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January 27, 2008

Questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How. . .	Personal Application with 'SPECS?'
Repeated Alike Different Accentuated Related	Sin to be forsaken? Promises to be claimed? Examples to be followed? Commands to be obeyed? Stumbling block or hindrance to be avoided?

Romans 6:15-23

15 What then?

Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

By no means!

16 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?

17 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,

18 and,

having been set free from sin,
have become slaves of righteousness.

19 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.

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

21 But what fruit were you getting

at that time
from the things of which you are now ashamed?
The end of those things is death.

22 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.

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

Review: We have been freed from the power of sin and must present ourselves as instruments of righteousness.
Observations: 1) the antithesis between being slaves to sin or righteousness 2) the use of contrasts and parallel ideas 3) keep in mind who he is writing this section to—believers
Key Question: How do you develop a habit (good or bad)? How do you break a habit (good or bad)?

a double underline to indicate an imperative—a command

Coming straight from 6:1 and 14

Romans 6:15-23

15 What then?

Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

Question is: "Does our sin really matter since we are under grace?"

By no means!

μη γένοιτο (may it never be) Paul's strong refutation of a false conclusion (Romans 3:6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11)

16 Do you not know

that (if) you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,

you are slaves of the one whom you obey,

Present -παρίστημι (paristhmi) place beside, **put at someone's disposal**; in the language of sacrifice—offer, bring, present
Notice that this "yielding" is a choice

either of sin,

which leads to death,

or of obedience,

which leads to righteousness?

εις "to" introducing a result

not a normal contrast

The imperfect is frequently used to indicate a regularly recurring activity in past time (habitual) or a state that continued for some time (general). (Wallace)
Here focus seems to be "continual"

17 But thanks be to God,

Christians are not neutral, God has rescued us ∴ we can be obedient

that you who were once slaves of sin active imperfect

have become obedient from the heart aorist passive indicative

to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

See notes for clarification

18 and,

having been set free from sin, aorist passive participle

Who did the "freeing"?—God

The aorist tense "presents an occurrence in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence." (Wallace)

have become slaves of righteousness. aorist passive indicative

Who enabled this?—God

19 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

As in 6:11-14 the indicative (position) leads to the imperative (practice)

to righteousness

leading to sanctification.

Focus is on process—becoming holy, but not state of holiness

for

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

21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed?

The end of those things is death.

22 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.

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

Notice the context for this well-known verse. While it is a great summary of the content of the gospel, the context indicates that this verse is written to Christians.

Working Idea (this is to help you see how the main idea was developed)

Since we are under grace, does our sin really matter at all?

Yes!

You can't live your life in two worlds. Our sin matters. Our decision to present ourselves to sin enslaves us to sin. Our decision to present ourselves to God enslaves us to God, obedience and righteousness, leading to sanctification.

Main idea:

There is no middle ground in our relationship with God.

Teaching idea:

This paradox may create tension for people—or better it should create tension for people since they will see positional truths that are not practical truths. They will hear statements related to their current standing yet realize that their current behavior does not match. Chapter 7 will deal more with the difficulty of the paradox. Here in Chapter 6 the focus should be on understanding the believer's position—freedom from sin and resultant behavior.

So it will be helpful to allow people to verbalize any discomfort this passage creates, but don't jump ahead to chapters 7 and 8 too quickly.

Introduction

This section is closely linked with 6:1-14 and goes through 7:6 and then sets up all of chapter 7.

This section will help us answer the question—Do our acts of sin matter?

Review

We have been freed from the power of sin therefore we must present ourselves as instruments for righteousness, not sin.

