

Romans 6:14-16

PREVIOUS

NEXT

ROMANS ROAD to RIGHTEOUSNESS				
Romans 1:18-3:20	Romans — 3:21-5:21	Romans — 6:1-8:39	Romans — 9:1-11:36	Romans — 12:1-16:27
SIN	SALVATION	SANCTIFICATION	SOVEREIGNTY	SERVICE
NEED FOR SALVATION	WAY OF SALVATION	LIFE OF SALVATION	SCOPE OF SALVATION	SERVICE OF SALVATION
God's Holiness In Condemning Sin	God's Grace In Justifying Sinners	God's Power In Sanctifying Believers	God's Sovereignty In Saving Jew and Gentile	God's Glory The Object of Service
Deadliness of Sin	Design of Grace	Demonstration of Salvation		
		Power Given	Promises Fulfilled	Paths Pursued
Righteousness Needed	Righteousness Credited	Righteousness Demonstrated	Righteousness Restored to Israel	Righteousness Applied
God's Righteousness IN LAW	God's Righteousness IMPUTED	God's Righteousness OBEYED	God's Righteousness IN ELECTION	God's Righteousness DISPLAYED
Slaves to Sin	Slaves to God			Slaves Serving God
Doctrine				Duty
Life by Faith				Service by Faith
Modified from Irving L. Jensen's excellent work " Jensen's Survey of the NT "				

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Romans 6:12-14

Romans 6:15-17

Romans 6:14-16

Our New Life in Christ Pt 4

by Dr. Wayne A. Barber

Romans 6:14 For [sin](#) shall not be [master over](#) you, for you are not [under law](#) but [under grace](#). 15 [What then](#) ? Shall we [sin because](#) we are not [under law](#) but [under grace](#)? May it [never](#) be! 16 Do you not know that [when](#) you [present yourselves to someone](#) as [slaves](#) for [obedience](#), you are [slaves](#) of the one [whom](#) you [obey](#), [either](#) of [sin resulting](#) in [death](#), [or](#) of [obedience resulting](#) in [righteousness](#) ?

Turn to James 1:13-14. I think James brings it out as clearly as anybody. It is not the temptation; it is that which is a part of us that responds to the temptation that we have to contend with day by day: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." "Carried away." There's an interesting word. It comes from two Greek words. One means "to draw or to lure," and the other word means "out of." To lure out of. The metaphor is of a fisherman luring a fish out in the open for a catch.

The word that James used there, "[enticed](#)," carries the same basic idea. The word "[enticed](#)" is the word which means "to be caught by the use of a lure." He says he is enticed by his own lusts, not somebody else's. What is it about us that continues to want to respond to this world? We live in fallen bodies. Because we live in fallen bodies that are not being renewed and we are not "home" yet and we've not gotten a glorified body, we still have to deal with that part of us that wants to respond to the temptation of this world. The problem is not the world. The problem is not the devil. The problem is not the temptation. The problem is that which is in us that wants to respond to the evil that is around us.

Now go back to Romans 6. Paul is continuing his thought. He wants us to understand, yes, you've been cared for forever spiritually, but you still have an outer man to deal with, a body of sin that has no power over us. That's a very strong point he's making here. In other words, when we sin now, it's by choice! It used to be that the sin in us caused us to sin. Not now! We choose to sin now, and we are responsible for every sin that we commit. We live in victory according to verses 12 through 14.

Paul knows that some of these Antinomians are in the audience he's speaking to. As he's already anticipated in verse 1 of chapter 6, he anticipates it again in verse 15. He just finished saying you are not under law, you are under grace, and so the second question comes up in chapter 6. We're going to begin to see how he answers that question.

Look at verse 15: "What then?" he says. "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Then you see the righteous indignation firing up. This guy could get fired up! It's like he gets fired up in his spirit and says, "May it never be!" That's exactly the way he responded to the first question he asked in verse 1.

What he's showing is, "You need to understand some things!" Paul had nothing to do with the origination of the Roman church, but he had such a love for them. He comes alongside them now and brings the Word to give them instruction. Let's see how he answers it.

First of all, he reminds them of a universal truth. This holds true whether you're saved or whether you're lost. By saved, I mean born from above, changed by the indwelling Spirit of God in your life. He shows you that this is a universal truth—it works on both sides of the cross. Here's the truth: that whoever or whatever a person chooses to serve becomes that person's master. Look at verse 16: "Do you not know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?" This truth holds true on both sides of the cross. It's a universal principle.

