



CHOOSING YOUR MASTER

ROMANS 6:11-23

LESSON 6

MAIN POINT

When we surrender to Christ as Lord and Master over our lives, He works to make us like Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Who was your first boss? Was this person easy or challenging to work for? Why?

Today we'll discuss how one of the ways we are changed by our relationship with God is that we become slaves to Him. How do you feel about being a slave to God?

What does it mean to you to know that God has authority over your life?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what God's Word says and means for us.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 6:11-14.

What does it mean to be "dead to sin" (v. 11)? Knowing that, what do you think it means to be alive to God in Christ?

What is Paul's basis (and ours) for believing we will live with Christ?

The Christian life is certainly not all about death. Good Friday was followed by Easter. Life is the theme of our faith. Having died with Christ means we will also live with Him. Paul described a reality, not just a possibility. The foundation of Paul's certainty is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. That Jesus had been raised from the dead meant He had conquered death, the greatest and most fundamental of human fears. Having been raised from the dead means death no longer rules over Him. The former certainty of death no longer applies. Life is the theme.

What aspects of a Christ follower's identity does Paul mention in this passage? Do you see them as part of your identity? Why or why not?

What two things are believers to refuse to do (vv. 12-13)? How do you interpret both of these instructions?

God initiated our relationship with Him, and He provides everything we need (grace, redemption, sanctification, etc.) to remain close to Him. But when we're faced with sin, which pushes us away from God, we have to choose to deny sin and remain close to Him. He never leaves, but we're often tempted to wander, run away, and build walls between Him and us. Such is the remaining evidence of the sin we're saved from. As Paul described it in this passage, not giving in to sin is a constant battle.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 6:15-18.

Have you ever been tempted to use grace as an excuse to sin? Why might that seem okay?

What does the abuse of grace imply about Jesus' work on the cross?

The reality of our everyday lives is that we serve whoever or whatever we're committed to. The word Paul used in Romans 6 describes more than just mere service; it indicates slavery. We've left sin's rule and submitted to God's rule. Sin only leads to destruction. God, the gracious King, shares His virtue with us. So often we only feel the negative side of the battle against sin. Waging war against the world can be so wearisome! But the good news is that God has liberated us from sin's power, so we can serve Him by bringing glory to His name.

What two masters does Paul describe? Do you agree with Paul that we have to be slaves to something?

What does it mean for something to be our master?

What characterizes a life mastered by God?

What do we communicate to God when we don't allow Him to be the master of our lives?

As Paul described, not giving in to sin is a constant battle. As we face temptation, we have to choose to grow closer to God by living either as the righteous people He considers us to be or as the selfish people we once were. In this passage Paul emphasized that Christians serve a new Master who liberated them from bondage to sin and empowered them to grow in faith.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 6:19-23.

How does a person move from being a slave to sin to being a slave to righteousness?

What is Paul referring to when He talks about spiritual fruit? Read Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 for some examples.

Read John 15:1-4. What one action must believers do to produce fruit? How does this help you better understand the slavery analogy of Romans 6?

Jesus lives in believers through the Holy Spirit. We act in obedience when we join Him in breaking free from the bondage of sin. With those chains broken, Jesus is now able to work through us. Through our obedience we display Him and His character to the world. As we allow Christ to work through us we can have an impact for the kingdom of God.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why do we often fear surrendering our lives completely to God, allowing Him to be our Master?

Does your daily life reflect Christ living in you? What do you need to do to change that?

Have you accepted Christ and chosen to allow Him to be your Master?

PRAYER

As you close, ask everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes. Pray: *Father, thank You that You sent Jesus to pay the price for sin that I could not pay. Forgive me for my sin. Please be the Master of my life from this moment forward. May my life show others I have chosen You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

COMMENTARY

Romans 6:11-23

6:11. Because Jesus died for our sins, Christians have died to sin. Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus took the punishment for our sin and gave us the power to overcome sinful temptation in life. As we turn away from sin and experience victory over temptation, we are reminded that we are alive to God in Christ Jesus. Paul builds this idea of being alive to God all the way to Romans 12 where he speaks of the renewing and transforming of the Christian's mind so that our new life in Christ is a primary way we worship God.

6:12. Based on what we have embraced as true about our newfound status regarding sin, Paul commands us not to let sin reign in our mortal body so that we obey its evil desires. We are to cut our ties to sin. Paul warns the believer here to cut the ties to the previous sinful lifestyle. How could a believer allow sin to reign in them when Christ has already overcome the reign of sin and death?

6:13. Finally, we are to consecrate ourselves to God and offer the parts of our body to Him as instruments of righteousness. "Offer" brings the language of sacrifice and worship to mind quickly. The predominant use of this word in the New Testament is to refer to bystanders those who are constantly there by the side as a backdrop. The sense seems to come and stand alongside God, offering what you have to Him as instruments of righteousness. We are to be at His disposal for the purpose of righteousness—body, mind, will, emotions, spirit. Paul is preparing to expound the whole concept of "offering" in verses 15-20 in terms of to whom one is enslaved. It is all a matter of mastery—whether sin or righteousness is the master.

