

Romans

Romans Chapter Six

Romans 6:15-16-17

May 2, 2010

This is lesson number 39 in our exposition of the Book of Romans.

The Theme of the Letter

Romans 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ ” Romans 1:16-17

Last week we did not finish with verse 16 and the subject of “Whose Slave Are You?”

And today we will pick up verse 17 with the subject of: “You Obeyed From the Heart”

Now in order to get the context let’s read:

Romans 6:15-23

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ 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? ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to *more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² 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. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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We need to clearly understand what Paul and John mean by “sin” in this context. It cannot mean the occasional unintentional sins that we are all guilty of; if it meant that, there would be no Christians at all.

What it does mean by sin is the deliberate, settled, stiff-necked refusal to give up any sin that has been brought to your mind.

You know it is sin, and you will not repent. **That is lawlessness.**

We have dealt with what it means to be “under law,” any law system.

All unbelievers are under law.

Anyone who thinks that they are in control of their salvation is under law.

The word “slave” is important. The KJV has it servant, but it is better understood in our time as “slave.”

Dr. Lloyd-Jones makes an excellent point in the last part of verse 16:

whether of **sin** leading to **death**,
or of **obedience** leading to **righteousness**?

The contrast is between sin versus obedience; and death versus righteousness.

Is not life the opposite of death?

Why does he use righteousness and not life?

He does not say obedience leading to life, but obedience leading to righteousness.

Lloyd-Jones correctly points out that if he had said obedience leading to life, he would have been teaching justification by works. Cf. verse 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift of God** is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But obedience leads to the kind of righteousness and the kind of life that every true believer desires to live.

Cf. **Eph 2:10**

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

This is what the apostle is telling us in **Romans 6:15-16**

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15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 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?

There are two and only two powers to which we are enslaved: sin or obedience.

These two powers are utterly opposed to each other.

Both are slave masters.

One is sin and the devil.

The other is obedience and God.

One leads to eternity in hell.

The other leads to eternity in heaven with Jesus.

Matt 6:24 Jesus said:

"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.

Our Lord Jesus made it very clear how we demonstrate to which power we enslaved, by what we do and not by what we say: Matthew 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice **lawlessness!**'

1 John 1:5-10

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in

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darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just 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.

John says that if we say that we are believers in Jesus i.e. a Christian, we are either a slaves to obedience or we are liars.

But Paul has confidence in you and says so in verse 17 -18.

Title: “You Obeyed From the Heart”

Think about the reaction of the Pharisees to what Jesus said in John 8:31-36.

John 8:31-36

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, 'You will be made free?'"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

But search the depths of your mind:

What do you **do**? How do you **think**? How do you **live**?

And so this very moment, as you listen to the words of this slave who stands before you, we are, every one, either a slave of obedience to righteousness, a Christian; or, you are still as you were when you took your first breath, a slave of sin.

But praise be to God there is deliverance, emancipation, freedom from slavery to sin. Yes, we are still slaves, but willing slaves of obedience to Jesus Christ.

17 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.

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This morning, with God helping us, we will learn something about those who are no longer slaves of sin; we will look at:

Who gets the credit	But God be thanked...
What we once were	that though you were slaves of sin...
What we did	yet you obeyed from the heart...
What we obeyed	that form of doctrine...
How we came to know	to which you were delivered.

First: Who gets the credit: But God be thanked...
Why give thanks to God?

Because God deserves all the glory!

If you listen to what is being offered as the gospel in many churches today you will hear propositions to the effect that God has made His supreme effort to make salvation **possible**.

But salvation according to this proposition can only be put into effect for you when you agree with the proposition.

In other words, the final deciding factor is man's so-called "free will."

Now if God is not able, or at least not willing, to break my will, and my salvation ultimately rests on my decision or free choice, who gets the glory when I respond?

But, the argument goes, when I made my "free-will" decision, God gave me the ability. Fine, then what about your so-called "free-will?" I am talking about first cause. When you are "dead in sin," you are dead toward the things of God.

When a person ever understands what it means to be "dead in trespasses and sin," they will cease boasting about their "free-will."

You can test any conflicting interpretations of Scripture and pretty well know which is the correct interpretation by seeing who gets the glory, man or God.

So I don't see much glory left for a frustrated God who cannot achieve His purpose without man's agreement.

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In my personal experience, I know that if God had left me to do what I wanted to do, I would have been in hell years ago. And that's where I deserve to be. I am perfectly content to say that God the Holy Spirit arrested my mind with the Word of God, convinced me of my guilt against a holy God, and in pure grace led me to faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And so, by the grace of God, I will say until I die, "God be thanked..."

