**WE’RE ALL SLAVES TO SOMETHING**

**09:00 Service – 02/07/2023 – Romans 6: 12 to 23**

This is part of Paul’s great statement of faith in Romans 1 to 8.

Chapter 6 centres on the battle with sin that all believers face. It is worth looking back (and maybe reading) the first 11 verses and seeing how Paul is very realistic about the battles with the sinful nature.

‘Shall we sin lots and lots so that God can bless us more?’ (v1 paraphrase)

‘By no means!’ (v2)

‘Count yourself dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ’ (v11)

But in verse 12, Paul is encouraging us to action – we must not let sin ‘reign’ in our lives.

1. This is typical of Paul’s treatment of the subject of sin. In verse 14, he says that sin is no longer our master – in effect, sin does not reign. Yet we are told not to let sin reign.

How pro-active should we be in dealing with our own sin?

Is being obedient to God a struggle?

What steps can we take to deal with the sins that keep coming back at us?

All through this section of Romans, Paul talks about law and grace. He insists we are ‘not under law but under grace’. When Paul uses the word ‘law’ he almost always is referring to the law of Moses. Some Christians have abused this statement by saying that Christians have no commandments that demand their obedience. What Paul is saying here is that we no longer look to the law of Moses – that was the Old Covenant. We now live under a new regime, inaugurated by Christ, but we are still called to be obedient to the words of Jesus.

1. What does it mean to live under grace?

Are we aware that God is gracious and forgives our sin?

Do we carry guilt and sin around with us, when God’s grace can free us from the burden?

The problem with the law is that it condemns us. The law of ‘70 mph on a motorway’ will condemn us if we go past a speed camera at 90 mph. For the second time, Paul is keen to squash the idea that, because we are covered by a gracious God, we can sin as we like. This was a common misinterpretation in the 1st Century church (the *antinomians*).

1. Paul’s next point is controversial. He says we are all slaves to somebody (v16) ‘You are slaves to the one you obey’ whether to sin or to obedience. Do you see yourself as a slave? (Remember, a slave of the 1st Century was owned by the master of the house and had no rights except those given them by the master.)

Verse 18 says we have been transferred from one realm to another. We are now slaves to the moral conduct that God expects of his people. Paul assumes that this means you ‘wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching entrusted to you’ (v17)

1. Do you see Jesus’ teaching as something he has ‘entrusted’ you with?

Do you accept that his teaching is always to be trusted?

Do you find some of the Bible’s teaching hard to agree with and therefore obey?

Paul is making a real point about the state of the believer before and after they found faith. Non-Christians often say they are ‘free’ in contrast to Christians who are tied up with all kinds of oppressive commands. Paul says unbelievers do have freedom (v19) – the freedom to not live righteous lives. In other words, if one is not serving God then, whether knowingly or not, one is serving sin.

1. Do you see a sharp contrast between how you lived before you followed Christ and how you live now?

Paul talks about the shame we feel about how we used to live. Is that a real experience for you?

Have you dealt with shame so that guilt no longer bothers you?

‘The wage of sin is death’ – that means sin must be dealt with because it leads to death.

The contrast is clear:

Before we were Christians (v21) Slaves of sin Shame Death

Now we are Christians (v22) Free from sin,

Slaves of God Sanctification Life

1. In our conversations and preaching do we make this contrast clear enough?

The great preacher, Martin Lloyd Jones summarised it as:

***The master that is served – sin versus God***

***The outcome of that service – death versus eternal life***

***How that outcome is reached – a ‘wage’ earned versus a ‘gift’ received***

Do we do people any favours if we fail to make the two choices clear?

Are we afraid to talk about sin because we think it might put people off?

Question from Elliot

1. To what extent is God’s sanctification of the believer instant, and to what extent is it a process?

How do I navigate the struggle between my new servanthood and my old nature? (Romans 7: 15-25)

Why has God called us to endure the struggle – What do we gain from the process?