Section Preview

Pastor Bob Deffinbaugh overviews chapters 6-8 this way:¹

The section we are studying in this lesson (Romans 6-8) contains three chapters. We can roughly summarize the section by chapters:

- The necessity of sanctification -- Romans 6
- The impossibility of sanctification -- Romans 7
- The certainty of sanctification -- Romans 8

While this gives us a fair approximation of the flow of Paul's argument, it is not as precise as it should be. Almost always, Paul provides us with clear structural clues to the way in which he has developed his argument. Such is the case here. The question, "**What shall we say, then?**," appears three times in chapters 6-8 (6:1; 7:7; 8:31). In the first two instances, his question is a misconception of Christian doctrine and practice, based upon an abuse of the truths he has just taught. In both cases, Paul's response is a strong and immediate, "**May it never be!**" (6:2; 7:7). In the third instance, however, Paul himself speaks out in response to the truths he has just laid down, showing us the proper response to the provisions which God has made for our sanctification. The structure of our text can thus be summarized in this way:

- The necessity of personal righteousness -- Romans 6:1--7:6
 - ◆ Proof from our "baptism" -- Romans 6:3-14
 - ◆ Proof from slavery -- Romans 6:15-23
 - ◆ Proof from marriage and death -- Romans 7:1-6
- The source of our problem and -- Romans 7:7--8:30
- God's solutions
- The appropriate response to these things -- Romans 8:31-39

¹ Robert Deffinbaugh, ©1996 by Community Bible Chapel, 210 Abrams Road, Richardson, TX 75081, <http://www.bible.org>. Lesson 4

Passage Preview

Romans 6:15-23 helps explain and apply one key principle from 6:1-14: The concept of authority—Paul used terms like enslaved, dominion and reign.

In our current passage, Paul develops the idea of slavery, showing that there is no middle ground. He will create an antithesis, an either or situation.

Either one is a slave to sin
Or he is a slave to God, righteousness and obedience.

The main point we will see is that we can't harbor sin. We can't try to keep one foot in each realm (6:1-14).

But this antithesis will raise questions which Paul will have to answer in chapter 7—"If there is no middle ground, why do I still struggle so much with sin?"

This section will help us answer the questions—

The two questions are distinct in that verse 1 asks whether sin should be pursued *so that* grace would increase, while verse 15 queries whether sin should be committed *because* (ὅτι, *hoti*) believers are free from the law and under the power of grace (cf. Moo 1991: 413).¹ The questions are the same in that the same result is contemplated: Does the presence of grace justify or encourage continued sin? In both cases Paul replies to Jewish Christian opponents who proclaimed that his theology of grace undermined the necessity of obedience.²²

Summary

The Lord has transferred you from the realm of sin to the realm of righteousness through your union with Christ—live like it.

Catch Phrase / Key Phrase:

Obedience from the heart

The balance between the indicative (position in Christ) and imperative (commanded practice) should lead to devoted obedience, not obedience resulting from duty.

"Holiness is not a condition into which we drift."³

Outline

I. Doctrine: Justification—The Righteousness of God Revealed 1:18–11:36

God's Gracious Provision of Righteousness is Acquired by Faith in Jesus Christ

A. The Need of It 1:18–3:20 *What a Mess!*

The Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation: The Universal Need of Righteousness

The Bad News: All condemned for sin—no exceptions

B. What It Is 3:21–5:21

What a God—The Way of Salvation

Justification: The imputation of righteousness to all who believe

"But now the righteous of God has been manifested" 3:21

1. Justification Explanation (Defined) 3:21-31

2. Justification Illustration 4:1-25

¹ It is not the case (contra Dunn 1988a: 341) that the question in verse 1 is more outrageous since ἵνα is used rather than ὅτι. To sin "because" one is under grace is just as flagrant as sinning "in order to" increase grace.

² See discussion under 6:1-14. Cf. Byrne 1996: 201. My thesis is not that he responds directly to Jewish Christian opponents, but that his discussion of the topic reflects long-standing debates with them.

² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 329.

³ John Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979) p. 193.

