

# Teen Challenge Sunday

*Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.  
(Romans 6:12 ESV)*

*But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart  
(Romans 6:17 ESV)*

## **Obedient From The Heart**

**April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**Romans 6:12-23**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Open your Bibles this morning to Romans 6:12-23; that's on page 943 in your pew Bibles. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup> Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

<sup>15</sup> What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> 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? <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

<sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:12–23 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

In the Bible there are two great images – two dominant ways – of thinking about salvation. In the Old Testament there are two great STORIES that provide a framework for us to think about our salvation. The first one is the flood. The flood story is about the wrath of God falling on the world because of sin. But the flood story is also about the grace of God in providing an escape. There is a boat. There is a guy who builds the boat and invites other people to come inside and

be **SAVED** from the wrath to come. So one dominant image – one important way for us to understand salvation is to understand it as **RESCUE** from the **WRATH** to come. That's one way to think about it.

The other story that helps us think about salvation is the Exodus. The Exodus is about how God saves his people from **SLAVERY**. The people of God have fallen under the power of Egypt. They are forced to do things they don't want to do. They are oppressed. They are limited. They are treated like sub-humans and they are forced to do inhuman things – like killing their own children because Pharaoh feels threatened by them. They are in **HORRIBLE BONDAGE** to a hostile **POWER** and God **GLORIOUSLY SETS THEM FREE**. He sets them free and he shows them how to live and he leads them to the promised land. That's **SALVATION!** That's another way to think about what God has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, we don't get to choose which story we prefer – I'm not saying that – they are **BOTH** true and both ways of wrapping our arms around this **HUGE** and **MAGNIFICENT** grace of God, but the focus of this passage in Romans is clearly on the second image. Romans 6 is talking about how God sets us free and that's what I want to talk about this morning. Now I want to talk about it from forest level; we don't have time to go through it at ground level – I want to pull up to the eagle's eye view and see the big picture. I want to look at this passage and a few neighbouring passages in order to understand the bondage of sin and the freedom that is ours in Jesus Christ.

Let's talk first about the bondage of sin. What is the nature of our inherited slavery? Remember that by the time we come to the Exodus story the people are being **BORN INTO** slavery. They are not choosing it – they are being born into it. That's how sin feels sometimes doesn't it? It doesn't feel like something we went looking for it feels like something that came looking for us. It feels like something we were born to and that's what the Bible says. We are born slaves. We are born into bondage and to understand salvation we have to first understand the nature of that bondage.

### **The Nature Of Our Bondage**

Let me tell you three things about it. First of all the Bible say that it is:

## 1. A Bondage Of Destructive Desire

We see that at the very outset of the passage we just read. Look at verse 12:

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. (Romans 6:12 ESV)

According to the Bible everybody does what they want! Don't let anyone talk to you about how you can overcome sin or addiction by means of will power. The will cannot and does not overcome desire. People do what they want. Why we do we sin? Because we LOVE SIN! That's the nature of addiction – that's why we join groups and get prescriptions and reach out for help because we WANT TO DO THINGS THAT WE DESPERATELY WANT TO NOT WANT TO DO! That's addiction! We want to do drugs because those drugs make us feel good – but at the same time we don't WANT TO DO DRUGS. We do and we don't. We want to look at pornography because it provides a pleasure and an escape and a sense of identity that we WANT TO HAVE but we don't want to watch pornography because it makes us feel gross and small and selfish and AH!!!!!! God rescue us from contrary desires! Jesus knew about this. He said:

<sup>19</sup> the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (John 3:19–20 ESV)

It is our DESIRE that keeps us in the dark. We love what we shouldn't, we fear what we shouldn't. We want to love the light but we love the darkness more. We want to love our kids but we love the high more. We want to love our wives or our husbands but we love the thrill and the feedback MORE. We are slaves to what we love and in our lucid moments we HATE what we love. That is bondage. That is addiction. Call it whatever you want – THAT IS SIN! Sin makes us love what kills us. And don't you dare sit there and think this isn't about you because your destructive love isn't chemical or sexual. How many of us were once in ABSOLUTE BONDAGE to anger, unforgiveness and bitterness? Those are LUSTS OF THE FLESH just as surely as these others. We WANT revenge and the upper hand even though it destroys every relationship we care about. We wish we could forgive and be gracious but we can't because WE LOVE OUR ANGER and our REVENGE and our POWER MORE! That's bondage! That's SIN that's SLAVERY and we cannot set ourselves free. Our desire leads us and lures us into

every act of self destruction and ruination until finally it drags us down to hell. James, the brother of the Lord said that very thing:

<sup>14</sup> But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. <sup>15</sup> Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (James 1:14–15 ESV)

That's how it is! God help us! God save us from the bondage of our desire.

