

THE INTRODUCTION

This week, we begin a new series called “Free.” It takes us from the second half of Romans 6 through Romans 7 and looks at the life of freedom that is found in Jesus Christ. These passages use many different examples of confinement to illustrate the various ways Jesus has freed us from sin.

This week, we will be looking at Romans 6:15-23. It uses the analogy of a slave to discuss our situation before and after giving our lives to Jesus. This analogy will continue in some forms throughout the four weeks we look at these passages.

In the U.S., when we think of slavery, we tend to think of the forced slavery of African-Americans of the early years of the country, or possibly the sex trade industry prevalent around the world today. While these existed in the first century Roman world, there was also a class of slaves that were treated as family members, and which functioned in society much like normal citizens. They just happened to be the property of a family. In other words, you might have a good master, or you might have a bad master. Your enslavement may mean harsh bondage, but it could very well mean more freedom than you might experience as a free man!

With that background in mind, let’s jump into our passage for today.

THE SCRIPTURE

Romans 6:15-23 NLT

Well then, since God’s grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now

you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE POINT

So, what does this passage tell us? Paul repeats himself three different times in three different ways, and wants his readers to get this point:

WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU'RE GOING TO BE A SLAVE TO SOMETHING. CHOOSE WELL!

Let's look deeper and see what he says about this.

THE EXPOSITION

THEREFORE

First of all, Paul refers back to something he had said previously. He had talked about how the Jewish people were trapped by the regulations of the Old Testament law. However, Jesus fulfilled the obligations of the law and now, through faith in Him, they (and we) can be free from the obligation and penalty of the law. Now, we have the opportunity to live by faith in Jesus.

But, Paul wants them to know that freedom in Jesus doesn't mean a free pass to sin! Just because Jesus forgives your sin, past and future, it doesn't mean you get to keep sinning with no consequences. That's where Paul picks up here.

YOU GET TO CHOOSE

In school, you've probably seen pictures of slavery as it happened in the United States in history. These images might have included scenes that showed slaves up on a platform being sold to a new owner. These auctions are a humiliating and despicable stain on the history of our great country, and it's something shameful that God absolutely does not approve.

But, I want to use this imagery to prove Paul's point here. These slaves in history were sold to the highest bidder, with no rights and no choice in the matter. They were separated from families and homes and treated however their masters decided. It was awful. Now, imagine a different scene. Imagine the same platform, the same slave up on the stage, but instead of a crowd of men, only two are there: one called Mr. S, and one called Mr. R. Instead of these men bidding for the slave, the slave has the choice of where he gets to go. He conducts an interview, and based on what the masters offer the slave, he makes his choice. He has no choice whether or not he'll be a slave, but he does get to choose who his master is.

That's the picture Paul is painting here. Before you came to Jesus, you had no choice. You belonged to sin. But, when you give your life to Jesus, you become free from that master. You legally become the property of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says...

1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a. NIV

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. -

You were bought at auction by the blood of Jesus. He died on the cross to forgive your sin, and when you accept that forgiveness, you basically say, "I accept that you bought me and now I'm yours forever." You belong to Jesus.

BUT, He still gives you a choice. What a master! When you become a slave of Jesus, He still lets you choose how you're going to live. Even though you're His property, He's going to let you choose whether you live with Him, or go back to live with your old master, sin. You have to choose. So, what exactly are you choosing?

CHOICE 1: SIN

The first option is to choose to serve the old master. This would be like being bought from the master who abused and mistreated you, brought to the house of the master who loves and cares for you, and then choosing to go back to hang out with the old boss.

What does that choice bring? Paul describes the results as rebellion, deeper levels of sin, shame, and death.