3. Justification's Benefits (Expectation) 5:1-11
4. Amplification and Application of Justification 5:12-21 (Hinge)

C. How It Affects Me 6:1-8:39

Sanctification: The Impartation of Righteousness

The Purpose of Salvation: Conformity to Christ's Image

	6:1 Principle	7:7 Practice	8:1 Power
Key Subject	Surrender	Self	Spirit

Contrast⁴	
Justification	Sanctification
Objective: declaration of righteousness	Subjective: being made righteous
Imputed Righteousness	Imparted Righteousness
Legal Act	Transforming Process
God's work for us	God's work in us
Based on the past death of Christ	Based on the Present Ministry of Christ
Basis Sanctification	Result Justification
Finished at Conversion	Finished at Consummation

1. Believer and Sin 6:1-23
 - a. Believer's Freedom from Sins' Domination 6:1-14
 - (1) Indicative: Union with Christ in His death and His life 6:1-11
 - (a) Should we sin to increase grace: May it never be! 6:1-2a
 - (b) **Know:** Understanding the nature of our union with Christ 6:2b-10
 - We have died to sin
 - We are united with Christ
 - (c) **Consider:** Accepting our union with Christ as true 6:11 Hinge
 - (2) Imperative: Freedom from the power of sin 6:12-14
 - (a) Prevent sin from reigning 6:12
 - (b) **Present:** Yield control to God 6:13-14
 - We are delivered from sin
 - b. Believer's Enslavement to God's Righteousness 6:15-23
 - (1) Question: May we sin because we are under grace 6:15a
 - (2) Answer: May it never be! For we will become enslaved to the wrong master 6:15b-23
 - (a) May it never be! 6:15b
 - (b) Explanation: To sin means that one will be enslaved to sin which leads to death 6:16-23
 - i) One's obedience to a master determines/reveals one's enslavement 6:16-20
 - ii) One's enslavement to a master determines/reveals one's destiny 6:21-23

⁴ Dr. Harold W. Hoehner's outline (DTS, Spring 1991, Exegesis of Romans 206, unpublished class notes)

Exposition / Key Exegetical Issues to be aware of



Think about it



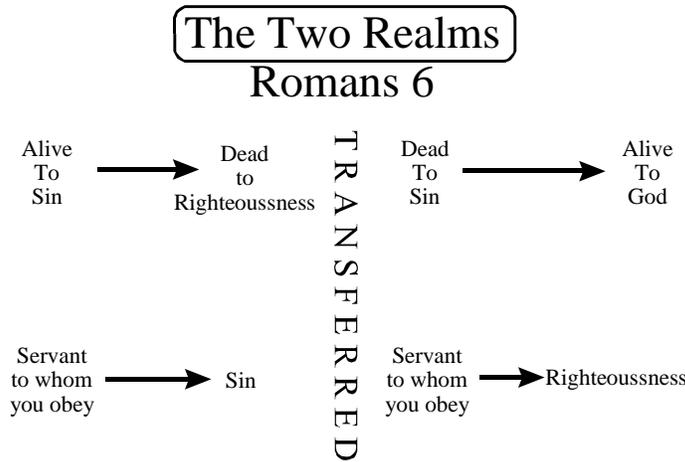
Talk about it

Teachers: The primary focus is on the fact that there is no middle ground in our relationship with God. This is a difficult truth to believe, because we want “wobble room”. It seems harsh to say that either you are a slave to God or sin.
Your class members may want to find the “yeah, but” or exceptions. This should lead to good interaction. You may also find that some want to turn this into an academic/mental exercise. You must keep this from being just “information”; the truths are transformational.

Potential Interactive Questions

How do you develop a habit (good or bad)?
How do you break a habit (good or bad)?

6:1-23



6:1-14

The Believer’s Freedom from Sin

Romans 6:1-4
Information

We have died to sin

Romans 6:5
Transition

We are identified with Christ

Romans 6:6-14
Implication/Application

We are delivered from sin

1. Know	= Dedication
2. Consider—believe it	
3. Present—do it	

Romans 6:6	Know	Remember	Sever the Ties	Understand your position, The Facts
Romans 6:11	Consider	Reckon	Setting the Standard	Who you are — Attitude
Romans 6:13	Present	Redirect	Striving to Yield	Do, Practice, Habits, Actions

6:15-23

Believer’s Enslavement to God’s Righteousness

The believer’s enslavement to God’s righteousness is because he has been freed from the enslavement to sin.

