

Romans Chapter Six - Part Two (15-23)

15What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

Our faith has nothing to do with going soft on sin. When we become a Christian we become a servant or a slave to God. God, our new owner wants us to live a godly life.

FAITH SKATING

Speaking of going soft on sin. A number of years ago in another place I remember praying with Bob when he received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. For the first couple weeks Bob was ‘great guns’ for the Lord. He attended church and a small group so that he could learn more about the Lord. And more importantly he had a new love for God and people. God had taken away his desire for bar hopping and the vices that go along with a bar hopping lifestyle.

But one day Bob was invited by an old friend to go bar hopping. Bob had too much to drink that night and afterward he expressed regret for putting himself in a position to feed his old weaknesses. For the next couple weeks all seemed well with Bob, until he again started bar hopping and began to fall into his old life style. This time when I talked to him he began to justify his actions. He said; “well, God still loves me and I am basically a good person.” Bob began to take God for granted when he gave himself permission to go back to the life he used to live.

God does not forgive us so that we can go back to our old life. He forgave us so that we could start our life over and live a new life for him.

16Do 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?

The people of Rome were familiar with slavery. In fact there were more slaves in Rome than free people. Paul uses the analogy of slavery to illustrate the point that in this life each person must make a choice. The choice of the one to whom we belong. People in Rome when they could not survive on their own or pay their debts would present themselves as a servant or slave to someone who would take care of their daily needs and give them shelter. In exchange, the servant would have to do everything their slave owner told them to do. The closest thing I can think of in our culture is a live-in nanny. The nanny gets a place to live and food to eat. In exchange, the nanny has to make herself available to take care of the kids and do other things under the direction of the homeowner. If the nanny does not do the work she is out on the street.

Many times Christians get the idea that we can live in God's house and eat his food but we don't have to do the things he wants us to do. We will take all the benefits but we will do things our way in our time. Some Christians are like the nanny who refuses to take care of the kids.

The truth is that becoming a Christian means that you have signed each moment of your life over to God.

17But 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, 18and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

This verse says that at one time we were slaves to sin. Now many of us lived very badly before we turned our lives over to Jesus Christ. We did things that if continued would destroy our lives completely. Drinking and drugs can kill you. Worry and fear and anxiety can take a toll on your life. Sleeping around outside of marriage not only destroys our kids, there are

diseases that can kill us. Many of us were addicted to a lifestyle that leads to death. We knew that unless we turned our life over to God we would lose everything and perhaps take others with us.

But what about someone who claims to be a basically good person? Are they slaves to sin? If so, how does that work? Let's use an illustration to make the point that even the basically good person apart from Jesus Christ is a slave to sin.

GOOD PERSON SLAVE TO SIN

Let's say our basically good person who does not live for Jesus chooses to go on a fishing trip. In and of itself a fishing trip is not a bad thing. But let's say that instead of going on a fishing trip it is God's will that that the basically good person should escort a group of kids to a Christian camp. The definition of sin is disobedience to God. And so if God wants you to take kids to camp and you decide that you are going fishing instead then your fishing trip is a sin. By living the self directed life you are a slave to sin because you cannot discern the will of God for your life. And doing the opposite of what God wants you to do is sin.

Satan's knows that if we are filled with the Holy Spirit and are consistently asking God what God wants us to do, Satan will be defeated in many ways. His influence will be crowded out of our lives and our town. And so Satan's biggest attack is to get us to take God for granted and do our own thing. When we take God for granted and do our own thing, we no longer operate in the power of God and Satan can pretty much have a free for all.

Even the self-directed life promotes the agenda of Satan. The self directed life teaches people to ignore the will of God and do what you want,

not what God wants. And so even people who are basically good but do their own thing are helping Satan.

There is no such thing as a basically good person. Either you choose to present yourselves as a servant of God, or you will automatically default into disobedience to God. If you are not seeking God's will consistently, then even if your life is pretty cleaned up, you will still be advancing the agenda of Satan because only God's power can transform a person and a town. Seeking God's will is the way to walk in God's great power and push back the darkness.

19I 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,

The longer we practice sin the better we become at it. I have a friend who struggles greatly with pornography. He said that the first time he looked at pornography he really hesitated and was greatly plagued by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. But each time he gave into that temptation it became easier for him to give in the next time. Before he knew what hit him he was a slave to his addiction. Giving into sin leads to more sin. If you have an ongoing pattern of sin get an accountability partner. That is the only way I was able to break some of my stubborn sinful habits.

so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

When you say to Jesus every morning; I am here to do your will; you will become more like him. Sanctification is the process by which God teaches us to live more and more like Jesus.

