

Christ bore the penalty of sin for us when He died on the cross and so sin no longer carries the death penalty for those redeemed through faith in Him. Paul anticipates the natural question of whether or not we may now indulge in sin since grace has superseded the punishment that God's moral law demands. He answers that question with a resounding "God forbid!" and points out that obedience to sin is slavery and that God's intent is to set us free from that bondage.

Romans 5:12-21: Paul points out that sin entered the world as a result of Adam's original sin in the Garden of Eden and as a result the human race has inherited a sin nature and death as the consequence ever since. However, just as the human race has come under the death penalty of sin because of one man (Adam), so all has the gift of life has become available to the human race through one Man (Jesus Christ). God gave the law so that the offense of sin might abound, but He also has provided more than enough grace to forgive whatever sin we may commit (v. 20). Sin has reigned over the human race to bring death but God's grace reigns in righteousness, giving eternal life to those who believe on Christ for salvation (v. 21).

Romans 6:1-13: Seeing that grace abounds to forgive our sins, Paul asks if we should continue in our sin so that God's grace can abound that much more? The answer is obviously a resounding "no" because God's grace has set us free from sin and we should therefore not dwell in that from which Christ died on the cross to set us free. Paul then introduces the idea that we are now dead to sin through the cross of Christ. Baptism illustrates how that when Christ died on the cross, we also died with Him and that when Christ rose from the dead, we did as well, rising into a new life. We should consider ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God through this new life we have in Jesus Christ.

Romans 6

14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you" – In the previous chapter Paul made the point that sin's dominion over the human race had brought death to mankind (**Rom. 5:17, 21** "*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*) ... *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*"). Now that we are under grace, sin no longer rules over us bringing the death penalty (**Rom. 6:23** "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*").

"for ye are not under the law, but under grace" – Paul is not saying that we have no obligation to obey God's moral law but that the law no longer has the power to condemn us to death when we disobey it. This is because God's grace has superseded the law (principle) of sin and death. Paul explains this in more detail in chapter 8 (**Rom. 8:2** "*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*").

15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Paul now anticipates a question that some people might ask. Since we have been set free from the penalty of sin (death), does that mean that we are now free to sin with impunity? After all, God's grace guarantees us that He will forgive us when we sin, right? Paul answers this question with a firm "No!" The problem is not that God won't forgive us but that it is not in our best interests to continue in sin.

16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Paul now uses the metaphor of the master/slave relationship to illustrate why sin is a bad idea even while we are under grace. The Greek word translated "yield" means "to present or make available" and the word for "servants" is *doulos*, which means "slave." *Doulos* does not refer to an employee who is being paid wages for his voluntary work. It instead refers to a slave who has no choice but to serve the will of another. Paul wants us realize that when we yield to temptation and thus obey sin we are making ourselves slaves to sin, the result of which is death (**Jam. 1:15** "*Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*"). Sin has a way of taking control of us rather than us controlling it. On the other hand, if we yield ourselves as slaves to God in obedience, that obedience will lead to righteousness.

17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin" – Before we came to faith in Jesus Christ we were the slaves of sin and under its penalty of death. Paul thanks God that this slavery to sin is in the past for us and he wants to remind us that it was slavery that God has delivered us from.

"but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine [teaching] which was delivered [to give into the hands of another] you" – We ceased serving sin and instead obeyed the teaching of righteousness that God has given us in His word. The phrase "obeyed from the heart" speaks of a genuine repentance from sin and a turning in faith to Christ. Our obedience is not an outward conformity to what we have been taught from the Bible but a sincere desire from the heart to obey God's word.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" – Salvation through repentance and faith in Christ has set us free from slavery to sin and its consequences and has made us slaves to the righteousness of God. Why would we want to return to being slaves to sin and death now that Christ has set us free (v. 16)?

19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity [weakness] of your flesh” – Paul has used the familiar illustration of being enslaved to a master to explain these spiritual truths because of the difficulty that human beings have in understanding them.

“for as ye have yielded your members servants [slaves] to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity [violation of the law]” – This describes our situation before salvation: we were slaves to uncleanness and were in continual violation of God’s moral law because we yielded ourselves to it.

“even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” – Now that we have been set free from the slavery of sin, we are now free to yield ourselves to be slaves of righteousness, a slavery which results in holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free [not a slave] from righteousness” – Paul invites us to look back to the time before we were redeemed. Jesus said that “no man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13) and before we were redeemed we were slaves to sin and therefore could not be a slave of righteousness. When Christ saved us and we experienced the new birth, we became a new creation that is now a slave to righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*). Thus it is impossible for a genuine believer to be a slave of righteousness and still be a slave of sin. 1 John 3:7-9 *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”* John is not saying that we will never sin after Christ redeems us (1 John 1:8-2:1), but that we will not practice sin once we have been genuinely redeemed.

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?” – Paul reminded us in v. 20 that we were slaves to sin before we came to faith in Christ. He now asks a rhetorical question: What “fruit” (benefits or advantages) did we have back then when we engaged in the sinful acts that are now an embarrassment to us as Christians? The obvious answer is “none.”

“for the end of those things is death” – While there may have been some short-term gains from our sin, those “benefits” are overshadowed by the fact that the “end” (result) of those sins is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Because Christ has redeemed us, we are now “free” (no longer a slave) to sin. We have become slaves to God and the benefits are holiness and eternal life. Christ has “flipped the script” of our lives so that we are no longer on the road to destruction but are now recipients of eternal life.

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul has contrasted our two possible masters and gives us the bottom line. The payday of obedience/slavery to sin is death. However, the benefit of being a slave to God is the gift of eternal life. This eternal life is made possible by Jesus Christ and it’s only through faith in Him that we can receive this gift.