

Jan. 19, 2020

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

Passage: Romans 6:15-23

Community Group Questions: “Mastered by God”

Read Romans 6:15-23 aloud as a group. And then work through the following questions:

1. In verse 15, Paul asks a question often posed by people who object to the gospel of free grace: “Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?” In other words, does God’s grace actually encourage us to sin even more, since we know we’ll be forgiven? Have you ever encountered this way of thinking among Christians you know? Have you ever encountered this thinking in your own heart? What’s your answer to it?
2. In vs. 16, Paul begins his argument by pointing out two masters that can rule any person. The first master is sin. Sin is presented here as a power that can hold a person in its grip. Notice the principle: “if you present yourself to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey.” In your life, how have you found sin to be an all-consuming master? Do you think most people understand the serious, captivating influence of sin? Why or why not?
3. There is a second master presented in this text. Paul says we can become a “slave of obedience” (vs. 16), or a “slave of righteousness” (vs. 18), which are both ways of saying that we can become a “slave of God” (vs. 22). God is presented here not as a “spiritual option,” or a distant life-coach, but as a master who is worthy of our total devotion. Notice that there is no “third option” of being your own master: you are either mastered by sin or mastered by God. Would you agree that people in our modern culture pride themselves in being free to rule their own lives? What does this passage have to say about the “myth of freedom”? Why is it such good news that God offers himself to us as our new master?
4. In verses 17-18, Paul describes the conversion experience of the Roman Christians. When they believed in Christ, God set them free from the slave master of sin, and enabled them to become “obedient from the heart” to the gospel message, now becoming “slaves of righteousness.” Considering this radical conversion, the Roman Christians should present themselves to God with equal devotion to how they previously presented themselves to sin (see vs. 19). The logic is clear: every Christian needs to live from their new identity; they have a new master now, so they should serve him alone. What would your Christian walk look like if you pursued God with as much zeal and passion as you once pursued sin? Can you think of specific aspects of your life that used to be devoted to sin, which are now devoted to God? How is God using those things for his purposes in recent days?
5. In verses 20-23, Paul reminds the Roman Christians of the results of serving each master. Sin gives us the fruit of shame and pays us the “wage” that we are due: namely death. Serving God, however, leads us to

the fruit of sanctification (increasing holiness and Christ-likeness), and God gives us a free gift: eternal life! The contrast could not be greater. In your own life, what has sin given you? Was sin ever “worth it”? By contrast, have you ever regretted serving God? What blessings have come into your life when you’ve dedicated yourself wholeheartedly to him?

6. In our passage, Paul is personally helping the Roman Christians in their fight against sin by reminding them of gospel truth. He is piercing through the “insane thinking” that sin clouds our minds with, and giving the Roman Christians “gospel sanity” by telling them God’s truth about the lethal nature of sin, the reality of their conversion, the goodness of being mastered by God, and the benefits of living in light of our true identity in Christ. In your journey as a Christian, how are you, like Paul, actively helping other Christians in their fight against sin? In what specific ways are you inviting other Christians to help you in your fight for holiness? As a community group, how can we imitate Paul’s example and help one another fight sin and stay devoted to God?