

**Free to Obey in Christ**

**Romans 6:15-7:6**

**Introduction:** In chapter 6, there are two sections with the same objective but with different emphasis.

***“Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means!”***

6:1-14 Being united with Christ is what God has done to us. Being joined to Christ leads us into righteous conduct.

***“Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!”***

6:15-23 Being set free does not do away with law but enables us to willingly follow Christ as slaves of righteousness.

Being enslaved to God means that by His grace we can now do what is right.

**1st Principle: Genuine Christianity is evidenced in vigorous obedience.**

We are to yield all our powers to God, so as to be employed in His service.

“…. *you wholeheartedly obeyed*” (6:17) --- “*you have become slaves to righteousness*” (6:18) ---“*so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness*” (6:19).

1. **There are only two kinds of person in the world and both are SLAVES** (Romans 6:15-16)
2. **There is the ‘slave of sin’ leading to death.** The Bible teaches that we were by nature objects of wrath (Eph. 2:1-3). We were slaves to sin (6:20), under the control of the sinful nature (7:5). Sin’s wages is death. (6:23). Here wages, ‘*opsonia’*, had to do with the daily food ration (literally fish ration) which was given to a Roman soldier for his service, rather than some large payment at the end of one’s service.

* **By the one simple act of disobedience** (Adam & Eve) **human pride destroyed our relationships**:

Human lust destroys our loyalty, trust, and integrity; human gluttony destroys our bodies, human sloth destroys our opportunities and ambitions, human envy and greed destroy our contentment, and human hatred / anger does violence to both self and others.

1. **There is the ‘slave of obedience’ leading to righteousness.** Paul uses an unexpected comparison here.

We might have expected faith in Christ to be the focus here but rather Paul writes about obedience.

We might have expected life to be in contrast to death. Instead we see righteousness in contrast to death. We might have expected righteousness to be in contrast to sin. Instead we see obedience in contrast to sin.

1. **We become slaves to the one to whom we offer ourselves**.

There is no notion of the ‘**Carnal Christian**’. “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or the will be devoted to one and look down on the other*” (Matt. 6:24)

* “Salvation in sin is as much a contradiction as happiness in misery”. (Charles Hodge – Commentary)

1. **Being in Christ sets us free to vigorously serve God.** (Romans 6:17-23)

The authority and power of our former master has been destroyed,

“*but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God*” (6:22).

* 1. **The world might define freedom as a spontaneous, independent form of self-determination.** It is a condition that allows a person to freely choose, not bound by obligations or limiting circumstances.
  2. **Only God is truly free**! The notion that a person may have such ‘freedom’ is a foolish, deceptive lie. Only in Him can we be set free from sin and sin’s consequences.

“*Now the Lord is a Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom*” (1 Cor. 3:17)

* 1. **Freedom that salvation brings leads a person to obey**. Obedience does not secure salvation but rather gives evidence to it. Flesh, law, sin, and death starkly contrast Spirit, freedom, obedience (service) and life.
  2. **There is a notion of ‘freedom’ that brings spiritual death, & there is a ‘bondage’ that brings forth true life.** Before vice, shame, & death ruled; but now holiness, peace of mind & life everlasting guide our steps.

* **To consider**: A man carries a sign, “I am a slave for Christ!” Flip side -- “Whose slave are you?”

**2nd Principle: Grace is necessary in the exercise of holiness.**

Our obedience to God is motivated and sustained by divine love. Christians are those who can renounce their service to sin, because the actual authority and power of our former master has been destroyed.

“*thanks be to God that* …. *you wholeheartedly obeyed*” (6:17). “*but now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God*” (6:22). “…*through the body of Christ….in order that we might bear fruit to God*” (7:4). “*we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit*” (7:6)

1. **Grace is necessary as Holiness is a gift.** (Romans 6:19, 22, 23) God’s free gift at work in regeneration is produced, sustained, and ultimately perfected in us by His Holy Spirit -- all for His eternal glory.
2. We have been set free from sin -- (the passive receivers).

We become, or are being made to be, servants of righteousness -- (the passive position again).

We are made to love God’s law (Ps.119: 97,136,165) and we know the ONE who is victorious (1 Cor. 10:13).

1. **The fruit of our union to Christ, holiness born of the Spirit,** will increasingly be evident as God works to transform our lives.

We were slaves to sin 🡪 we have been set free from sin 🡪 and because of that we are to wholeheartedly obey. We become slaves of righteousness leading to holiness (both now & eternally).

* “*For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave* (1 Cor. 7:22) “*You were bought with a price*” (6:20).
* *12.* “*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed -- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence -- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13. for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose***”.** (Phil 2:12-13)

1. **Grace working through union with Christ results in a fruitful life**. Christ satisfied the demands of the law, setting us free to obey in the Spirit.
2. The **3rd use** of the Law, the ‘moral law’, is not done away with (civil, ceremonial, 3rd use = moral).

**Not Legalism** seeking salvation by obeying the law –{in **FEAR}**.

The Jews described the Law as a “**yoke**”, and they were proud that the law of God set them apart.

**Not Antinomianism** seeking to be free of obligation –{in **HATE}**.

**Freedom** from dependence on the law in order to be saved, but **also a freedom** now to truly obey it, (There was such a thing as voluntary slavery in Israel.) – {in **LOVE}.**

1. *“3. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6. Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”*(1 John 2:3-6**)***. 6. “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 9. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”* (1 John 3:6, 7, &9)
2. **Belonging to Jesus Christ** **as Lord** brings us true freedom.

“*I tell you the truth everyone who sins is the slave of sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.*” (John 8:34-36)

1. Just as death dissolves the marriage bond, so union with Jesus Christ in his death dissolves our bondage to the law. Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. We are now *“released from the law that we might serve in the new way of the Spirit*” (7:6). This freedom results in a faith that overcomes whether one was an alcoholic, a glutton, an adulterer, filled with angry hate, or simply self-righteous. God does not force persons against their will but **transforms the nature** so that they now can **freely obey with a willing heart** “*the form of teaching to which you were entrusted*” (6:17).

**Discussion Questions:**

Do you agree with the Bible’s teaching that all human beings are slaves?

In our human condition how can we experience real freedom?

In what distinct ways have you seen God’s grace at work in your life?