

ROMANS
6:15-19



Resisting Sin...

**“in Christ Jesus
Our Lord!”**

**Part 2:
The Analogy and
Reality of Slavery!**

ROMANS

6:15-19



¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under Law, but under grace? May it never come to be! ¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks [be] to God, because you were slaves to sin, but you responded from [the] heart to [the] form of teaching into which you were handed over. ¹⁸And, after being freed from the [slavery] of sin, you were enslaved to righteousness. ¹⁹I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your bodily members as subjects to impurity and to the lawless mindset leading to lawless behavior, thus now present your bodily members as subjects to righteousness leading to sanctification.

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As we go back to vv.2-9, Paul teaches that we are not to remain in sin because we have died to sin through Baptism into Christ Jesus. So then, he asks a question in v.15 that conveys the supposition that being *in the state of grace* is a legitimate reason for sinning? As in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks more broadly against freedom abused; or the Corinthian problem of libertinism [*the practice of indulging in any sinful activity without restraint*]!

ROMANS

6:15



¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under Law, but under grace? May it never come to be!

In the context of Paul's discussion, he is actually continuing the topic found in vv.12-14. The exhortation to not sin was introduced in v.12. So Paul ends v.15 with another emphatic negation: “May it never come to be!”

Paul makes it clear that grace must never be used by the Christian as an excuse to continue in sin or to sin without restraint.

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6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

As you may recall, Paul has been using the language of ruling or lordship. Now, in v.16, he abruptly turns the picture to slavery. Slavery becomes his major metaphor through the rest of chapter 6. Paul is using interactive expressions comparable to what a parent would say to a child: “Don’t you understand?”

ROMANS

6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

What is Paul's teaching point?

He is turning the notion of slavery upside down! Instead of one being in a state of slavery that results in coerced obedience; he now speaks of a “choice” to listen and respond to one of two masters!

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6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

The result is that you'll be a slave to one or the other.

Remember, this freedom of choice, just as you've heard from Hebrews concerning your freedom of speech, is only available to the Christian...a Baptized believer!

ROMANS

6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

You will soon see that an unbaptized unbeliever is a slave only to sin (vv.18, 20). They belong wholly and completely to sin and are compelled to respond to its cruelty. Since the unbaptized unbeliever is totally under sin's lordship and reign, they are also, thereby, under the tyranny of death (5:13).

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6:16



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However, those who have died to sin in Holy Baptism are now free from its reign and lordship! They are able to put themselves at the disposal of sin (unrighteousness) or to God (righteousness); and the latter is only by the power of the Holy Spirit's leading (cf. 8:4-14).

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6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

So, to the one or the other, they “present” themselves as “slaves of obedience.” Those now alive to God are able to hear and respond to the call: either of sin... “leading to death;” or of God... “results to righteousness!”

ROMANS

6:16



¹⁶Do you not understand that to whom[ever] you present yourselves [as] slaves of obedience, you are slaves to whom[ever] you respond, whether of sin leading to death or of responsiveness to God leading to righteousness?

So...listening to sin leads to eternal death in hell; but,

the responsive hearing of faith...results in eternal life in heaven with your Lord Jesus!

ROMANS

6:17-18



FREED
FROM
SLAVERY
BY GOD

¹⁷But thanks [be] to God, because you were slaves to sin, but you responded from [the] heart to [the] form of teaching into which you were handed over. ¹⁸And, after being freed from the [slavery] of sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.

We now come to the “before” and “after” section of Romans 6 that will be prevalent through the end of the chapter. In v.17, Paul show how your “*transfer*” of before and after has happened and who affected it!

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First, the hard truth: “you were slaves to sin...” (cf. St. John 8:34). Therefore, on the basis of Roman 1:18 – 3:20, Paul has ably demonstrated that “all sinned” (3:23); so then, “all are under sin” and all are sin’s slave (that is, prior to Holy Baptism!).

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Notice how Paul states: “you were slaves to sin...” **So what changed?**

Note the bookends of v.17: “...thanks [be] to God...,” **and** “you were handed over.” **Paul reinforces this in the next verse, which begins with another Divine Passive, “after being freed...”**

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6:17-18



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¹⁷But thanks [be] to God, because you were slaves to sin, but you responded from [the] heart to [the] form of teaching into which you were handed over. ¹⁸And, after being freed from the [slavery] of sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.

Together, these expressions communicate to you that you were delivered and freed from slavery by God and, therefore, you must properly give Him thanks!

ROMANS

6:17-18



FREED
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¹⁷*But thanks [be] to God, because you were slaves to sin, but **you responded** from [the] heart to [the] form of teaching into which you were handed over.*
¹⁸*And, after being freed from the [slavery] of sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.*

Let's take a look at the middle of v.17!
The verb (ὕπηκούσατε) “you responded”
is vitally important! Literally, it
meaning is the act of being *under the*
authority of the one speaking, i.e., really
listening to the one giving the charge
(order) and “to hearken, obey” that
suggests attentively listening, i.e., being
fully compliant and responsive.

