

- *Yielding – making use of our position*

1. We are always slaves of one kind or another

- *The unconverted person a slave of sin*

- *The Christian a slave of righteousness*

2. The Christian has experienced a radical change

- *A transfer of kingdoms and a change of nature*

- *A liberation has happened already*

3. The new life in the Christian produces a growing sanctification

- *We now have to yield to this new slavery*

Romans 6:1–14 and 6:15–23 deal with the same theme. So Romans 6:15–23 begins with the same question, more or less, as he asked in chapter 6 verse 1. ¹⁵*What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? Again he says, May it not be!* Paul has told us about our position. Now he wants to practically urge us to make use of our position, and actually yield our members to God.

1. We are always slaves of one kind or another. He says: ¹⁶*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as slaves for obedience, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness?* Any kind of regular obedience comes because there is a slavery there. And regular obedience deepens and intensifies that slavery. We behave the way we do because we are the slaves of one master or another. The unconverted person is a slave of sin. Jesus said, ‘Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin’^{□1}. The person who sins does what he does, because he is what he is. He is a slave in his being and nature; and so he or she behaves like a slave in obedience to his or her master. The person is a slave; and sin is the lord or master. But the same thing is true of the Christian. When someone is converted he is radically changed.

2. The Christian has experienced a radical change. ¹⁷*But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which you were delivered,* ¹⁸*and having been liberated from sin, you were enslaved to righteousness.* At the time of our first faith in Jesus, the teaching of the Christian gospel was a form which squeezed us into a new shape. We became a different kind of slave – a slave of righteousness. It is not possible for a person to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ without coming under a new lordship. There is a transfer of kingdoms and a change of nature. The new convert will never be the same again. The heart is changed. A liberation has taken place. It is not something that the Christian is seeking. (He or she is not ‘seeking deliverance’.) It has happened already. Salvation is deliverance. If there is no deliverance, there is no salvation! If there is no salvation, there is no deliverance!

3. The new life in the Christian produces a growing sanctification. Paul is using an illustration. ¹⁹*I am speaking in a human way because of the weakness of your flesh.* It really should not be necessary to use this kind of illustration but Paul is sympathetic with our weakness of mind! We now have to yield to this new slavery in our lives. He says: *For just as you once made the parts of your body available to be slaves in the service of impurity and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now make the parts of your body available to be slaves in the service of righteousness leading to growing sanctification.* ²⁰*For when you were the slaves of sin, you were free in the matter of righteousness.* ²¹*What fruit then did you get at that time? Fruit of which you are now ashamed. The end of those things is death.* ²²*But now having been set free from sin and having been enslaved to God you have your fruit for sanctification and the end is eternal life.* ²³*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

□1 John 8:34

Paul is NOT saying

(i) That obedience is 100% inevitable

(ii) That they might not be saved

(iii) That they could lose their salvation

Paul IS

(i) Showing them the basis for them presenting their limbs and faculties to God

(ii) Appealing for consistency

(iii) Warning that there will be serious consequences if they do not take him seriously

• They must take responsibility for 'walking on the right road' and laying hold of what God has made possible

What is Paul doing in Romans 6:16–23? (i) He is not contrasting the old life with the new life, in order that we may simply congratulate ourselves we are in the one and not in the other. He is not saying, 'You have died to sin. Obedience is 100 per cent inevitable. So all is well.' There would be no point in Romans 6:12–13 and in Romans 6:19b if total obedience were somehow 'forced' or irresistible and 100 per cent inevitable. (ii) He is not hinting that they might not be saved, and then urging them to prove their salvation to themselves. His thought is **not** that godliness is inevitable for the Christian and therefore they are not truly saved if they do not live the godly life and so they ought to start doubting straightaway! (iii) He is not warning them against loss of salvation. The whole point is that righteousness has captured them and enslaved them.

What then is he doing? (i) He is showing them the basis for their presenting their limbs and faculties to God. The greatest thing has already been done. 'They' – in their true personalities – have died to sin. (ii) He is appealing for consistency. They must realize that they are slaves of righteousness and so follow through with practical self-presentation to God. (iii) He is warning that there will be serious consequences if they do not take him seriously. Sin cannot rule over us in our position, but sin can reign in our bodies and affect our experience. There is the possibility that they might be so foolish as to try to walk on the wrong road! From what he has said one might think that was hardly possible. The Christian is 'enslaved' to righteousness. Yet it is possible to sow to the flesh and 'reap corruption'¹, so Paul's mentioning the way of death is not an idle matter. Their position has changed for ever. They are slaves of righteousness. But let them not take one step on a road which destroys and corrupts. Otherwise, whether they are slaves of righteousness or not, their experience will be that they will corrupt themselves and destroy themselves and be 'saved through fire'. They are on the right road, but let them not dabble with the wrong one. 'For the wages of sin is death . . .' Let them rather lay hold on the free gift God is giving them. For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord².

¹ Galatians 6:8

² 6:23



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