6:15a

Question: May one sin because he is under grace? 6:15a

Can we sin occasionally? (Not, do we sin or do we sin occasionally—but can we choose to live this way?)

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (ESV)

In the context of Romans 6:1-14, some may be tempted to take this truth and twist it into an excuse for sin. If sin is no longer my master, they challenge, can I master sin? If sin can no longer use me, can I use sin? Is the overthrow of sin an excuse to sin? Most definitely not! Paul again responds with horror to such a thought. “God forbid! May it never be!”

At the beginning of the chapter we encountered the question, Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? (v. 1). Now we meet a second and similar rhetorical question, Shall we sin because we are under grace rather than law? The first draws from 5:20 the mistaken inference that since law was added to increase the trespass, we ought to continue sinning so as to make grace increase all the more. The second mistakenly assumes that if we are not under law it does not really matter if we sin. The answer to both questions is a resounding, “By no means!”⁵

Contrast with 6:1

Contrast between Romans 6:1 and 6:15		
	6:1	6:15
Question	Shall we remain in sin? (Present tense = state of sin)	Shall we commit sin? (Aorist tense = acts of sin)
Rational	In order that grace may abound Thus: to gain more grace	Because we are not under the Law but under grace Thus: to gain excuse for sinning
Answer	No: because we died to sin	No: because sin leads into slavery
Point	We are no longer in sin’s realm	We are not free to sin, but freed from sin as a master

6:15b-23

Answer: No, because he will become enslaved to the wrong master.

6:15b

Answer: The believer can by no means think he is free to sin under grace.

You have changed masters—in bondage to righteousness; we are to serve God because we want to, not because we have to.

6:16-23

Explanation: To sin means that one will be enslaved to sin, which leads to death.

6:16-20

One’s obedience to a master determines/reveals one’s enslavement.

⁵ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995). 155.

6:16

Issue of “offer” to “obey”

In verse 16 Paul gives a reason as to why living under grace does not grant people permission to sin. He assumes that believers should know (οὐκ οἶδατε, *ouk oidate*, do you not know?) that they are “slaves” of the master they choose to obey. The metaphor of slavery dominates these verses; words related to slavery are used eight times.⁴ Paul emphasizes that people serve either obedience (v. 16), righteousness (vv. 18, 19), and God (v. 22), or they serve sin (vv. 16, 17, 18, 20, 22). No middle ground is possible. One is either God’s slave or sin’s slave. Those who think that freedom is attained by jettisoning obedience to God opt for sin as their lord. Subjection to one master or another is underlined in verse 16 by the particular emphasis placed on the word “obedience” (ὕπακοή, *hypakoē*; ὑπακούειν, *hypakouein*). Twice slavery is specifically linked with obedience since slavery inevitably involves absolute obedience. Indeed, obedience is strikingly inserted when the two masters who are obeyed are mentioned. Either people are slaves of “sin leading to death” (ἁμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον, *hamartias eis thanaton*) or of “obedience leading to righteousness” (ὕπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην, *hypakoēs eis dikaiosynēn*). As a contrast to “sin” one would expect either “righteousness” or “God” as the master to whom obedience is given, and in fact, these are both granted such a status in verses 18–19 and verse 22, respectively. Why then is “obedience” found here? Presumably because Paul wanted to emphasize that life under grace is characterized by obedience, by specific and concrete submission to the will of God. Moreover, Stuhlmacher (1994: 95) is probably right in discerning an echo of 1:5 and 15:18, where the obedience is one of faith.⁶

Θάνατος [*thanatos*] includes physical death but cannot be limited to such, since it is explicitly contrasted with “eternal life” (ζωὴ αἰώνιος, *zōē aiōnios*) in verse 23. The death that is the result of sin, therefore, is separation from God, eternal death, and final condemnation.⁷

By way of application

If one claims to be “under grace” and yet lives as a slave to sin, then the claim is nullified by one’s conduct. Those who live under grace show that they are under grace because they have a new master (God) and are liberated from their old master (sin). Paul refuses to accept any abstract understanding of grace separated from concrete daily living. Grace does not merely involve the forgiveness of sins. It also involves power in which the mastery and dominion of sin are broken.⁸



6:17

“slave to sin” – wholeheartedly obeyed

“the standard of teaching” or “form of teaching”

Most likely a contrast to the Jewish standard of teaching.