"Do you not know?" He uses that phrase in 6:3 and 7:1, but they're different in their construction. Look back at 6:3: "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" Paul says, "Don't you know this?" The present tense is used. "Are you walking around without this understanding?" The word for know is *agnoeo*: a (without) and *gnoeo* (understanding). "Do you not know? Has it not dawned on you? Has it not come to your rational mind that when you were baptized into Christ you were also baptized into His death?" It's in the present tense, so he's saying, "You need to understand this."

Then in 7:1 he used the exact same verb, the exact same tense, and he says, "Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives?"

But here in 6:16 he uses a different construction, a different verb, a different tense. I think he's saying something different. First of all, the verb there is *eido*. It's the verb that means to intuitively know something. You don't have to go to school to get this, you intuitively know it. Paul uses the perfect tense. The perfect tense means something has happened back here that's caused you to be in the state of knowing something up here. What in the world could Paul be talking about? I don't think he is talking about salvation changing everything, although that certainly is implied. I think what he is saying is, "Don't you understand the fact that you used to be a slave of sin? Has not that experience back there caused you to have this kind of knowledge up here? You know good and well the devastating consequences of being a slave to sin. Don't you know? You should know that!" This is what I believe he's saying there.

"Do you not know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey." The word "present" is the same word we've been looking at. It's the word *paristemi*. It comes from *para*, which means alongside and *histemi*, which means to place yourself. You place yourself alongside the proximity of that which causes your downfall when it looks at unrighteousness. He says, "Don't you know? Don't you remember how it used to be?"

Sometimes I think we have forgotten what it was like to be lost. Sin becomes such a tempting thing. We choose, out of the lust of our own flesh, to follow it, and we forget the trap that's there. We forget the dead end street. The Apostle Paul is saying, "If you continue to present yourself to something, then you have chosen." By the way, it's in the present tense, but it's active voice! Active voice means you initiated the action when you continually choose to do this. It's your choice. You're choosing to put yourself in that position.

The word "obey" is again the word *hupakoe*, which means to get up under something and listen to it in order to obey it. Paul is saying, "Guys! Don't you know that if you keep doing this, you're making a conscious choice and statement that you're choosing this to become your master?"

This principle was true before we were saved, and some people try to relegate it as only a lost person. But I want you to be very careful how you do this. When I study the text, I don't get that. He's referring to something you ought to know. You've got to understand that a Christian can also choose to be mastered by his flesh. You've got to understand that. We've got a choice on both

sides of the cross.

Remember the context. Verse 13 says, "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness." That's present tense! He's talking to believers! He's saying, "Don't continue to present the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness." Evidently there was a flaw in the understanding of the Roman believers. Somehow they had slipped back into a mentality that said that you could go back and sin. You're under grace and you're not under law. Somehow sin can be tolerated in your life.

I think the Apostle Paul is saying, "Don't do it! Stop what you're doing! You're not supposed to do that any more! Don't you understand something's changed about you?" So with that flow in the context, verse 16 doesn't throw me at all! "Do you not know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"

Paul takes that principle and begins to show you the consequence of making the wrong choice of who it is you want to rule your life or what it is you want to rule your life. We used to have a sign in front of the church that said, "You are free to make any choice that you want, but you're not free to choose its consequences." Good thought! There are consequences to whatever you choose to yield yourself to. Whatever you put yourself in the proximity of, that will control you and lure you, and it is going to have a consequence behind it. He says, "Do you not know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death." Now the word "death" there has no definite article in front of it. To follow the pattern he started in chapter 5, if he were speaking of eternal death, he would have stuck the little "the" in there in the Greek text. The word "sin" does not have the definite article in front of it. So there's a tremendous principle here for a believer.

What he's saying here is there is a death. The word "death," *thanatos*, means separated from. When I die physically one of these days, my spirit will leave me and go to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus. Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." There's a departure, a separation. But in a "lost" sense, when we were in Adam, we were eternally, spiritually separated from God, the Father.

There's that separation idea. I think what he's saying here is, "If you choose to let your flesh control you, if you make the conscious choice to do that, you're going to have the result of a spiritual death, not eternal, but a realization of what the righteousness of God could have been doing in your life, and you have just invoked the chastening hand of the Father." Hebrews 12:6 says He chastens, He disciplines, and He scourges those whom He loves.