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In the Greek, ὑπηκούσατε is a second person plural, aorist (past tense) active verb, which means that grace was neither forced nor imposed upon you. Instead, the verb conveys how faith listens responsively and thereby gladly receives the freeing gift of God “from [the] heart!”

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¹⁸And, after being freed from the [slavery] of sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.

Tying this all together, we have the hearkening to the message of Holy Baptism and its promises into which God has immersed you! The response of active “*obedience*” to God, which Paul calls for vv.16 & 19, then results by the power of the Holy Spirit. It can only follow after the gracious action of God has been passively received, heard, and believed; only then can the baptized believer respond “*from [the] heart!*”

ROMANS

6:19



FREED FOR
SLAVERY
TO GOD

¹⁹I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your bodily members as subjects to impurity and to the lawless mindset leading to lawless behavior, thus now present your bodily members as subjects to righteousness leading to sanctification.

Now we come to the contradictions (!) in human terms, anyhow! First: how is one freed and enslaved at the same time?

Second: How can there possibly be a willing enslavement which is passively received?

Third and last: How can all this possibly take place “*under grace?*”

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The metaphor of slavery is a powder keg of misunderstanding, especially today. Not only is it fraught with danger, but it can be very scandalous to Paul's hearers then and today! We could say that Paul was probably aware that this figure of slavery is unworthy, inadequate and apt to be very misleading, as a way to indicating the believer's relationship to God.

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Even though slavery may seem to be inadequate, it still “communicates” well! So Paul, at the start, states that his use of slavery is corrupted by man “on account of the weakness of your flesh.” At the same time, Paul’s effective use of slavery reveals that there is a contrast between the Divine and human use.

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In its proper Divine use, slavery is fully adequate and appropriate. Remember, at the very beginning of Paul's letter to the Romans, he states that he is a "slave of Christ Jesus." Thus, man is either a slave to God or to sin; there is no other option! So the only real freedom of man...is being a slave to God!

ROMANS

6:19



FREED FOR
SLAVERY
TO GOD

*¹⁹I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you **presented** your bodily members as subjects to impurity and to the lawless mindset leading to lawless behavior, thus now present your bodily members as subjects to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

Note that the verb “*presented*” is in the past tense (aorist in Greek). It’s in the second person plural (“all ya all” presented) and it’s also an imperative. We don’t have these mixing of moods in English, but in the Greek they represent a fact of behavior that is now able to be opposed because another possibility is present, one to which Paul implores his readers.

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¹⁹I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your bodily members as subjects to impurity and to the lawless mindset leading to lawless behavior, thus now present your bodily members as subjects to righteousness leading to sanctification.

Thus, presenting one's members to sin or to God is an option available only to baptized believers (stated previously). Prior to your Baptism and conversion, you did not and could not have had the ability to serve God in righteousness. Instead, you were "subjects to impurity" wholly and completely...your members were given to impurities outlined in Romans 1:18-32!

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6:19



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SLAVERY
TO GOD

*¹⁹I speak in human terms on account of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your bodily members as subjects to impurity and to the lawless mindset leading to lawless behavior, thus **now** present your bodily members as subjects to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

But that was then; this is now! Paul uses a Greek adverb “νῦν**” (**now**) as an emphatic! NOW! As a result of your Baptism and conversion, NOW your bodily members, who were used to be engrossed in acts of impurity and lawlessness, are exhorted to be “subjects of righteousness leading to sanctification.”**

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6:19



**FREED FOR
SLAVERY
TO GOD**

**Let's close with what our Lutheran
Confessions have to say about this:**

“We say that after penitence (that is, conversion or regeneration) must come good fruits and good works in every phase of life. There can be no true conversion or contrition where mortifying the flesh and good fruits does not follow. True terrors and sorrows of the soul do not permit the indulgence of the body in lusts, and true faith is not ungrateful to God or contemptuous of His commandments. In a word, there is no penitence inwardly which does not produce outwardly the punishing of the flesh.”

ROMANS

6:19



FREED FOR
SLAVERY
TO GOD

“This, we say, is what John means when he say (Matt. 3:8), “*Bear fruit that bears penitence,*” and Paul when he says (Rom. 6:19), “*Yield your member to righteousness,*” and elsewhere (Rom. 12:1), “*Present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy,*” etc. When Christ says, (Matt. 4:17), “*Be penitent,*” He is surely talking about total penitence and total newness of life and fruits” (Ap. XII 131-32).

ROMANS
6:20-23



**Next
Week**

Resisting Sin...
**“in Christ Jesus
Our Lord!”**

Part 3:
The Fruit of Slavery:
“Before” and “After” (20-22)
and
God’s Grace-Gift (23)