Secondly, the Bible says that our bondage is:

## 2. A Bondage Of Misguided Hostility

The Apostle Paul talks about this in a neighbouring passage. Look at Romans 8:7. He says:

For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it does not submit to God's law; **indeed, it cannot**. (Romans 8:7 ESV)

Again this sounds a lot like what Jesus said in John 3. Jesus said that if you are loving the darkness then you are HATING the light. You don't want the light to expose what you are doing because you love what you are doing; you are not ready to leave it behind. Therefore you look at God – who is the light – as an enemy rather than as a Savior.

That's when you know that you are really addicted – when you hate the people who are trying to help you. How many of you know what I'm talking about? As long as you are in it – and remember you are in it because you still love it – as long as you are in it you will hate those who are trying to get you out of it. That is the INSANITY of sin. We love the one who is holding us captive and we HATE the one who is setting us free. It is the Stockholm Syndrome as applied to human sin.

In our sin we hate our Savior. We see him as judgmental, restrictive, insensitive, uncaring, cold, parental, magisterial and withholding. He did not give me joy – I had to go GET IT and now I am captive to it and it is HIS FAULT! That is the logic of slaves.

Do you remember when God sent Moses to set his people free? Moses rebuked Pharaoh and

called down plagues of judgment and deliverance and he led the people through the Red Sea and he called down manna from heaven and water from the rock and STILL the people yearned for Egypt in their hearts. They were deluded and they began to remember eating meat from pots when now all they had was bread. Do you remember what happened? The Bible says they wanted to stone Moses. Moses had to run to God and cry out:

“What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”  
(Exodus 17:4 ESV)

The people HATED the one who was sent to save them. They were so ENSLAVED that they loved what was killing them and hated who was saving them. That is bondage my friends. That is sin. When you cannot even tell friend from foe.

Thirdly, the Bible also says that our bondage is:

### **3. A Bondage Of Spiritual Blindness**

Move forward a little further in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 4:4. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says there.

In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4 ESV)

He is speaking about those who are perishing – those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. In their case the god of this world – that is the devil – has BLINDED their minds to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel, which is the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. That is the final horrifying FACT of our captivity. We are slaves to our desires, we are captive to our senseless hostility and here is the last nail in our coffin, here is the last door on our dungeon. We are in the dark and our eyes have been blinded to the light. We cannot see the way home.

That’s who you are in your sin.

Now, let me say a word to those who can’t quite identify as naturally with the story that the Bible is telling. Some of us don’t need help understanding this – WE HAVE LIVED THIS or we ARE

LIVING THIS! But some of us got saved when we were 6 years old. In the kindness of God we barely remember the dark. Our scars are so faded and so light that we almost wonder if they're real. You need to know that this is what God saved you from. You need to know what DIED when you came to Christ at 6 years old. This you – the SLAVE YOU died in the dark and was raised in the light. This is who you are apart from Christ – this is who we ALL are apart from Christ. This is the BONDAGE of human sin.

But thanks be to God there is freedom in Jesus Christ! Let's talk about that.

## **The Nature Of Our Freedom**

According to the Bible our freedom in Christ is first of all a:

### **1. Freedom To See God As He Is**

If you still have your Bibles open to 2 Corinthians 4 look forward two verses to verse 6. The Apostle Paul says:

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6 ESV)

Do you see that? Salvation begins when God shines the light into our sin darkened, demon blinded hearts such that we SEE the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That's where it all begins! God opens BLIND EYES and the first thing we see is the goodness of God in the person of Jesus Christ. We see that he is not hateful. For God so loved the world that he gave. He is not withholding. For God so loved the world that he GAVE. We realize that we have been lied to. God is for us. He is good. There is nothing for us here in the dark. Everything good – everything alive and human and beautiful is found in God and God alone. A light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. This is what it means to be born again. It is to come to life and to open your eyes again – just like a new born baby – and to see for the first time the eyes of your Father reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. It is to know that he is for you, that he LOVES YOU and he is good. That's where life begins. That's the very beginning and the very essence of Christian freedom. It is reconciliation to God. It is the end of hostility and the

beginning of eternal joy.

