have faith, and if we do obey obedience we have life and righteousness.

Obedience from the heart

We see that explained in more detail in verses 17 and 18. But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. So, the people here were slaves of sin, but they became obedient from the heart, to that form of teaching to which they were committed. They were on one side, lost in their sins, on the side of sin and death, but they became obedient from the heart. That means that they believed what they had been taught inwardly, with their heart, wholeheartedly. This wasn't just an external thing that they were faking for the world. They believed the things they were taught with their inner being. That's what the heart is when it is referenced in Scripture many times, and this is one of those times. They believed on the inside, and it changed who they were on the outside, because verse 18 says they were freed from sin, and became slaves of righteousness. Before we just breeze past an important phrase though, look at the end of verse 17 again, it says that they became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed. So, they became obedient to the Word of God that was taught to them. That is important to realize. They didn't just obey the words of man, or the teachings of man; they obeyed the Scripture. The KJV makes it a little more clear that that is what is being said **But** God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. The Word of God is truly the word of life, and Paul says here that they obeyed from the heart what they had been taught. And,

notice that when they obeyed from the heart that they became slaves of righteousness. They were now committed to being a slave of the one whom they obeyed. You are either a slave of one or the other. Paul doesn't give several options here. There are only two; you are either a slave of sin, and the sin nature, which results in death, or you obey from the heart the Word of God, and you are a slave of righteousness, which we have seen leads to life. Again, I want you to see that this is a genuine obedience from the heart, it isn't just an outward appearance, this is an obedience that was meaningful. It reminds me of getting gifts from the kids at Christmas time when they were just little. They would come with a gift that to anyone else would just be a piece of paper or a stick, but to me, their Dad it was something special. I still have some of them because I know they were given from the heart. And that is what Paul is talking about here, their obedience was from the heart, it was a special kind of allegiance that they had toward the Lord, and not only did it save them, but it changed how they acted on the outside; they became slaves of righteousness.

Paul in Seminary, and the progression of sin

Then Paul tells them that he is speaking in human terms because of the weakness of their flesh. He is trying to make it easier for them to understand. Remember that Paul received his instruction from the Lord. That must have been quite a Seminary experience for Paul; I mean he was taught by the Master Himself. Those were some discussions obviously, and we would not have been able to follow a lot of it, I'm sure. You have Christ Himself, teaching one of the most brilliant, and importantly, one of the most sanctified theologians to ever live. So, here he puts it into human terms so that we can understand him. Notice, that he has to put it into human terms because of the weakness of their flesh. That is sin. Sin keeps us from knowing God completely, so Paul has to make it so we can understand what he is talking about. Verse 19 continues For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, **resulting in sanctification**. This verse tells us something about sin, and what happens if we obey sin. There is a downward progression, and we saw that in our Psalm today. You can keep your place in Romans 6 and turn back to Psalm 1 if you want to. Psalm 1 begins with How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! Notice the downward progression there. The blessed man does not do these things, so we can assume that the sinner does do these things, and it if the sinner does these things, you can see it gets worse and worse. He is saying here that the blessed man does not follow the progression of sin. The progression of sin is downward; it gets worse and worse. So, if we look at it from what the sinner would be doing it goes something like this. First he is walking with the sinners, he can still turn away from them whenever he wants, he is just walking with them. Then he is standing in the path of the sinners, hoping that they would come along. Then finally he is sitting with them, just seeking them out, and doing what they do, he is sitting with them; he is one of them. But, Psalm 1 tells us that the blessed man does not follow this progression; he doesn't do these things. Instead he delights in the Law of the Lord, and meditates on it day and night. That is he meditates on the Word of the Lord day and night, it is always in the front of his mind. And, that is what Paul is talking about back in Romans in verse 19; when you used to be slaves of sin, your sin got worse and

worse. So, now he gives them another command. Present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in holiness. What he is saying there can't be missed. That is key to the whole argument here. When you obey from the heart, like these Roman Christians did, they became slaves of righteousness, and the result is holiness, or sanctification. When they obeyed it affected their behavior; our obedience in the heart, on the inside, should affect our behavior on the outside. The Lord desires for His people to be holy. Leviticus 11:44 says For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And, Peter quotes that to his audience in 1 Peter 1:16. This is progressive sanctification. Daily yielding ourselves to the Holy Spirit, obeying the Word, and becoming more like Christ. This isn't perfection. We aren't perfect, like will be shown in chapter 7. We still have our sinful flesh, so we do still sin, but the goal is perfection, we should strive to be completely obedient to the Lord, and know that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, and He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. But, we should have this desire to follow Him, obey Him and please Him. We saw that sin is a downward progression; if we do not confess our sins and deal with them, they will get worse, we will progress down the path of sin. So, our hearts desire, if we have obeyed from the heart should be to be like the blessed man in Psalm 1 who meditates on God's Word throughout the day and night, and presents himself to the Lord ready to obey Him. And if we do this, if we obey the Lord from the heart, we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and we meditate on His Word day and night, and confess our sins as they happen, then we will be more like Christ. That is why it is called progressive sanctification. It should be a progression; we should be more like Christ as we grow in Him. We should not be going backwards like the progression of sin. We should be getting more and more holy as we continue in Christ. And when we continue in Christ then like we saw in Psalm 1, we will be like the tree beside the river bearing fruit. And this is what we see in the next few verses here.

