

Covenant Life College
Paul's Letter to the Romans
Week 7 – Robin Boisvert
Romans Chapter 6.1-23

1) *What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

5) *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of death might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

12) *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.*

15) *What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. 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.*

20) *When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I. Romans 6.1-14—Union with Christ and victory over sin

A. *Union with Christ* is a great privilege that comes to believers as a result of justification by grace through faith alone. There is no stronger basis for our victory over sin than our union with Jesus Christ.

B. Paul wants to protect the doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone from its detractors and from misunderstanding. The shallow misconception contained in the question (6.1) is that if God is glorified in forgiving sin, if His grace is demonstrated openly in the forgiveness of sin, why not sin all the more so that grace will abound. Some were attacking the doctrine on this basis, so as to dismiss it out of hand. And then, it is possible that some really thought this to be a true interpretation and were hoping to indulge themselves in sin, supposedly with God's blessing. Paul's response makes clear what he thinks of such an interpretation—"God forbid!" Such a response shows that those who say such things have no idea what they're talking about. "We died to sin; how can we go on living in it?"

The main idea is that we have freedom from sin through our union with Jesus Christ. This is because we died (in Christ) to sin and our union with Him extends to the new life we now live. We must **know** what this means (3), **consider** it to be so (11), and then respond by presenting (13) ourselves not to sin, but to God.

C. We died to sin (6.1-2). The big question—in what sense did we die to sin? What does this statement mean?

1. It *does not* mean that we died to sin in such a way that we are no longer subject to sin's attraction or its temptations.

2. It *does* mean that we died to sin through our union with Christ in the following ways:

a. We died in Christ to the penalty of sin (6.10).

b. We died in Christ to the dominion of sin (6.6, 14). Sin is no longer our master. This is the dominant sense in which we died to sin. There has been a change in realms, a change of masters. We are no longer obligated to sin.

In light of this, how should we then live?

D. We must count/ consider/ reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God (6.11).

E. We must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies or offer the members of our bodies to obey the evil desires of sin (6.12-13).

F. We must present ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and this includes presenting the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness (6.13).

G. The concept of the *indicative* and the *imperative* is basic to biblical ethics (how we should live) and is especially clear in Paul. These words represent verbal moods. The *indicative* mood of a verb indicates what is objective fact, such as "we died to sin." It

doesn't tell us to do anything, but tells us what is the present state of affairs. The *imperative*, however, is the mood of command. "Don't let sin reign ... do not present your members to sin," are examples of this mood. In biblical ethics, the *indicative* always precedes the *imperative*.

II. Romans 6.15-23

A. Picking up on the language of 6.6 (no longer enslaved to sin), this section contrasts slavery to God and slavery to sin.

B. In 6.1-14 Paul argues that an abundance of grace should not lead us to sin because we have died to sin and have been set free from sin (6.7). In this section, the flip side is explored. Though we are set free from sin we are still slaves. But we are slaves to God.

C. Paul is steering a course between legalism ("I must keep the law in order to be accepted by God.") and antinomianism ("I'm saved by grace, so it doesn't matter how I live.") In the next chapter he will discuss the place of the law in the Christian life. But here he makes clear that being a slave of God (righteousness) is a vital part of the Christian life. Obedience to God is not optional for the Christian (cf. John 14.17).

D. Verse 15 is parallel to verse 1. In verse 1 the question is whether we should sin so that there might be an abundance of grace. Here, in verse 15, the question is whether we should sin because we are under the realm of grace, not law (which was just stated as the case in verse 14). The answer to both questions is a resounding "NO!" followed by a lengthy explanation.

E. Verse 16 states the obvious. If you present yourself to someone as a slave, you *are* a slave to whomever you present yourself. But he does this to introduce two contrasting slaveries—to sin or obedience. This is a summary statement that is further explained in 17-23. The remainder of the passage shows that slavery to sin leads to impurity, lawlessness, bad fruit, shame and ultimately, death. But slavery to obedience (which is really slavery to God) leads to righteousness, to sanctification and ultimately, eternal life. Sin is not static. Neither is grace. There are only two realms in which we can stand.

SLAVES OF SIN (17, 20)	SLAVES OF GOD (16, 22)
↓	↓
IMPURITY (19)	RIGHTEOUSNESS (16, 18)
↓	↓
LAWLESSNESS (19)	SANCTIFICATION (19, 22)
↓	↓
DEATH (16, 23)	ETERNAL LIFE (22, 23)

F. Verse 17 states the *indicative* truth that *we were* slaves of sin, but are no more. They have obeyed "from the heart the *typos* (pattern, form) of teaching to which they were committed (delivered)." "... *typos* includes the active connotation of a pattern that

‘molds’ others. Similarly, in this verse, it is likely that *typos* includes the idea that Christian teaching ‘molds’ and ‘forms’ those who have been handed over to it.”¹

G. Verse 18. Paul uses the language of freedom to describe this central indicative of the believer’s transfer from the old realm of sin to the new realm of the righteousness.² Verse 20 describes the same situation from the other side.

H. Verse 19. Paul explains why he uses the slavery imagery. Note the progressions and the results.

I. Verses 21, 22 ask the important questions of benefits and ultimate ends.

J. Verse 23 displays contrasting outcomes. Note again our union with Christ Jesus our Lord, the thought that underlies all blessings in the Christian life.

¹ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Eerdmans, 1996, p. 402.

² Ibid.