I want to tell you something. When I choose to let my flesh rule, there's a death! There's a death to the realization of what God could have done by grace in my life. There's a death to the presence of God and the marvelous fellowship that I could have had with Him. Immediately I begin to reap what I have sown, and in reaping what I have sown, God must chasten and discipline and scourge me and bring me back to my senses. I've asked for it. That's what we need to understand.

So, the Apostle Paul is saying, "There's a truth here you had better firmly get a grasp on." As a believer, I can never say, "The devil made me do it." I can never say that. I can't ever say that the flesh "snuck up on me" and just defeated me. When I am in sin, reaping the consequences of it, it is a consequence of a conscious choice.

The Apostle Paul said, "This is a universal truth. You've got to understand. Whoever you foolishly choose—if it's in a wrong way—if you foolishly choose to serve the lust of your flesh, you have chosen to do it. You've chosen the consequences, whatever they may be, and you are responsible for what you do. Don't ever think you can cast blame on anybody other than yourself if you are a believer. You are responsible for sin, responsible for the consequences. Thank God for His grace, that He didn't kick us out of the kingdom when we sinned. His grace is again accessed by faith. When you're willing to turn and come back and reach out for that grace, it's always immediately there. But in the meantime, God chastens, disciplines and scourges His own.

I think the theme verse of the whole Book of Romans is Romans 1:17 when it says, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed." Then he quotes out of Habakkuk chapter 4 and says, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." To me, that is the whole bottom line of the Book of Romans, "The just shall live by faith." When you live by faith, you access grace. When you access grace, the result is righteousness. It's that which God does through you that He approves and that He empowers. Therefore, when you obey, the result is righteousness.

Let me give you a real practical demonstration of that. When you obey Him, all of a sudden you can forgive that person you couldn't forgive before because the righteous forgiveness of God now becomes yours and is exemplified in your life. When you choose to obey, all of a sudden you can love that person who has never loved you and treated you horribly because it's the love of God in you loving that person. The righteous character of God is being produced by the Holy Spirit living in your heart.

So, I've got a choice to make. Who do I want to be my master? Do I want it to be my flesh? Don't I know by now that ends in a dead end street? Or do I want Jesus to be my Master and daily learn to surrender to Him? That's the universal truth the Apostle

Paul brings out.

There are consequences to whatever choice you make. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "Man cannot serve two masters." He only gave two. That's all you have. He says you cannot love God and serve mammon. "Mammon" there is used for money, but money is not the problem. Paul says it's not the money, it's the love of money. It's greed. It goes right back to old flesh, the lust that responds to that kind of thing. I've got a choice to make: serve my flesh or serve my Lord. There are going to be consequences either way I go. I'd rather have the righteousness as my consequence, not the other stuff.

First of all then, he reminds them of a truth. Secondly, in verses 17 and 18 he reminds the Roman believers of their testimony. The testimony of the believer to a lost world is that he has already made his choice, and his choice is to serve a living and a holy God. This is good! Paul is telling the Roman believers that they have already done it. It's very similar to what he did to the Thessalonians in Thessalonica.

Paul says in I Thessalonians 1:8-10: "For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. For they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." Oh, how we need this as a reminder! If you don't know what you're saved from, then you haven't got a clue what you've been saved to!

The Holy Spirit of God is the one who reveals the Lord Jesus Christ to you. There is something about the deity of Christ that is so overwhelming to you. You understand that you are a sinner. You're helpless and you cast yourself upon Him. How little you understand, but you exercise what you do understand. If you don't see the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, you need to go back and check out your salvation. When you invite a holy God into your life, you cannot invite a holy, inherently holy, God into your life without understanding Who is going to be in control of your life. You may not understand the terminology of it, but there is something to do at salvation! You're coming out of something, but you're going into something. You're coming from something, but you're turning to serve a living and holy God. How we need to be reminded of this every day of our lives.

Salvation is not membership in a church. Salvation is not a "fire insurance" policy so you won't go to hell. Salvation! Saved! Rescued! Delivered from what? My helpless condition in Adam, where I was an ungodly sinner and an enemy of God. Nobody could save me, and I couldn't save myself. Only Jesus, the God-man, could do that! He came and died for me, and I place all of myself to Him. I come now to serve a living and holy God.

Verse 17 says, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed." Paul says, "But thanks be to God." He's thanking God. He's certainly not thanking man. This is all God's work. It's the good news. He says, "You were slaves of sin." Imperfect tense. There was a time in your life when you lived as a slave. That's why you ought to know better now than to go back to it. You lived as a slave to the sin. The definite article is used there. That Adamic nature was within you. That's been changed, but you still have the remnant, that law of sin that lives within our flesh that we have to deal with. Because of being in Adam you were slaves of the sin.

