

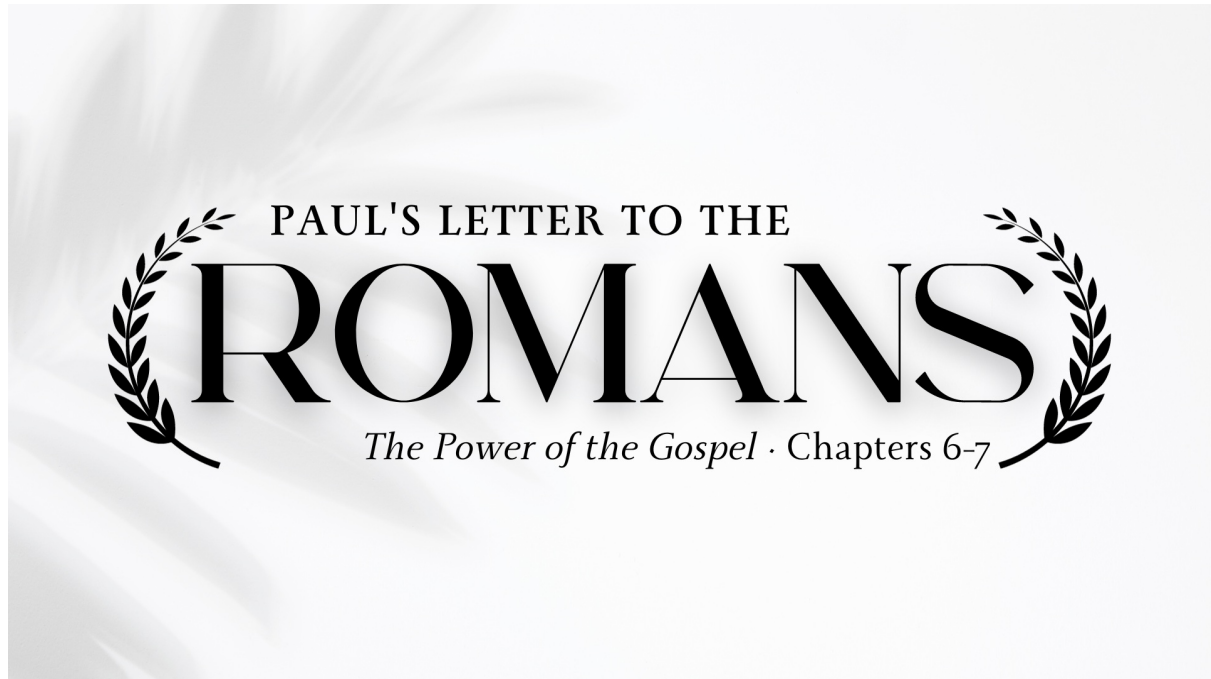
Gotta Serve Somebody

Romans 6:15-23

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Part of Paul's Letter to the Romans Romans 6-7

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Paul makes it clear that Jesus' followers are called to live their lives in Christ.

We're called to seek to follow Jesus and allow his Spirit to transform us increasingly into the image and likeness of Jesus.

There is no such thing as neutrality when it comes to faith in God and following Jesus Christ.

***God:** You must not have any other god but me.*

—Exodus 20:3 (NLT)

To try to maintain a “neutral” stance is to say we don't believe His claim that He is the one and only true God.

***Jesus:** No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other...*

—Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

***Jesus:** Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.*

—Matthew 12:30 (NLT)

Gotta Serve Somebody by Bob Dylan

*You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls*

*But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody*

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

—Romans 6:14 (ESV)

Paul tells us that in Christ, in truly committing our lives to him, and not just mouthing the words or playing at Christianity when it's convenient, we will discover that “sin will have no dominion over you.”

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

—Romans 6:15-19 (ESV)

If we have made Jesus Christ the Savior and Lord of our lives, sin no longer has to control our lives - we have a new Master!

In salvation the believer is choosing to obey a new and better master - up to this point we have been the “slave” or servant of sin, but now we are the “slave” or servant of righteousness.

Jesus: ... I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.

—John 8:34 (NLT)

Our commitment to Christ isn't just in our mind but especially in our hearts to biblical teaching, where this commitment must flow out into how we live our lives each day.

O LORD, I am your servant; yes, I am your servant, born into your household; you have freed me from my chains.

—Psalms 116:16 (NLT)

These two forms of servanthood or slavery are very, very different - one is an unending taskmaster that inevitably leads to death, while the other fills us with joy and peace, leading to eternal life with Christ.

Paul is saying that sin leads to more sin; it's bondage or slavery to sin.

Too often folks have to hit bottom before they're willing to

consider Christ's way.

We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

—Celebrate Recovery's First Step (of Twelve)

Slavery to sin leads to more sin, but Paul says slavery to "righteousness" leads to "sanctification."

Sanctification is the process of being made holy by God, of being made more and more like Jesus, so that the Fruit of the Spirit, and particularly love, are the driving forces in our life and are clearly seen by others.

The journey of sanctification is why the Church is absolutely necessary, as the community of faith working together, through the power of the Spirit, seeks to be more and more like Jesus and so be more and more different from the world around us.

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.

—Romans 6:20-23 (ESV)

The right relationship with God must lead to the right way of living, or we haven't truly made Jesus our Savior and Lord.

The fruit or result of sanctification is love and eternal life.

Jesus: A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. A good

person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

—Luke 6:43-45 (NLT)

Jesus: I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

—John 15:5-8 (ESV)

Who we serve determines what kind of fruit we produce.

When we're living in Christ, as slaves of God, we will bear fruit that blesses others and leads to "eternal life" for us.

The wages of *not* serving God, which is, in effect to serve Satan, for there is no neutrality here, is spiritual and eternal death, but it's also a wasted life here and now that finds no lasting joy or peace either.

The person who seeks to be a slave, a servant, of God, who seeks to follow Jesus and become more like him, who is different and set apart from the world, actually seeking to be holy, by the grace of God, that person is receiving "the free gift of God [which] is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Next Week: Romans 7:1-6 (*Don't forget to set your clock back 1 hour next Saturday night!*)