“to which you were committed” – passive tense

The use of the passive tense (subject being acted upon), is very interesting here. He will command this in verse 19. But here again we have an act of God—God has determined—has handed us over to—this new standard.

Paul is thankful that his Roman readers (on the whole?) have been obedient—from the heart (devotion and duty?) to that over which God has decision and work that has allowed for this.

⁴ There is some doubt as to the origin of the metaphor. Lyall (1970–71) posits a Roman background, whereas Kaye (1979: 120–29) locates it in the teaching of Jesus. I must confess that the resolution of this question, as far as I can see, has no bearing on the meaning of the text.

⁶ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998). 331.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 332.

⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 332.

But verse 17 staves off any intimation that those who belong to Christ are neutral in the battle. Paul thanks God that though they once were slaves of sin, now they have become obedient from the heart to the gospel. The thanksgiving must not be passed over lightly; what must be observed is that *God* is the one who rescued them from sin's dominion. It is due to *his* work that they have become obedient from the heart to the gospel. Thus the call to obedience in verse 16 is grounded by the indicative of God's work in verse 17. Believers are called to yield to God as their master, to be those who have already been claimed and delivered by that master.⁹

6:18

“freed from sin”

“have become slaves to righteousness”

If Paul seems to have been repetitive, it is only because what he was teaching is so important. Once again in v. 18 the apostle reminded his readers in Rome that they had broken free from the slavery of sin and become the willing servants of righteousness.⁵² The freedom brought by grace does not provide *carte blanche* to continue in sin. On the contrary, grace places the believer under obligation⁵³ to holiness and growth in righteousness.¹⁰

Contrast “ever increasing wickedness” and “leading to holiness”

In both cases in the Greek it is simply εἰς “to” (see 6:16)

Believers are not in a neutral position between slavery to sin or righteousness. They have been freed from sin and provided the enablement meant for righteousness.

6:19

Since v. 6 Paul had been personifying sin as an illegitimate slave master, one whose authority over the believer has been removed by the death of Christ. Beginning with v. 15 he expanded the analogy by contrasting the old master, sin, with the new master, righteousness. Analogies, by definition, are less than perfect. So Paul reminded his readers that he was putting the argument in human terms because of the inherent difficulties in understanding spiritual truth.¹¹

The γάρ (*gar*, for) introducing verse 19b demonstrates that the imperative in this verse is grounded on the indicative expressed in verses 17–18. God has freed them from the tyranny of sin, therefore they should now present their members as slaves to righteousness. The indicative of God's work does not rule out human activity or suggest that human decisions are unnecessary. Instead, the indicative is the basis and ground for the choice to submit to righteousness. Slavery to righteousness must be ratified by the decision to be God's slave in the particulars of life. In verse 19 Paul contrasts the past mode of life with what should “now” (νῦν, *nyin*) be true of believers.¹²

This verse opens an interesting window on the Pauline conception of slavery to sin. Unbelievers are totally subservient to sin as a power that exerts authority over their lives, but the slavery envisioned is not coercion. People do not submit to sin against their will. Rather, they “freely” and spontaneously choose to sin. In other words, unbelievers are slaves to sin in that they always desire to carry out the dictates of their master. This does not mean that those with addictions (e.g., to alcohol, pornography,

⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 333.

⁵² For information on manumission in antiquity see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (1923; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 320–30.