The two masters

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Basically, he saying here that before you obeyed from the heart, before you were saved, you were free from righteousness. I picture this like there are two masters waiting for people to come along. One of the masters is dressed like he's ready to go out on the town and live it up; that is sin, and the other looks like he is dressed to work in the garden, that is the Lord. Those who chose to become slaves of the one dressed like he's ready to go out on the town go with him. They go live their lives of sin, and the result is death. Those who obey from the heart the Master who is dressed to work in a garden become His slaves, and go to work in His garden. The first group is free of that work going on in the garden. They don't have to work there, they can do as they please, they don't have to pull the weeds, they don't have to water the plants, they don't have to prune the plants, and all the other work that goes on in the garden; they are free in regard to righteousness. They are not required to work in the garden of the Master. In fact, they can't work in the Master's garden. They are slaves of another one, and they aren't permitted to come onto the Master of the garden's property. They are free from Him.

Then he asks them about the fruit that they were bearing then. The NKJV says What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of

those things is death. The word for fruit here in the NKJV is translated as benefit in the NASB. It means the result of doing something. Like the apple is the result of the tree's flowers being pollinated and growing through the summer. This is the same word that is in Galatians 5 that talks about the fruit of the Spirit. Paul asks here, what benefit did you get from those things that you were doing then? What is the benefit of those things you do when you are with the master of sin? Really he answers the question as he is asking it; he says that they are ashamed of those things that they did then. And make no mistake; you can be ashamed of the sins that you commit as a Christian as well. Christians still sin, and it is shameful when we do. It is more shameful than when the unsaved sin. They are expected to sin, they are slaves of sin, like we see here. Before these people believed they were slaves of sin it says. And they lived like it, and the result is death. Well, we can still sin, we can go away from the garden where the Lord has us working, and we can go along with the people who are the slaves of sin. And, guess what, the gardens of our lives will show the result. If we are living with the sinners, or as if we are slaves of sin, and not slaves of Christ, then the garden of our lives will be full of weeds and thistles, and the plants that are supposed to bear fruit will be tiny and choked out by all the weeds. If the seeds have been planted, the plants will still be there, but they will be hard to find. Have you ever seen a garden that was overrun with weeds from a distance? You can't see the plants at all; the weeds are the dominant things. You have to dig around in there to find the plants. Well, that is the way it is in our lives if we go with the master of sin. We can't be with him and work in our garden at the same time. We are doing one or the other. That is why the Lord said you can't serve two masters. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. You cannot serve God and sin at the same time. If you are out on the town, you can't work in your garden. And when we obey the Lord from the heart, He calls us to be His slaves; He calls us to work in the garden of our lives obediently.

Free to bear the fruit of holiness

And we see that in verse 22, again in the NKJV But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. Now, though it says when you obey Christ from the heart you are set free from the master of sin, and we become slaves of God, and importantly it gives the result here. It says that you have your fruit to holiness. If we present ourselves to God as slaves, then He sets us to work in the garden of our lives. We till the ground, or study His Word, we pull the weeds, repent of and confess our sins, we prune the plants, get rid of things that distract us from the Lord, and our garden looks like a garden, not a weed patch. It says here that we have our fruit; we bear fruit for the Lord when we live in obedience to Him. Remember, we can't live with the master of sin, and work in the garden. But, if we are living in obedience to Christ, our gardens will be good. It will be obvious that the person living in obedience has weeded their garden, and tended to their plants. The plants will be bearing good fruit. If we are living in obedience to the Lord we will bear fruit for Him, and we will not be living in sin against his wishes. We will be working in our garden, not off following after sin. Again, we won't be perfect because we still have the sin nature within us. We still have the old nature, but remember that it has been crucified with Christ like we saw in verse 6. So, that old man, our old sinful