20For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Before we give our lives to Christ we get to do anything we want. There is a sense of freedom that comes with living any way we want. But where does the self directed life lead? Paul poses that question in verse 21.

21Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

Everyone is going to die one day. It is a sobering reality. Death is the separation of the soul from one's body. The body dies and the soul moves away. The kind of death Paul speaks of is not separation from the body but eternal separation from God. Separation from God is the outcome of refusing to change owners. That is the outcome of living the self-directed life.

22But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification,

Sanctification is the process of God changing us to be more like Jesus Christ. That happens when we practice belonging to God. God will never lead us into sin and the more we listen to him and focus on him the holier we will become. Our sanctification will be complete when we go to be with Jesus. But right now we should be moving more toward total obedience.

Total obedience to God does not mean that you become a non-person. It means that you are acting like the person you and I were created to be.
and the outcome, eternal life.

23For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The payment we deserve for living without God in our life is eternal separation from God. If people practice staying away from God all of their life why would God force them to suddenly be with him? The gift of God is

that right now we can receive a gift. That gift is an offer to love God and enjoy Him forever.

INDICATIVE VERSES IMPERATIVE

I would like to finish this week by talking about a contrast of ideas that is found in our text. On one hand there is a truth in this text that it is God who saves us and it is God who does the work to help us live the life that we should live. On the other hand, Paul clearly states that Christians are supposed to make decisions and take actions that lead to a godly life. So the question is this; who does the work to make us live a holy life? Is it God who does all the work leaving us to watch God make us do the right things with our life? Or do we make the decisions and do the work to live a life that will bring us God's blessing? First, let's look at these two contrasting ideas in the text.

Paul insists that God did the work to free us from sin. Verse 2 says we are; "dead to sin but alive to God". Verse 6 says: "Our old self was crucified with him". Verse 11 says: "We are dead to sin but alive to God". Verse 13 says; "We have been brought from death to life" Verse 18 says: "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness."

These verses are written in such a way to indicate that God has done these things for us without our help.

On the other hand there are also several verses that tell us we are responsible for winning the battle against sin. Verse 12 says; "Do not let sin reign". Verse 13 says; "do not offer the parts of your body to sin...but...offer yourselves to God". Verse 19 says: "offer the parts of your body in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness."

These verses clearly tell us that we are asked to make a choice to avoid sin. Our choices matter to God. So how do we put together the ideas that God does the work but we also are called to do the work?

Throughout the bible God makes the first move. God initiates the action to help his people, and he asks them to respond. Christians are called to become what they are. To act like the people God says they are. What God will one day make us should be a spur to getting as close to that ideal as possible.

HELMUT THIELICKE QUOTE

“Believers are responsible to open their mouths so that they may drink from the river of sanctifying grace.”

I like to think of living a godly life in this way; God’s job is to reproduce the holy life of Jesus Christ in us. Our job is to ask the Holy Spirit to help us see and cooperate with everything God wants to do in our life.

Living the holy life is only something God can do. Therefore if we are going to live a holy life and obey God we have to get in touch with God’s own power. Reading Scripture, worship, prayer and hanging out with other Christians are some of the ways that we can get in touch with the power of God who will cause us to live a holy life.

LIVING LIKE WHO WE ARE

We know that it is God who does the work to sanctify us and change us to act in a way that is pleasing to him. Another way to think about our role in the sanctification process is this; we are called to act like the people that God has made us.

God says that we are children of the king. Are we acting like children of the king? God says we are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. Are we acting like people who are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms?

God says that we have been transformed, born again, dead to sin, alive in Christ. Are we acting like who God says we are? God says that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. Do we act and live like people who have the power that raised Jesus from the dead? Our lives are given to practice becoming the people that God already says we are.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Have you ever gone faith skating? Have you ever taken all the benefits of salvation but then stayed away from God? If so will you ask God what it means in your life that you now belong to him?
2. Did you realize that there is really no such thing as a basically good person? There are some who seek to do God's will and there are others who sin by not paying attention to the will of God. What will you do to pay more attention to God's will for your life each day?
3. What are you doing each day to open you mouth to the living water of God's power? How are you doing with reading scripture, and prayer and fellowship with other Christians? Did you know that these disciplines would help you become more aware of what God wants to do in your life?