Second: What you once were: ... that though you were slaves of sin...

What does this mean? Does it mean that those who were slaves of sin and are now under grace do not sin at all? No. It cannot mean that.

Then there would be no Christians at all, because even true believers in Jesus Christ, who are slaves of obedience, still find sin in their mortal body.

The thing that we must keep in mind as we continue to study Chapter 6 is that Paul is answering the wicked thought that grace produces presumptuous sin. No! No! No! Anyone who presumes on the grace of God and continues in willful sin has not yet been delivered from slavery to sin!

And another thing that the apostle keeps before us is that while it is true that we can do nothing to merit the grace of God, neither can a true child of God sin away his salvation. When the child of God sins, he repents and confesses his sin to God, and quits his sin.

The apostle warns us in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that there is a godly sorrow that produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the worldly sorrow {the sorrow of being found out} leads to death.

2 Cor 7:10

For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

That is why it is so easy to misunderstand this **doctrine of grace**.

If I can't sin away grace, **why not** continue in sin? And the answer continues to be, "Certainly not!" Simply because a genuine believer does not think that way.

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The slave to sin and death can be characterized by the stubborn, stiff-necked, unrepentant refusal to quit sin. The one who presumes on the grace of God says, at least in his heart, "I believe that I am saved because I prayed the "Sinner's Prayer" and asked Jesus to come into my heart. And besides that, I have been baptized." "I must be saved because I have done everything they told me to do "in order to be saved."

But there is just this little problem with such a person. Most of his waking hours are taken up with wicked and selfish thoughts. He or she passes along gossip and slander, but after all, they say, "it was the truth." They come to meet with the church when it suits them and they can't find anything else to do. But they don't enjoy it very much when they do come. They want people to think they are a Christian. And, "Yes," they say, "I have a few habits that I know are sinful. But no one else knows what I do when I am by myself, so it can't hurt, can it?" "And, besides, I will clean up my act someday, but I like the way I am right now. "You don't have to be a religious fanatic" they say, "to be a Christian."

Paul is not laying out an optional way of life for those who want to be "spiritual." No, he is simply describing the life of every one who is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there is such a thing as ignorant zeal without knowledge. But there is also such a thing as being completely sold out to Jesus Christ. And that is what a slave of obedience has done, he has sold out to Jesus Christ!

John 14:15 Jesus Said:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."

And so, every Christian is a slave of obedience to righteousness.

Third: What you did: yet you obeyed from the heart...

I have already mentioned that there is a lot of talk about our "free-will." The way many preachers present what they think is the gospel is to say that God has, in effect, put on a grand drama in the death of Christ for sin. They say that Jesus was nailed to a cruel cross and thereby makes salvation "possible." If you want to be saved, you must exercise your "free-will," and only then can God save you.

Think now, without malice toward this preacher, who is in charge of such a proposition? Man or God?

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The Bible teaches us that Christ actually accomplished what He purposed to do when He died on the cross and was buried and rose again from the grave. Jesus did not make salvation possible, He made it certain.

Listen carefully to me, if this is new to you. This matter of “free-will” and salvation. Do you not choose to come to Christ?

Is not your will involved in coming to faith in Jesus Christ? Of course it is. Christianity is not a mindless, uncommitted existence.

Being a Christian does involve the mind, the will if you please.

17 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.

Do you see it? “... though you were... yet you obeyed...”

You were one thing, a slave to sin; now you are something else: still a slave, but now you have a new master, the Lord Jesus Christ!

How did that happen?

Being a slave to a new Master manifests itself in obedience,
“... you obeyed from **the heart...**”

Now everyone knows that “the heart” in this context is not the muscle in your chest that pumps your life’s blood.

Your “heart” here is your innermost being. We refer to the “heart of the matter,” the most important element, the central thing, the heart.

Your heart is the center of your thoughts and emotions.

And the Christian obeys from the heart.

I received this email from a Dr. Lee who ministers primarily to the Chinese.

Looking for Good Temptations

“Most of the time, it is I who look for temptation to fall into, not the other way around.” A Christian talked about the temptations he faced away on business trips, having the free time and

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in places no one know him. I cannot agree with his confession more! The best example would be David.

One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, "Isn't this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her. 2 Sam 11:2-4 (NIV)

If David who walked so closely with God sin so easily, will I fare better?

Wandering mind and eyes look for temptation. Believers do not just suddenly fall into temptation; their walk with the Lord has faltered long before. Do I seek out pornography, for thrill, when no one else is around? Why am I not able to break the habit and keep living a life of failure?

