

# ROMANS (6:19-23)

## *But I Don't "Feel" Free*

PART 23 – JANUARY 16, 2005

### ROMAN SLAVERY

In chapter six, Paul does not claim that we go from slavery to freedom ... but from "slavery to sin" to "slavery to God."

- The assertion is that we're all slaves to *something*.

In *Mat 11:30*, Jesus says his "yoke is easy and his burden is light", but it *is* a yoke. Jesus himself took on the role of a servant and shocked the disciples when he washed their feet.

Q: Does the imagery of "slavery" bother you?

- American slavery is rooted in the most demeaning racism.

Now to the Romans, the difference between slave and free was one of *status*, not racial superiority. Some household slaves were even adopted (and inherited) equally with natural sons.

Slaves worked as architects, actors, accountants; physicians, philosophers, teachers, librarians, and shopkeepers.

About a third of Rome's population were slaves. Foreigners often enslaved themselves to gain Roman citizenship.

Still, slavery was contemptible and demeaning (and it was the rise of Christianity that led to its demise). So the analogy is inadequate, and Paul readily admits it.

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:19-23 NIV

## FEELING FREE

Paul knows this whole slave analogy is far from perfect.

No longer do I call you slaves ... but I have called you friends ... - John 15:15  
NAS

And in Paul's letter to the Galatians, he said:

... you are no longer a slave, but a son ... - Galatians 4:7 NIV

So, Paul is semi-apologetic as he justifies this slave analogy.

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. - Romans  
6:19a NIV

Our "natural" minds are too weak to fully grasp the complex realities of God. So, we grope for examples and images that end up being partially misleading. For instance:

- God doesn't force us against our will to go with him.
- We're the ones who choose which master we will serve.

Now Paul shows us which aspects of the analogy to focus on.

Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. - Romans 6:19b NIV

Notice how Paul contrasts two developmental progressions:

- A. "ever-increasing wickedness"
- B. "righteousness leading to holiness"

Once we're committed as servants of the Righteous One, his Holy Spirit will lead us to *ever-increasing* godliness.

When Abraham Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation it freed all American slaves as of January 1, 1863. On January 1, 1863, do you think every slave *felt* free?

Being set free is a single action, but walking in that new freedom is a process requiring effort and struggle.

- Positional Freedom - the *fact* of receiving an authorized declaration of forgiveness and righteousness (in Christ).
- Experiential Freedom - the *act* of living out the practical, progressive, moral outworking of that righteousness.

## EMPOWERED STEERING

So, I can be freed from sin, and still not feel very free from it. But here's the big difference:

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. –  
Romans 6:20 NIV

- As believers the *dominion* of sin has been broken.

Last time we talked about how this meant that we are freed (in a very practical sense) from sin's delusion, desire, and despair. But here, Paul is talking about a "controlling aspect" of our walk with God; or, the "empowering" of the Holy Spirit.

Q: What's it mean to be "empowered" by God's Holy Spirit?

We get this misguided idea that God is going to rescue us from the consequences of our sin with no effort on our part.

- I just have to pray for him to "empower" me!

We should think of it like power steering. It feels like you're the one doing the work of steering, but if the power steering goes out you quickly realize how much assistance you had.

- God assists us with "empowered steering"

And this enabling power never comes absent from our effort. Most miracles in the O.T. required a first step (think "Red Sea"). We'll talk more about that in just a minute.

What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of?  
Those things result in death! – Romans 6:21 NIV

- Paul isn't talking about self-condemnation (*ashamed of*).

He's talking about having an absolute lack of justification, rationalization, or excuse for the *old ways*.

- "Empowered steering" won't help if you turn the wrong way.

And we won't consistently drive and direct our lives God's way, unless and until we realize that there is absolutely no benefit with those sinful attitudes and actions we tend to excuse.

- We must see sin as the supreme waste of life

## LIPOSUCTIONING SIN

Q: Are you ashamed of your sins both past and present?

Q: Do you comprehend that your sin “results in death”?

Q: Do you demonstrate the same commitment to Christ that you demonstrated to your sins when you were living for them?

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. – Romans 6:22  
NIV

Paul uses three very specific words of process again:

1. The benefit you “reap” ...
  - We reap that which we sow (plant) and grow (cultivate)
2. “leads” to holiness ...
  - It doesn’t “teleport,” it guides and directs.
3. And the “result” is eternal life.

If you lose fat through liposuction you may *look* better, but it won’t make you *healthier* or *stronger*. That only comes through proper diet and exercise.

- The Lord won’t liposuction my sin out of me

But he will *train* us to grow in Christ-like character, because:

- His goal isn’t to enable laziness but to empower holiness

This is why we don’t feel so “set free” at first, but grow in our *feelings* of freedom as we see first hand shameful behavior being transformed into life-giving character.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 6:23 NIV

Paul brings us back to the fact that there are two masters: one master pays a wage; one master gives gifts. A wage is something you deserve; a gift is something you don’t.

If I devote myself totally, he’ll liberate me completely. And this is why his yoke is easy and his burden is light.