6:14. In conclusion, Paul reminds the Roman believers that the gospel they are hearing about is a gospel of grace. For those under the law, sin is the master, simply because the law has no power to enable one to resist sin. Law does an excellent job of pointing out failure, but it cannot empower one to keep from failing. Only one thing can: grace. Paul had already told his readers that grace will reign through righteousness to bring eternal life (Rom. 5:21), and the time for that in the individual's life is once the identification with Christ's death and resurrection has been made. Once the identification with Christ is made, it is the constant flow of grace into the life of the believer that "teaches us to say 'No', to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age" (Titus 2:11-12).

6:15. This is the second time in this chapter that Paul uses the diatribe format to raise and answer the same question: Does not grace allow for the throwing off of all moral restraint? The pattern here is the same as in the earlier part of the chapter: proclaim grace (5:21); raise the objection (6:1); answer the objection (6:2-14). Here the pattern is: proclaim grace (6:14); raise the objection (6:15a); answer the objection (6:15-23). There is little difference between the two objections. As for his answers, Paul answers the first one theologically and the second one illustratively.

6:16. Before looking at the details of Paul's analogy it is helpful to note in verse 19 his stated reason for using slavery as an analog: because you are weak in your natural selves. In essence, he is simply doing what any good teacher will do to aid understanding—finding a point of common ground with his students that will move a concept (death to sin) from the abstract realm to the concrete. Slavery would have been a good analogy to almost any audience Paul addressed in his day, as it was a widespread practice (cf. Paul's letter to Philemon). But slavery was particularly apropos to his audience in Rome because of the number of slaves in the city. Certainly some, if not many, of the believers in the Rome church were slaves. Therefore, Paul's analogy would immediately be understandable to them. They would either be slaves against their will (prisoners of war), or voluntary slaves (more on the order of household servants who indentured themselves to a household for the purposes of welfare or survival).

Interestingly, Paul will address both kinds of servants in this passage, though the voluntary servant is his primary focus. Based on what he wrote in Romans 5, everyone is born a "slave to sin"—without choice of will. His primary focus here, however, is the death to sin that allows the voluntary offering of oneself to another master for service. Paul picks up a key word from verse 13—"offer." In verse 13, he told the Roman believers to offer themselves to God for purposes of righteousness. Implicit in the offering, he says here, is slavery. Regardless of who you offer yourself to, you become a slave of the one you serve. If I offer myself to God, but obey sin, then I am a slave of sin, not of God. So in answering the objection raised in verse 15—"shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?"—the answer is "no" because you will become the slave of sin, not of God, if you do. And that leads to death. If you are a Christian, and continue to sin because you know God's grace will forgive you, you have in reality become a slave to sin. On the other hand, obeying God means you are a slave to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

6:17. Paul commends the Roman believers for, in practice, fulfilling what he has been explaining to them in principle: obeying the form of teaching to which they were entrusted. Two things are worthy of note here. One is the form of teaching. Instead of written copies of Scripture, oral tradition was the means for transferring history and teaching from one place, or one generation, to another. Whatever the content of the teaching was that the Rome believers had received, it was apostolic and Paul was pleased with their adherence to it. They perhaps did not know, until they had the benefit of hearing the words of Romans 6, that they had been slaves to sin—but they had been.

6:18. Not only were the Roman believers entrusted to the Word of God, they were made slaves to righteousness. When they offered themselves to Christ (v. 15), they became the slaves of Christ and to the righteousness which is the opposite of the sin to which they had died.

6:19. Here is Paul's analogy apology referred to above in verse 16. He hates to put spiritual truth into such worldly form as slave terminology since the analogy is imperfect (referring to freedom in Christ as "slavery"). He makes the same exhortation here as in verse 13, but now using slavery terminology. Instead of offering the parts of your body in slavery to impurity, offer them to your new master, Christ, as slaves of righteousness.

6:20-23. In the last four verses of this chapter, Paul asks the believers in Rome to think about the quality and direction of their lives before coming to know Christ and their lives since. Never one to sugarcoat or beat around the proverbial bush, Paul asks them (and us) directly: What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? The benefit of being slaves to sin, free from the control of righteousness, was death! Because “no one can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24), when they were slaves to sin, they could not be controlled by righteousness—and sin results in death (v. 23).

Conversely, when they died to sin and became slaves to God, they became free from the control of sin—and righteousness leads to eternal life. Because sin is deceptive, and because it is the “old self” (the former way of life, v. 6) that has died, not the “body of sin” (the capacity to sin; v. 6), the Christian has to be exhorted to remember to what he or she has died (sin) and to what he or she now lives (righteousness). We have earned death as our wages as Adam’s children; we have received as a gift of God’s grace the privilege of being rescued from solidarity with the first Adam to solidarity with the second Adam. He died; we died. He was raised; we were raised. He lives to God; we live to God. He will live forever; we will live forever with Him.