

## **Romans 6**

### **The Two Masters**

Today, we continue our studies in the book of Romans by looking at chapter 6 and considering the subject of “The two masters.” Before we get into chapter 6, let’s remind ourselves what’s happened so far in Romans.

Paul started off in Romans chapter 1 telling his readers that he was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation [to] everyone who believes.” Paul then explains in verses 17 and 18 that two key components of this saving gospel of Christ are the righteousness of God and the wrath of God. For the rest of chapter 1 and most of chapters 2 and 3, Paul then explains how all people are deserving of the wrath of God. No matter how religious or moral a person may be, no matter their background or upbringing, Paul comes to the conclusion “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” That’s a hard hitting message, and one we perhaps don’t like to hear. Our sins have so offended God that we deserve to face His wrath. Have you recognised that sombre fact?

But Paul has good news too as part of this “gospel of Christ” which has the power to save all who believe. Remember the righteousness of God that Paul wrote about in chapter 1? Paul says in chapter 3 that people can be “justified freely by [God’s] grace.” To be justified means to be declared righteous. Paul says that it’s possible for us, those who deserve God’s wrath, to be seen by God as righteous and to be spared from God’s wrath. Paul explains in Romans 3 that this is because the Lord Jesus offered Himself in our place to satisfy the demands of the wrath of God. Jesus offers to stand in the place of guilty sinners, to bear their punishment so that God can righteously forgive us.

The end of chapter 3, all of chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5 go on to show us that the way to be justified – to be seen by God as righteous - is through faith in Christ’s death. We can’t earn this salvation. No amount of being good will satisfy God. The way to have peace with God and to be justified is to have faith in God. To believe that God is fully satisfied with the death of the Lord Jesus, and accepts His death in your place. Paul concludes that this was a great demonstration of the love of God for “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” I asked before if you realised you were a sinner deserving of God’s wrath. If you have realised that, and are perhaps painfully aware of the fact, have you realised that God offers to you forgiveness? God offers to you the opportunity to be declared righteous in His sight. God offers to you eternal life, through faith in the Lord Jesus. Will you accept it by faith?

From about verse 12 of chapter 5, Paul explains another key part of the gospel. It’s not just that we’ve done wrong things and deserve to be judged for them. We have an even bigger problem. We are inherently wrong. We’re lost. We’re incapable of living the kind of life God wants us to. Paul says that as descendants of the first man, Adam, we’ve inherited his sinful nature. Because of Adam’s disobedience all those years ago in the garden of Eden, we’ve been made sinners. We have a problem, not just with the sins we commit, but that we have a sinful nature. Just as much

as we need saving from the consequences of our sins (or our wrong actions), we need delivering from this sinful nature so that we can live the kind of life that pleases God.

That's where Romans 6 comes in. In today's chapter Paul tells us that when a person gets saved, that person has died to sin. Paul sets up a picture of a man and two masters. Each master wants to reign over us. One master, called sin, wants to rule over us and make us obey its sinful lusts. The other, Christ, wants to reign in us to let us enjoy "newness of life." Paul argues first that when a person is saved there has been a complete positional change. We no longer serve the master sin. We've died to it. We're alive in Christ. And then Paul tells us how to apply this positional, and definite reality in our lives and live in the enjoyment of it. Over the course of our study today we'll read the whole of Romans 6 but first let's consider the first seven verses:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin."

At the end of Romans 5, Paul had explained that "where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." Isn't that wonderful? Even where there had been great sin, and awful offences committed, God was able to show grace to men and women through the death of the Lord Jesus. That's a precious truth of the Bible isn't it? No matter how bad our past may be, there is hope for us in God's grace. Christ's death is sufficient for each of us to be saved if we accept it by faith.

But some in Rome had perhaps started to take liberties because of this. Perhaps they were saying 'Well, if God is shown to be more gracious when He forgives really bad sins, shall we carry on sinning so that God can seem even more gracious?' It's a strange argument isn't it? Shall we continue disobeying God so that God can look even more wonderful when He forgives us? That's the question Paul raises at the start of chapter 6.

But he gives a definitive answer! Certainly not! Paul says we shouldn't carry on sinning because we're not just sinners anymore. In fact, we've died to sin, It doesn't make sense that we've died to the power sin had over us and then would carry on sinning. Paul says to these Roman Christians, "Don't you realise that when you were saved you died with Christ. You died! The old man, the old you who was a slave to the master sin died the moment you got saved. So you've been freed from that master. Now you can walk in newness of life. You're no longer a slave of sin!" When a person is saved they are united with Christ in His death. Their old man was crucified with Christ. Then, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we can walk in newness of life, freed from sin and united with Christ in His resurrection.

Isn't this a wonderful truth! We were once sinners, but now we're dead to sin and alive to God. Now, it's possible for us to live a life that is pleasing to God. As we move on in Romans 6, in verse 8-11 Paul explains the consequences of being dead to sin. How does the fact that our old man has been crucified with Christ make any difference to us? Let's listen to what Paul says:

"Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He

lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul says that if we died with Christ we shall also live with Him. Since this is true for all believers, Paul is saying to Christians, “Since you died with Christ, you will also live with Him.” The important thing to notice here is that Paul is not describing an experience. He’s describing a fact. In fact he’s describing two facts. The Christian **has** died with Christ. And the Christian **will** live with Christ. These are not supplementary experiences that some Christians go through if they progress enough. These are truths that belong to all believers. If you’re a Christian listening to this message today, do you realise that when you were saved, you died with Christ. When you trusted in Jesus to save you from the judgement your sins deserved, your old man was crucified with Christ. So Paul says, “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Essentially Paul is saying, “Take hold of what is already true about you. Live in the good of it. Think about yourself the way God thinks about you. Recognise what you are – dead to sin and alive in Christ.”