⁵³ Conduct pleasing to God (i.e., “righteousness”) is viewed as the new power to which the believer is subject. Freedom is not the lack of all restraint but deliverance from everything that would keep a person from becoming what God intended that person to be.

¹⁰ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995). 157.

¹¹ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995). p. 157.

ἀνθρώπινον λέγειν means “to speak in humans terms,” i.e., as people do in daily life (BAGD, 67). The NAB has “I use the following example from human affairs.” See Rom 3:5; 1 Cor 9:8; Gal 3:15 for similar qualifying remarks.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 337.

or gambling) never wish to be freed. It means that the desire for these things is ultimately greater than the desire to be freed from them. Sinning is what they want to do. Only God, therefore, can release them from such subjection, for new desires are necessary to escape the bondage of sin. Of course, this is precisely what God has done. He has liberated them from the tyranny of sin so that they “have become obedient from the heart” to the gospel. He has planted new desires within them.¹³

6:20-23

One’s enslavement to a master determines/reveals one’s destiny

It seems best to include verse 20 on the last section rather than with 6:16-19 though a number of commentaries disagree.

The aim of verses 21–22, therefore, is to motivate believers to present themselves as slaves of righteousness. Being slaves of sin produces no good fruit, while subjection to righteousness yields good fruit. The outcome of slavery to sin is shame and misery, while the result of slavery to God is sanctification. The ultimate outcome of a life of sin is death, but the outcome of righteous living is eternal life.¹⁴

6:20

The imperative sounded forth in verse 19 is now given a basis in verses 20–23, as the *γάρ* [*gar* for] in verse 20 suggests. Paul explains why believers should present their members as slaves of righteousness instead of as slaves of uncleanness and lawlessness.¹⁵

“freed from the control” 6:20

ejleuvqero –freedom, independence, not bound

6:22

ejleuqerovw –free, set free – aorist passive participle

The verse then matches the structure of verse 22 almost exactly:¹⁶

	<i>Status</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Before we were Christians (v. 21):	slaves of sin, free from righteousness	fruit bringing shame	death
Now that we are Christians (v. 22):	free from sin, slaves of God	fruit bringing sanctification	life

6:23

“benefit” – fruit

The sinful life gives no benefit, the life yielded to God leads to holiness and eternal life

“results in eternal life” –

tevlo – end or goal toward which a movement is being directed, outcome

Believers have been transferred from one realm of lordship to another, so that they are now obedient from the heart to their new lord. Those who submit themselves to sin will end up having sin as their master, showing thereby that they were never delivered by grace in the first place. The destiny of such is not eternal life but eternal destruction.¹⁷

Verse 23 not only explains the contrasting “outcomes” of death and life, but also brings the chapter to a fitting conclusion. That sin leads to death has been a background motif since 5:12. Only by remembering the dark side of life outside of Christ can we truly appreciate God’s “gift” to us, the gift of

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 337.

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 340.

¹⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 338.

¹⁶ Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 212.

¹⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 343.

his grace that brings “eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As Lloyd-Jones points out, this verse makes three contrasts basic to Paul’s teaching in this part of the letter:

the master that is served — sin versus God
 the outcome of that service — death versus eternal life
 how that outcome is reached — a “wage” earned versus a “gift” received.¹⁸

Point:

We are now prepared to see how the verse functions in the argument as a whole. It is not optional for believers to present themselves as slaves of righteousness; the outcome of a life of sin is death (v. 21). The outcome of a life of righteousness is sanctification, which is essential for eternal life (v. 22). We must not fail to see that Paul addresses believers in verse 23. Those who are slaves to sin will receive the wages that that master pays—eternal death. By contrast, the gift God gives is eternal life. Eternal life inevitably involves good fruit (vv. 21–22) and sanctification. Thus Paul’s concluding words are remarkably similar to verse 16, in which he trumpets the essential nature of obedience. The thrust of Paul’s argument in verses 16–23 is that being under grace does not encourage believers to sin. For if their lives evidence slavery to sin, then the consequence will be eternal destruction. The power of grace must lead to a transformed life, for holiness of life is necessary for life eternal. Is Paul saying that holiness is the evidence that one is truly a slave of righteousness, or that holiness makes one a slave of righteousness? Moo (1991: 414) opts for the latter, Kaye (1979: 113) for the former. But we are not forced to choose, since both are true. Those who are slaves of righteousness have been liberated from sin by the grace of God. If they practice righteousness, it is an evidence of his grace in their lives. But the imperative cannot be ruled out either. Those who have been freed from the power of sin must be holy in order to experience eternal life. They cannot rely on the indicative of God’s grace and shuck off the need for concrete obedience in the particulars of life.¹⁹