What is needed to anchor my wandering mind? Guard it by spending time with the Lord in prayer, meditating on His Word, listening to praise and worship music, to name a few."

With that thought in mind, let's consider our "free-will."

What moves us to action? How free is our "free-will."

What we do, we do freely. But before we choose to act, before we decide anything, before our will is exercised, there are other factors at work.

There is the mind, the **intellect**, our base of knowledge.

I have accumulated a store of knowledge, e.g., a razor is very sharp and will cut you; fire is hot and will burn you; and I cannot flap my arms and fly.

My **emotions** are also involved. The first time I cut myself with a razor I learned that it hurt a lot, and I try not to ever cut myself again by handling a razor carelessly.

I don't remember how old I was when I learned that fire is hot and that it hurts when you get burned. My guess is it was as soon as my mother said, "Don't touch that stove!"

I fell off of a roof one time and sure enough, I learned that I can't fly.

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Now when I am confronted with certain choices: How should I handle this razor? How do I deal with a hot surface? What to do when I am on a roof?

You get the idea, I am calling on my base of knowledge to make certain decisions.

Whatever I willed to do with that razor was not decided in a total vacuum of “free-will.” I made a choice, but my will had been influenced by my intellect and my emotions, it was not absolutely free.

So no one is **free** in the absolute sense of being free.

So when we “obey from the heart,” our intellect and emotions move us to will or to act. When we believe on and trust Jesus and Him alone, it must be based on a sense of need and utter failure to satisfy God in our own merit.

Fourth: What we obeyed: that form of doctrine...

Something was obeyed from the heart...

that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Now this is very important. This “form of doctrine” is not just an isolated teaching, a single doctrine, not even the offer of the gospel. The idea is a form or pattern of teaching that was delivered or entrusted to you. This is not a simple proposition like, “Give your heart to Jesus.”

Why would I want to give my heart to Jesus?

Paul is writing to the Christians in Rome. This is a local church that he wanted very much to visit. It is not one of the local churches that he was used of God to establish, such as the church at Corinth. But as an apostle under Christ, he had authority over this church as well as over all the churches. Do the writings of the Apostle Paul have any authority over the church at Vineland Park Baptist Church at Hueytown, Alabama? If they don't, we are a bunch of religious hypocrites playing church.

But these Christians at Rome had believed the same basic truth, the gospel of the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

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That “**form of doctrine**” is what we have discussed in earlier messages on this great book. The righteousness of God in Jesus Christ; the wrath of God; God justifies the ungodly; Adam and Christ, etc. That form of doctrine!

Was everyone in that congregation in Rome a true believer? No. Some of them thought that because of grace, they could continue in sin. And the apostle has corrected that preposterous idea.

Someone who has died to sin can no longer live in sin. The person who is continuing in known sin is simply deceived. They have not died to sin.

But like all of the Scriptures, this letter is addressed to believers. Believers want to know the truth, unbelievers in the church, the hypocrites will make excuses and continue in a life characterized by sin.

Fifth: How we came to know: to which you were delivered.

Like all of us, the Christians at Rome needed to have this word of assurance. They needed to settle in their minds once for all, how they came to believe in genuine faith.

This form of doctrine has been entrusted to your mind, not just presented to you as an option for your “free-will” to consider. This truth is something that has been delivered or **entrusted** to your mind, your intellect and emotions, and you were so affected by this teaching that it **moved you to obey** this truth from your innermost being, your heart.

Does being confronted with the doctrine of the wrath of God cause you to reject the idea that God might actually have a complaint against you? Then you won't be interested in the God who saves sinners.

Substitution! Propitiation! The sin of the first Adam imputed to me. Me, personally, condemned and under the wrath of God! At my earliest opportunity I proved that I was a sinner. I did not become a sinner when I sinned, I sinned because I was a sinner.

But I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Not because of any foreseen faith on my part, but only because it pleased God to do so. In the fullness of time, Christ came into the world. Christ Jesus came into the world to save

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sinners. He did not come to call the righteous, those who don't accept the need for a sufficient Substitute, but desperate, lost men and women, sinners, to repentance.

By faith, I can see my sin imputed to Jesus Christ. I did not and cannot cause that transaction. Only God, who justifies the ungodly, has that power. And when my sin is placed on Christ, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God's Son, is imputed to me. I am justified! And being justified, I want to obey God.

God now sees me through the blood of the Passover, even the Christ.

Has God said anything to you. Have you ever surrendered to King Jesus?

Are you a slave to obedience?

I am not asking you to do anything "in order to be saved."

I am simply asking if God has done anything for you?

Then confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and submit to believer's baptism.