nature does not have power over us, to lead us into sin. Christ's death, through our faith has rendered that old nature ineffective. We are now slaves of God, and we are to obey Him from the heart with our bodies and our lives, just like we obeyed the teaching that we heard from the Word with our minds. And just like we can't conjure up salvation on our own, we need the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin, which He does through the Word, we can't follow Him in our own strength. We need to rely on the Holy Spirit to help us follow Him, we need to be yielded to Him, and we need to listen to Him when He is convicting us of sin and showing us how to live our lives. This is important to remember. When we try to do these things in our own strength, according to our own minds we get into trouble. That is when we go away from the garden and start following after sin. We need to be constantly yielded to the Spirit, we need to be in constant fellowship with Him, or we can quickly get off track. And we will get off track, but like I said before we have the promise of 1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. That says the whole idea right there. We will sin, but we can confess those sins to Christ, and He will forgive us. If we say we don't sin, not only do we lie, verse 10 says we make God a liar! Obviously we don't want to do that. There is no lie within Him; He is perfect. And if we say that we don't sin, we make Him out to be a liar. Yes, we sin, and when we confess those sins to Christ, He forgives us. And our garden looks well kept.

The Gospel in one verse

Finally, we have a verse that just encapsulates the entire Gospel message so succinctly. It's all there, in one neat package. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Notice the contrast there. The wages of sin is death, BUT the free gift of God is eternal life. Wages... death. Gift... life. This is the gospel message. We all have a sin nature. We all act on that sin nature and commit sins against our Creator who is holy. But, He offers us a free gift, just like He talked about in chapter 5, and if we take the free gift, we have eternal life in Christ Jesus. Wages are something that you get when you do a job, when you work for someone. You do the work, and your master, or boss pays you. These are the human terms that Paul was talking about in verse 19. He equates here our spiritual lives with working in a job. If we work for sin, or we are enslaved by sin, then our paycheck will be death. We will reap what we sow. If you are enslaved to sin, you sow sin, and you reap death. But, notice how the analogy changes in the second half of the verse. It is another contrast; Paul has been using that technique a lot in these chapters. The free gift is eternal life. Paul talked about the free gift in chapter 5, verse 15 says But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The free gift is the death of Christ on the cross. In John 12:32 Christ said that if He is lifted up on the cross, all men will be drawn to Him. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. That is the free gift. He offers eternal life through His death on the cross. You don't earn gifts. They are just given. Notice you earn the death in the first part of the verse. Death is the wages of sin. You earn the death from your sin. Eternal life is a gift that we receive by accepting Christ as our Savior. We accept the gift by presenting ourselves to Him; we submit ourselves to Him as our

Master. We become His slaves, and oh by the way, good and faithful slaves obey their masters.

So, can you imagine how the garden of someone like Paul would have looked? He was completely yielded to the Holy Spirit, at least as much as a person could be in this life. He was constantly praying for people; he told us to pray without ceasing. He was constantly confessing his sins, constantly thinking about the Word of God like it says in Psalm 1. He was living in constant obedience to the Lord. He did not have pervasive sin in his life. He was constantly living under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, he was constantly working in the garden of his life. So, there were very few weeds there, and when they came up, he picked them as soon as he noticed them. He pruned away the excess branches on the plants so the fruit would be bigger and the plant would be stronger. This is like getting rid of anything in our lives that distracts us from serving the Lord, this doesn't necessarily have to be sin either, this could be things that are ok, but just a distraction. Paul's plants would be well watered. He would water His life with the Word of God. Here's a good one for us husbands, Eph 5:25-26, **Husbands**, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. Notice, the equating of the water and the Word. The word cleanses us, and gives us life, just like watering plants gives them life. What was the result of Paul keeping the garden of his life so well? Immense fruit! Can you imagine the fruit that resulted from a life like Paul's? Think of all the millions of people that have been saved as a direct result of the work that he did for the Lord. He was truly a sanctified person, he lived in obedience to the Lord, and when he sinned, he took care of the problem, he immediately pulled the weeds out of his life and confessed them to the Lord. God's original intention was for us to live in a perfect garden that didn't have weeds, and thistles. The fruit was just there for the picking. That was the Garden of Eden. Adam was placed there to tend the garden, not to reap its fruit by the sweat of his brow. That came after he sinned. God cursed the ground, causing weeds to grow, and requiring work to be done to gain the fruit. Our lives are just like that. God wants us to be in the Garden of Eden, some day we will be. But, now we are left to live on this earth with our sin nature, so we have to work in the garden of our lives to bear fruit for Him. It takes effort, God doesn't just give us the fruit, we have to cooperate with Him, and be yielded to the Holy Spirit, that is what progressive sanctification is all about. And, with Him we can bear fruit that we don't need to be ashamed of.

Pray