

You're Gonna Have to Serve Somebody
Romans 6:15-23
#19 in a Series on Paul's Letter to the Romans
Faith Community Church – February 26, 2006

Objective: to encourage those attending to view their lives as vehicles with which to serve God..

Introduction – Please turn in your Bibles to Romans 6.

*You're gonna have to serve somebody.
Well, it might be the devil, or it might be the Lord,
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.¹*

That's what Bob Dylan says. His lyrics are not where we would look expecting to find theological insight. I don't know what prompted him to write the song *Gotta Serve Somebody*, but when it comes to stating the point of Romans 6:15-21, the song nails it.

Read Romans 6:15-23.

This passage speaks to us of the choice that we all need to make about who we serve. At first reading it seems somewhat similar to verses 1-14. And it is. But it is not just a repeat of what Paul has already said. (Note paragraph on the sermon notesheet).

In verses 1-14 he is addressing the issue of whether it is appropriate for followers of Christ to sin in order to allow God's grace to get greater opportunity to be displayed. His answer is: absolutely not! Since those who have trusted in Christ are joined to Christ, we have participated in his death and resurrection and have been set free from the power of sin. But some might wonder if being free from the demands of the Law of Moses results in an opportunity to live in whatever way we please. To that Paul also says, absolutely not! Our being set free from sin results in our being servants – slaves – of God. He then gives us several reasons why we should be actively seeking to live in a way that acknowledges the authority that God has over our lives.

Why You Should Live as A Servant of God

1. Because you know that is what is expected of you. (16-19a)
 - a. One of the problems of human nature is that people think they are better than they really are. I'm not talking about skill – I'm talking about morality. But it doesn't take much to show what human nature is really like. Simply remove the restraint of the law. We see it when there are power failures, when there are natural disasters, when there are political or economic collapses. Looting, rioting, destruction. And so unreasonable! Of what value is a large-screen TV when there is no electricity? What is that? It is simply people living out the fact that they are slaves to sin. But

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God does not set us free from that and pat us on the back and tell us to try to be good. We have been set free from sin and made alive *to God*. It is a change of controlling principle, of authority, of allegiance.

- b. Notice that Paul uses the concept of slavery to identify our relation to sin or God. He acknowledges that it is not the perfect illustration (19a), no doubt because the concept of slavery carried with it negative connotations. But he makes it clear that in the grand scheme of things our place is not that of a master, but of a servant. Someone or something is going to tell us what to do. And we will follow.
- c. So Paul answers the question of “can we do what we want because we aren’t under the authority of the Mosaic Law?” with a firm no, and he reminds them of what they already know. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness.

2. Because it leads to accomplishing God’s purposes in our lives. (19b)

- a. Paul has expressed thanks for the fact that these Roman Christians had embraced the truth that they had been entrusted with. He is grateful that as a result of their faith they are no longer slaves to sin. So in the latter half of verse 19 he urges them, as he has in verses 1-14, to give themselves to their real and rightful master. The same is true for us. We are to give ourselves to pursuing righteousness because it leads to our sanctification.
- b. What does that mean? Let me try to illustrate it (using the very expensive china to feed the dog outside). The problem is that you regard your expensive china as set apart for a specific use. That is along the lines of what it means to be sanctified.
- c. This concept is clear in passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:25-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Peter 1:1-2.
- d. Therefore we choose to live under God’s authority, to do his will, because it enables us to fulfill our calling – to be all we can be.

3. Finally, because it is the only thing that makes sense. (20-23)

- a. In verses 20-21, Paul asks a question that all of us need to answer. When it comes down to it, what do we gain from living in disobedience. Unwanted pregnancy? Addiction? Guilt? Oh – those are the consequences of the “biggies.” How about broken relationships? Disappointment? Regret?
 - i. Moses had it right. Despite the “benefits” of living as a prince in pagan Egypt, Moses chose “to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.”²
 - ii. Why? John explains it in his letter (1 John 2:15-17).
- b. And that is what Paul tells us as he closes out this chapter. Our freedom from sin and being bound as a servant to God results in our sanctification now and ultimately in eternal life.³

² Hebrews 11:25

³ See Stott: Romans, 186

Conclusion

Where are you in the scheme of things? If have not trusted in Christ, who died to provide forgiveness for your sin, then please know that the wages or payment of sin is death. But by accepting the gift God offers – by believing that Christ died for you – you are set free from sin and receive the gift of God – eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

If you claim to be a Christian, what are you doing with your life? Who are you serving? Serving the old master of sin does two things: it leads to emptiness in this life and it gives reason to question the reality of what you profess about yourself. Paul's words to us are simple. Tell the old master to hit the road. Turn to the new Master and walk with him. With each new day that God gives you, live with the conscious desire to follow the kind of life that he wants you to follow, to the praise of His grace.