

Romans 6:15-23

What motivates the Christian to live a holy life?

1. Not the Old Covenant (Law) but the New Covenant (Grace).

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

- This chapter starts with an explanation of the significance of baptism as a rite of initiation and identification. We are born again to a relationship with God that is defined by the New Covenant in Jesus' blood. We are set free from the Law Covenant with its curses and blessings that are linked to our performance.
- The logical implication of being free from the Law is that we would not have anything to restrain us from sinning. "Where grace abounds, sin does all the more abound."
- Law and Grace represent very different systems.

	Law	Grace
Our basic relationship with God	Earned by our performance	Given because of Christ's performance
Our daily walk with God	Repeatedly earned by our performance	Given because of Christ's work, and as a natural consequence of following biblical teachings
Our motivation for obedience	Heavily based on fear and guilt	Based on love and thankfulness
Our source of power	Our own discipline and sense of duty	The Holy Spirit enlightening and strengthening our renewed selves
The results in our lives	Condemnation	Salvation

Implications of Biblical Grace

- **"Free grace"** does not imply **"cheap grace."**
- Freedom from the **"fear of condemnation"** does not imply freedom from the **"fight against sin."**
- Biblical grace must include both the power to **"comfort the sinner"** and the power to **"constrain the sin."**
- **"Permissive grace"** is corrected by **"profound grace,"** not by returning to Law.

II Cor.5:14 "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

2. Not the Old master (Adam) but the New Master (Christ).

a. In “ideal life” - Slaves obey their masters.

16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone {as} slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

- If you want to understand a slave’s behavior, look at his master’s agenda.
- In this verse, Paul lays out the historical story of his reader’s testimony. When they were slaves to sin they were presenting themselves to sin as instruments of sin.
- Before coming to faith in Christ, we presented ourselves to sin and we lived our lives in darkness, pain, and pride or guilt.
- At our baptism we presented ourselves to God. We changed masters.
- Every Christian has officially presented himself to God for the purpose of obeying God as a slave of righteousness.
- This verse is not referring to the “moment by moment” presentation of ourselves to Adam or Christ. He is speaking of the principle of ownership and identity. We once were apart from Christ and children of darkness in Adam but now we have changed our allegiance. Paul is not saying that if we sin we are excluded from eternal life as the next verse makes clear.

17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

- “Obedient” is a reference to faith in Christ (the “obedience of faith” Rom.1:5) which means that when we turned to Christ in faith we presented ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness.
- At our baptism we officially presented ourselves as slaves to God and righteousness but this high calling is the ideal. Our behavior may not always conform to that high calling.

“sin”

Baptism “the ideal”
(initiation and identification)

“obedience”

Experience “the actual”

b. In “actual life” – Slaves do not always obey their masters. Because of our weakness we must continually renew our presentation.

19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members {as} slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in {further} lawlessness, so now present your members {as} slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

- Because of the weakness of our flesh it is possible for Christians to obey the wrong master.
- Because of the weakness of our flesh we need to be encouraged to follow through and live out an obedient life before our new master.

What does our weakness demand?

1. We “need to know” what our baptism signifies.
2. We need to keep on “presenting” ourselves to our new master.
3. We need be reminded of the “benefits” of righteousness.

Old master
Slaves of lawlessness
death

*“having presented
yourself. . .
. . . you must continue to
present yourself . . .
weighing the benefits.”*

New master
**Slaves of
righteousness**
life

3. Not the old benefits but the new benefits.

a. The lack of benefits under sin.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death.

- The key word here is “benefit.”
- How was your old way of life working for you? What was the result? What did you get out of it? Shame, death, etc.
- While it might be said that self-serving behavior that has little sacrificial concern for ones neighbor may be viewed as advantageous in the short run, it certainly is not in the long run impressive.
- If we define death as separation from life and all that life offers, then we can say that death is indeed served by those who are slaves to sin.

b. The richness of benefits under Christ.

22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- The benefit of being enslaved to God is life, which is manifested in this life, by a separation from sin onto God. In the next life, this life principle results in eternal fellowship with God.
- It is possible (but a mistake) to read this verse to suggest that unless one is sanctified (holy in conduct) in this life there can be no eternal life.

Slaves to sin
shame
death

The myth of neutrality

Slaves to God
sanctification
eternal life

Truths about freedom

- Not **feeling constrained** in my moral choices may give me a false sense of freedom.
- Not seeing the **immediate consequences** to my moral choices may give me a false sense of freedom.
- I am never free to **act independently** of a master. I am not morally autonomous.
- I am free to **choose** my master.