Secondly, the Bible says that our freedom is:

## **2. A Freedom To Love God As He Deserves**

These are all connected obviously. Our freedom begins with grace from God to see God as he is. And we see God as he is we love him as we should. Paul says in Romans 5:

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5 ESV)

God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us LOVE HIM as we should! Paul goes on to say in Romans 8:

<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:15–16 ESV)

When you become a Christian God puts his Holy Spirit in our hearts – not to lead us back into sin – but to lead us forward into the love of our Father. He helps us to cry Abba! Father! The Spirit helps us understand that God is our Father and we are his children. He BUILDS FAMILY and INTIMACY and LOVE.

God knows our brokenness. He knows that sin blinded us and ruined us and made us hate. So he lights the way and he heals our hearts. He makes us love again. He teaches us to love what we should. He teaches us to love all that is good, all that is beautiful and all that flows from him. That what the Spirit does – he opens our eyes and our minds to the goodness and the glory of God and seeing that we are changed. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 the Apostle says:

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV)

In the end all people become what they love. All people are fashioned and changed by what they love. If you love the dark then you become the dark, but if by the Spirit you love God then you shall be changed into the image of God. You shall be restored into the very image of Jesus Christ

– this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. That is the glory of our freedom in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And lastly, according to the Bible our freedom in Christ is:

### **3. A Freedom To Obey God Because We Want To**

Let's go back to our main passage. In Romans 6 Paul speaks about a glorious gospel freedom.

He says:

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart (Romans 6:17 ESV)

Paul is talking to saved people here. He is writing to people who have been RESCUED and so he can say: "Thanks be to God that you who were once SLAVES OF SIN have become OBEDIENT from the heart." Saved by grace, filled with the Holy Spirit you are now WANTING to obey God and to live as you were made to live – HALLELUJAH! That's what we want! We want to want God! We want to want to do what is right and what will cause us and those we love to FLOURISH! We want to be good spouses and good parents and good PEOPLE – we want to want what we should! That is salvation friends, that is the freedom we have in Christ – it is not simply having the power to IGNORE our PASSIONS – God save us from so stale a salvation – no this is so much better this is the freedom to LOVE WHAT WE SHOULD. This is the freedom to INCLINE in the direction of all that God is and all that God has made us to be and to do – this is the freedom to OBEY GOD FROM THE HEART.

Do you want that? I LONG FOR THAT EVEN AS I HAVE BEEN SAVED TO THAT. This is a desire that grows and grows and grows as you walk with Jesus. When I was young in faith I wanted mostly not to sin. Now I want mostly just to be as Christ. Practically speaking that doesn't mean anything different but it feels so very different. I hate sin now because it doesn't feel like what I love. I love Christ and I have tasted and I have known that he is good and so I want to be like that more and more – by one degree to the next – until one day I shall SEE HIM and I SHALL BE LIKE HIM for I shall SEE HIM AS HE IS! I am living for that day, I am longing for that day and thank God Almighty that day is coming! Its coming for me because the



Spirit leads me there. He leads me by the light of God, by the love of God and by the desires of my transformed heart. That is salvation – that is FREEDOM – thanks be to God!

**Response:**

That's what salvation is – but where is salvation found? That's where Paul takes us at the end of the passage. Look at verse 23 of Roman 6:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ESV)

Salvation is found in Jesus Christ. There is no other name in heaven or on the earth by which men may be saved. Do you want to be free? Do you want to love what you should? Do you want to OBEY GOD FROM THE HEART? Then call upon the name of Jesus and thou shalt be saved! Call to him for rescue, cast yourself upon his life and death, cling to him in desperate faith, receive the Holy Spirit, call to Abba Father and be saved. This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

Jody, will you come and lead us?