In the next section of chapter 6, we’ll think about the practical implications of this but as we finish this section let’s take hold of Paul’s command and consider ourselves the way we really are! Verses 12-14 introduce some of the first instructions in the book of Romans. It’s not that there have been no practical implications to the contents of the letter so far, but this is the first time those implications are spelled out in specific commands. Let’s read the verses together.

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”

In these verses, Paul gives some instructions to the Roman Christians that result from the truth that their old man was crucified with Christ. First, they were not to let sin reign in them. They were not to obey its lusts. Perhaps the focus of verse 12 is about habits of life. As a rule in their lives they weren’t to let sin reign. Did you notice that it was our old man that was crucified with Christ and not sin. Sin is a master that is very much alive and wants to reign in us. But we’re not bound to obey this old master any more. We don’t have to give in to the temptations we face. We don’t have to obey our old master. Paul in effect says, “Since you are dead to sin, don’t let sinful habits foster in your life. Don’t be driven by sinful desires. Don’t live your life chasing after sinful pleasures. Don’t let sinful lusts dictate how you live.”

Then in verse 13 Paul says, “Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” If verse 12 focused on our manner of life as a whole, verse 13 zooms in on the daily choices we make. Paul says, “Don’t put yourselves in positions where you’re likely to sin. Don’t do something if you know it’s likely to make you sin. Don’t go somewhere that’s likely to be a bad influence on you. Don’t watch something that’s going to tempt you to lust or give in to greed. Since you are alive in Christ, present your bodies as instruments of righteousness for God to use as He sees fit.”

Paul concludes the section by saying that believers are not under the law but under grace. In other words, they weren’t like they were before they were saved when they had laws to tell them what not to do but no power to prevent themselves from sinning. Now they are under *grace*, they’ve been saved and are dead to sin and alive in Christ and they can walk in newness of life, with lives characterised by righteousness and not sinfulness.

Can I ask you today if you enjoy the truth that you're linked with Christ in His death? When He died, you died. Now you're alive in Him! Are you enjoying the privilege of walking in newness of life? Have you really started to view yourself as you really are – dead to sin and alive in Christ? Are you making practical efforts not to let sin reign in you?

In the remaining verses of the chapter, Paul fleshes out the practical implications of the truth that our old man was crucified with Christ and we are dead to our old master sin. Let's read verses 15-23 together.

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In verse 15 Paul raises another important question. If Paul has just said we're not under law anymore but under grace, should we keep on sinning? Just as emphatic an answer is given: Certainly not! According to Paul, how we live determines who we obey. If we keep on sinning, we are presenting our lives as slaves to sin and the consequence is death. But since, when we were saved, we died to our old master, we can present ourselves as slaves to God. We've changed masters, and our new master is infinitely better. God has delivered us from being slaves to sin. We've been set free.

In verses 21 and 22 Paul contrasts being slaves of sin and slaves of Christ. The “fruit” of serving sin resulted only in things that the Christians in Rome would now be ashamed of. They were things that lead to death. But the fruit of serving Christ was holiness and everlasting life. Don't be deceived! Sin might appear to be attractive for a time. But it's destructive and destroys both our own lives, and possibly the lives of those around us. By contrast, serving Christ is the best life. It's not always easy, though Paul doesn't mention that here, but it leads to holiness and enjoyment of everlasting life. No wonder Paul says, “Present you members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.” So, if you're a Christian listening today, do you realise that you died to sin? Are you making every effort not to let sin reign in your life? Are you presenting your bodies, your time, your energy, your money, your intellect as instruments for Christ to use however He sees fit?

I suppose there is a danger in studying a passage like this that everything seems very interesting and nice in theory, but seems to make so little difference in practice. How does the fact that we reckon ourselves to be dead to sin but alive in Christ actually affect us in the daily rhythms of life? I've been challenged about this as I've been studying Romans 6 preparing for this talk. It's been on my mind that these are not just truths for our minds to enjoy in some kind of abstract sense. It's supposed to make a difference and make me more holy. It's supposed to help me live in a way that is pleasing to God. Do you know, as this has been ticking over in my mind as I've gone about my daily business, I've noticed something. I've noticed occasions when I've been about to treat my family harshly out of frustration, or I've been about to engage in some office gossip or slander, or about to watch something that wouldn't be helpful for a Christian, and I've found myself reminded

of these verses. “Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” I’ve been reminded to “reckon [myself] to be dead indeed to sin but alive ... in Christ” and as a result, some of the time at least, I’ve been able to avoid those actions and walk in newness of life. I don’t share that to claim any great holiness. I know too much of the experience in next week’s chapter 7, for that to be the case. I only want to try to show that the teaching of Romans chapter 6 is supposed to help us as we live serving our new master, the Lord Jesus.

May the Lord grant us help to walk in newness of life, not presenting ourselves as slaves to sin, but to Christ for righteousness knowing that the gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Romans 6: The Two Masters, talk number T1119.

NKJV Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated

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