

(15) What then? Are we to sin because we are not under Law but under grace? By no means!! 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 are committed, 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) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 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. 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! For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Think on These Things:

- 1) V. 15 continues the basic argument of our last lesson. Why shouldn't we keep sinning so that when God extends forgiving grace, He gets more glory? From a human perspective, this appeals because we can do whatever we want and --- in the end --- God is glorified by forgiving us. Why does Paul say so strongly, "God forbid!"?

This is equivalent to saying, "May it never be like that!!" To live sinfully under this rationale is to twist God's Word to suit ourselves. With this kind of mind set, everyone would want to live exactly as they like because --- there would be no consequences. In the end, God would just forgive everything and we could all go to heaven! But this is not how things work with God...

- 2) Being a slave does not appeal to anyone, really. Yet Paul declares in v. 16 that we are all slaves. When we are NOT slaves to God --- even totally ignorant of Him --- who are we slaves to? What does Paul point to as the outcome of these two lifestyle choices?

We are slaves to the whatever we surrender ourselves to. Life is described as being a slave to one of two masters: sin (ourselves) or God. Sin brings one impurity and lawlessness, while God provides us with righteousness and sanctification. Sin is our 'default' slave-master; we must 'choose' to step out from sin (i.e., repent) to become a slave to God, and then work at keeping that commitment.

- 3) When you become a Christian, become "freed" from sin, what ought to happen in your life?

We should walk in newness of life (v. 4), learning to see things from God's perspective and how we need to live in *new* ways from our normal routines and actions. We set aside our deeds of darkness up to that moment to follow after God. Our goal becomes to glorify Him in all that we do. V. 18 shares that in being set free from sin, we have chosen to become slaves to righteousness.

- 4) V. 19 may come across insulting, but Paul was really just hoping to make his message clear by being simple and straightforward. What is his basic message? What should be the outcome for your personal life if you do this?

Paul's basic message is that we used to live one way before coming to faith in Christ, and now we need to embrace a new way. The old self-serving way promotes impurity and lawlessness, but God's way leads to righteousness and sanctification that leads to eternal life. Therefore, make an informed decision: stop living for yourself, and start living for God!

- 5) What word does Paul use to describe the "fruit" of our past lives, the things which happened before we became Christians? Is this how you view things? If we share Paul's view, what should we be spurred on to do?

Paul describes the fruit of our old lives as things that bring us shame now. (In fact, many of us start keeping secrets from each other because we don't want our new Christian friends to know all that we *really* did before....) Even some of our past accomplishments that gave us pride seem to lose their luster as we understand better the things of God and learn to focus on heavenly matters and priorities. Sharing Paul's view, we should seek to live a sanctified life that leads to eternal life.

The Q, "Is this how you view things?" is personal. Not everything about our pasts is bad --- but in God's eyes, we often come to regard them as less important in our new life.

- 6) If you voluntarily become a "slave" to God, what is described for you as the result?

V. 22 says that a Christian life of righteous living leads to sanctification (a God-honoring life of obedience and faith, filled with God's presence). While eternal life with God begins at our new birth by the Holy Spirit, a Christian's true end is eternity in heaven in an immortal body in the place prepared for us by Jesus.

- 7) V. 23 is Christian doctrine. It is a basic understanding of the Bible that we should all memorize. Can you restate this doctrine?

We are asking class members to personalize this essential teaching in their own words: "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

Maybe something *like* the end result of ignoring God and sinful living is eternal death, but for people who repent of their sins and embrace faith in the true, Living God, God's gift is eternal life through Jesus.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: