

A New Allegiance

Romans 6:15-23

“It’s better to ask for forgiveness than permission”

What does it mean?

Do what you choose, even if you are not supposed to

And if/when you get caught, ask for forgiveness

Imagine a new bank account

Each Sunday morning, every unpaid bill will be paid off for you. How might you live?

When is it bad to depend upon guaranteed forgiveness?

How does that fit the central idea of Christianity: forgiveness??

The Metaphor of “Slavery”

“I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations.” *Romans 6:19a*

Trying to explain an idea from God that is hard to explain.

One human ‘owning’ or having absolute authority over another human (slavery) is dreadful!

Even if someone claims they are doing it well

Even though the Bible didn’t explicitly reject it

When based on race, it is even worse in its effects

The US is still dealing with it individually AND as a society today!

Paul’s emphasis in using “slavery”: total control (good or bad)

We are slaves to what controls us: hurts, habits, hangups

Sometimes also by good values and good relationships

Human Choices

Some ways to think about human choices

Autonomous I do what I choose to do

Rebellious I go against what people try to get me to do

Shaped I do what I was shaped to do (good or bad, based on family, culture, experiences, ideas, ...)

“Under consideration” I’ll listen to what others have to say before I make my own choice

Submission I follow the one in authority over me

We may like to think we make free choices

In reality: we are all ‘mastered’ by something (or more than 1)

Something is always shaping our “free” choices

And every time we follow it, it gets stronger

“There is no such thing as human ‘autonomy,’ a freedom from all outside powers and influences. Either people are under the power of sin (not-God), or they are under the power of God.”

Christianity says: Since God is the source of all goodness, anything that is not God is not good: “sin”

And being under the power of sin separates us from goodness and life and people and God

The Letter to the Church in Rome

A central idea of this letter:

“The gospel [the good news of Jesus Christ]... is the power of God that brings salvation

[rescue from the destruction that comes through sin]

to everyone who believes:

first to the Jew, then to the Gentile [everyone else].

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith...” *Romans 1:16-17*

Romans 6:15-23

15:

The key idea in earlier verses: The Gospel

Being loved by God does NOT come by good behavior

In other words, we are no longer UNDER law (moral requirements)

We don't HAVE TO DO what it says in order to be loved by God (under grace=forgiven and loved by God as a gift)

So...what motivation is there to do what God says??

→ Because now we are "UNDER grace". What does that mean?

16-18:

Everyone has a master

Everyone starts with a master other than God

Christians now have God as their master

19:

Having a master other than God accelerates decay

Having God as your master leads to sharing more and more in the glorious goodness of God

The only command in this passage: make God your master

20-23:

There is no good apart from God

So sin is anything other than God

Means	Master	Outcome
the wages	of sin	is death
the gift	of God	is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

The Big Idea

Either we are being shaped by God

leading to increasing goodness and glory, and eventually to eternal life,

or we are being shaped by something other than God (sin)

leading to greater chaos and decay, and eventually to death

And mixing the two is shameful and destructive

for it feeds the power of sin and it attacks the heart of God

Sin as master

Each step toward sin increases the power of sin for the next step

We tell ourselves we can stop, yet we discover a pull that we cannot stop

Sometimes our steps are intentional, sometimes they are ignorant

Either way, there is a great cost

God as master

Each step toward God increases the influence of God for the next step

Each step toward God takes us deeper into life and joy

To have an allegiance to God, yet not move toward Him is destructive, and it attacks the heart of God

Application

Receive the gift of grace: forgiveness and a new allegiance [trust, loyalty, commitment]

We all start with "not God" (sin) as our master, and it destroys

Grace is **being forgiven**: washing away all that decays & destroys

All the things that brought us shame before God, Jesus takes away from us as if they were His own

Grace is **being adopted** by a new and glorious Master

We are adopted by God to be His child forever (a new allegiance)

As adopted children, we must grow into our new identity

This is the **gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**

Jesus has claimed our allegiance to Him alone

And we willingly accept that allegiance

Recognize the disaster of each step away from God (sin)

For both Christians and non-Christians...

Not following God's ways always brings harm to self and others
It also feeds sin's power: we are slaves of what controls us
Gravity's strength increases exponentially as we move closer

For Christians...

It also attacks the heart of God
To use a human example...
To date two people at once is deeply problematic
It is far worse when one of them is your spouse!
Sinning as a Christian is even more problematic!
It is disgusting for a Christian to use forgiveness to tolerate sin

Submit each step of your life to the ways of God

We do "give up" our autonomy (which we never had anyway)
Yet it is **not** becoming a robot
Rather, it is the start of true freedom
Like being the student of the greatest artist in the world
Gaining these skills, knowledge, disciplines, and abilities opens the door to the best and greatest creativity
Our call is to a never-ending journey to learn the ways of God and to make them automatic in our hearts

What we naturally do with our sin

We try to normalize it: "I'm just being human"
We try to minimize it: "At least I'm not like ___..."
We try to distract ourselves from it: (generally with more sin...)
We may despair in it: "Why try to change..."
We may decide to apologize later: Thinking we can have the best of both worlds...

What we should do with our sin

Confess: agree with God with genuine sorrow

Sin (not-God) is ugly and destructive
Sin is mastering me

Claim His promise in Jesus to forgive as we confess

For the first time: put your trust in Jesus as Savior and Master

Seek help:

from the Holy Spirit

Repent: take action

immediately take steps away from sin and toward God, to stop further harm, and to repair the damage

One essential action:

Seek help from the people of God

Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. How have you seen the destructive and enslaving power of sin, whether in your life or in the lives of others?
2. Have you received the gift of grace in Jesus Christ (both forgiveness and a new allegiance)? If so, rehearse the wonderful work of God, re-telling your own soul, and others, the joy of what Jesus has done for you.
3. In what ways and in what settings are you tempted to turn away from God? What are you tempted to do once you come to see the error in your ways? (like normalize, minimize, distract, despair, or presume forgiveness)
4. What does it look like for you to take the right steps in response to our sin? (Consider: Confess, claim promised forgiveness in Jesus, Seek help from the Holy Spirit, Repent, Seek help from the people of God)