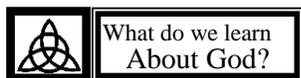
Summary

Key concepts

Believers are not in a neutral position between slavery to sin or righteousness. They have been freed from sin and provided the enable meant for righteousness. Therefore we should not be content with sin, even occasional sin.

Key Point

No middle ground.



God will not share His throne with anyone.
 He must be the only Master.
 He will not allow us to serve two masters.



Are there areas of your life that you have not fully yielded?
 Are you content with “a little” sin?

¹⁸ Douglas J Moo, *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Romans*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000). 212.

¹⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, p. 340.

Romans 6:15-23

15 What then?

Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

By no means!

16 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?

17 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,

18 and,

having been set free from sin,
have become slaves of righteousness.

19 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.

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

21 But what fruit were you getting
at that time

from the things of which you are now ashamed?
The end of those things is death.

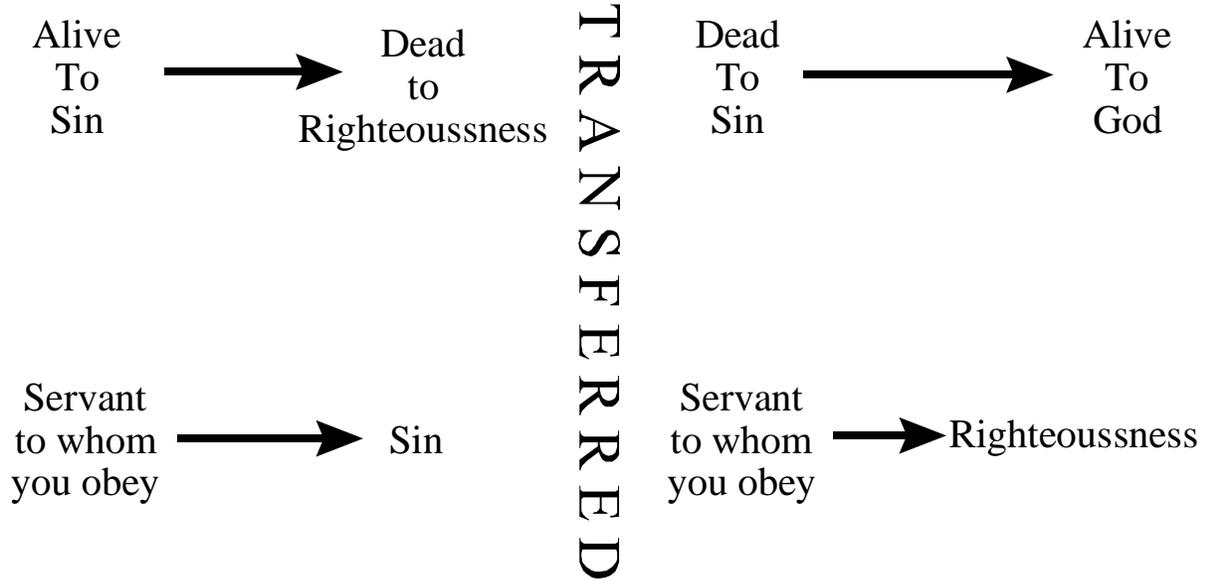
22 But now

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.

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

The Two Realms

Romans 6



No Middle Ground
Can't have a foot in both realms
Romans 6:15-23