But now it's different. He says, "you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed." "You became obedient" is aorist active indicative. What does that mean? It's what I did. I initiated the action. I participated in it. Let me say it this way. Saturday afternoon I went home and sat in my chair. What else did I do? Nothing! I stayed in my chair. (You know what I have found out? The older I get, the more I like that chair!) I sat in that chair. That's aorist tense. It happened at a certain point in time. Active voice means nobody told me to sit in that chair. I just went home and sat in it. Indicative mood means it took place! It's a historical fact.

Paul says, "You became obedient." What do you think he's talking about? You made a choice to serve the living and holy God. That's what salvation is. Turning from, but turning to. He says, "You became obedient out of the heart." From the heart or out of the heart this decision was made. It was out of the heart the decision was made in the Roman believer's life, and it was in the heart that the change came. Romans 5:5 says, "He has poured out His life by putting His Spirit within our hearts."

Paul says they were obedient "to that form of teaching to which you were committed." *Tupos* is the word "form." The word means to take an instrument and stamp an imprint on something and leave that imprint. Here it means doctrine; "to that form of teaching [to that form of doctrine] to which you were committed." The word there is the word that means to be handed over to; to deliver over to something. It's aorist passive. I didn't hand myself over to it. I became obedient and was handed over to it.

What is he talking about here? What doctrine is he talking about? It's got to be the gospel, but listen. If we're going to stay real true to the context, the doctrine is that when you were saved, you become a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is indelibly imprinted on every believer walking on the face of this earth. There is no other lifestyle for a believer. That's imprinted on us. He sets a mark on us. When you find a believer who says you can go back and live in sin, what you've just done is found somebody who has tried to go upstream. The current's flowing the other way! He had to turn and go against the current to go back into sin. Something's

changed in him, and he's been handed over to the doctrine. Jesus is Lord and will always be Lord, and I'm to serve a holy and living God. Yes, it's the gospel, but contextually to me in chapter 6, you've got to relegate it to what he's talking about.

You see, a believer needs to assess what he did when he received Christ. It was much more than just joining a church. What did you do when you received Christ? That's why we have the Lord's Supper periodically. It's not just to show you what Jesus did for you, but to remind you what you said to Him when you received Him by faith.

There's got to be an understanding of what you're coming out of. If it's that big, it's still got to be there. The deity of Christ is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit of God. This is not taught by man as much as it's revealed by His Spirit.

Verse 18 says, "and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." Those verbs there grabbed me. First of all, its aorist passive participle—"having been freed." The word here is *eleutheroo*. It's the word for freedom. The "oo" at the end caught my attention immediately! Dr. Zodhiates' *Word Study Dictionary* says, "Verbs which end in double o's generally indicate bringing out that which a person is or that which is desired, but not usually referring to the mode in which the action takes place."

So, let's read it again: "and having been freed from sin." You have been shown to be freed from sin. What's your testimony today, believer? Have you been shown to be freed from sin? How were they shown to be freed from sin? Look at the next verb! "You became slaves of righteousness. It's in the same tense—aorist passive! *Doulos* is the word for slave. The word here is *douloo*. There are those two little o's again. Let's read it again: "having been [shown to be] freed from sin, you were [shown to be] slaves of righteousness." In other words, something changed in your life, and all of a sudden you didn't live like you used to live. You began to live differently. That's your testimony. What are you doing thinking you can go back and live in sin again? You have just gone against everything that salvation represents in God's word.

What's your testimony? Did you turn away to serve a living and a holy God? What kind of testimony do we have? "Don't tell me. Show me!" is what the Apostle Paul is saying.

Salvation is serious business. Can you walk back into sin? "Can" is not the question. The question is why would you even think about it? Your whole testimony is going to be completely annulled if you go back and let your flesh control you again. It's by your own choice. You're telling the world, "I'd rather Jesus not be Master over me. I'd rather that sin be master over my life."

Alexander the Great went out to visit his troops and history records that they brought him a coward, a deserter. Alexander the Great looked at him and said, "What's your name?" He said, "Alexander." They had the same name. History records that Alexander took his finger and stuck it in that boy's forehead and said, "Son, you either change your behavior or you change your name."

To me that's what Paul is telling us in chapter 6. If you are going to call yourself a Christian, then you'd better have a lifestyle that backs it up. That is the testimony we have. The witness is a changed life. Who is your master?