

Romans: Slaves to Righteousness, Recipients of Life
Romans 6:15-23

“The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45)

It’s not “just forgiveness,” it’s the power of new life. The question is not just “If you died tonight...” but also “if you wake up tomorrow... how is your life going to look different because Christ is in it?” (J.D. Greear)

#1 - Why does holiness matter? (vv. 15-16, 20-23)

- Genuine Christianity involves allegiance, loyalty, and devotion—it’s about having a Master and doing His will. (vv. 15-16)
- Are you really free if what you reap from that freedom is death and not life? (vv. 20-21)

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. (Romans 5:12)

For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. (Rom. 8:6)

Paul is talking of a “death” that these Christians used to experience; a death that non-believers know now, as well as the one they will know in the future. He is referring to brokenness of life. Here’s how that works: if you don’t obey the law of God, you become a slave to selfishness, lust, bitterness, pride, materialism, worry, driven-ness, fear, etc. The specific enslaving sins depend on whatever particular “bottom line” you have offered yourself to instead of God. For example, if you are enslaved to approval, you will constantly experience self-pity, envy, hurt feelings, inadequacy. If you are enslaved to success, you will experience driven-ness, fatigue, worry and fear, and so on. Anything you worship besides God promises much, but delivers worse than nothing. It is slavery: a constant treadmill of seeking to grasp, or keep hold of, something which can never really deliver. (Tim Keller)

- Being like Jesus and being in heaven are wedded together in the Bible. (v. 22)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

Strive... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

To make being ‘under grace’ an excuse for sinning is a sign that one is not really ‘under grace’ at all. (F.F. Bruce)

- God is not a wage-payer but a gift-giver. (v. 23)

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live. (Isaiah 55:1-3)

- Application:
 - If you are not a Christian, would you consider where your life is headed?
This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 Jn 5:11)
 - If you are a Christian, do you see holiness as a blessing and not as a burden?
 - Liberty does not mean that you are free to do whatever you want to do; it means that you are free to do what God created you to do.

- Let's ask God to magnify grace by magnifying godliness among us.

#2 - How does holiness happen? (vv. 17-19)

- Holiness happens as...

- God works. ("But thanks be to God")

- The bad news is that we are no match for sin.
- The good news is that sin is no match for God.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary...²⁹ He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. (Isaiah 40:28-29)

- God works in our hearts. ("obedient from the heart")

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26)

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. (Matthew 15:19)

- God works in our hearts through the gospel. ("to the standard of teaching")

- So...

- Remember Christ's work in your life.

- Don't forget who you are and what God has done.
- Give yourself to the regular hearing of God's Word.

- Pursue Christ's character in your life.

- Then...

Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."¹⁴ "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood;¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known."¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:13-18)

- Now...

For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. (Romans 6:19)

The glory of God is a man fully alive! (Irenaeus)