

OFFER YOURSELVES TO GOD

Romans 6:12-23

Key Verse: 6:13

“Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.”

In the first part of Romans 6, we learned that we died with Christ as far as sin is concerned. Sin no longer has a dominion over us. Sin is no longer a way of life for us. We don't feel like we are dead to sin, but the word of God declares that we are. We have a new identity. So we must count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In the second part of Romans 6, Paul continues to teach us how to overcome sin. Our journey toward heaven is more like an obstacle course than a four-lane highway, as John Bunyan described in his book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is important for us to know how to overcome various spiritual challenges God allows us to face, particularly those that come from within us.

I. DO NOT OFFER YOURSELF TO SIN (12-14)

Look at verse 12. *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.* The word, “Therefore,” indicates that Paul's teachings on how to overcome sin in this passage is predicated on our understanding of the union with Christ in his death and resurrection. His command, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body,” wouldn't apply to those who are not willing to count themselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. To those who are willing, he commands, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.” The implication is that if we allow it, sin will reign in our mortal body. Sin lost its power over us when Jesus died for our sins and was raised from the dead. Yet, we should not underestimate sin. We are still vulnerable to temptations. For example, many people are addicted to pornography. Among them are those who are in respectful positions such as school principals and church pastors. It is shocking, but it is true. Perhaps their problems begin at a weak moment in their life. But we have to know that as soon as we allow a small opening, sin will come in and reign in our body. Many lives are ruined by such addictions. Paul says that the result of sin's reign is that we obey its evil desires. Sin approaches us with a promise of fun, pleasure, and satisfaction. But it is a smoke screen. Its intention is to kill us. That's what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Satan promised that good things would happen to them if they disobeyed the word of God. It was a lie. The outcome of their sin was that they died—they were separated from their Creator God.

Verse 12 implies that our relationship with sin is not quite finished when we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. So how can we deal with the desire to sin? How can we prevent sin from reigning in our mortal body? Look at verse 13. *Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him*

as an instrument of righteousness. This verse teaches us that we have two ways to approach sin. The first is to offer our body to sin as an instrument of wickedness. The Greek word for “instrument” is *hopla* (ὅπλα) which also means “weapon.” It tells us that we are fighting a battle. We should not offer our body as a weapon for sin to do evil things. If a criminal drops his gun as he tries to rob you, you don’t want to pick it up and hand it to him. It is foolish. We should not offer our body to sin. Instead, Paul says that we should offer ourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life. We should offer every part of ourselves to him as an instrument of righteousness. That’s how we can overcome sin.

So how can we not offer our body to sin? We know we would fail miserably if we made a list of 100 things we should not do and put it up on the fridge door. A better approach is to actively give ourselves to God, that is, to offer ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness. It means to spend more time with the word of God, in prayer, and in serving the ministry of God. When we remain in Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us a holy desire to live for God, as we will learn in Romans 8. The Spirit helps us to hate sin. He helps us to overcome our sinful desires. Besides, if we spend more time with God, we will have less time to indulge the sinful desires. The Christian life should be more than just avoiding moral sins. We have to fight the positive warfare.

Do not offer yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness. We have two choices concerning sin. This means that we are not totally helpless before sin. We can and should make a good choice. We have the responsibility to resist sin. Paul says in verse 14. *For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.* The Jews were under the law. Then Jesus came to set us free. Now we are not under the law. We are under grace. The law cannot help us to overcome sin. The law can only accuse us, and sometimes even arouses sinful passions in us, as Paul will discuss in Romans 7. But the grace of God is different from the law. Grace sets us free from condemnation and empowers us to conquer sin. When we are under grace, sin shall no longer be our master. This is a promise of God for all of us who have the union with Christ. Again, we don’t have to be helpless victims of sin. We can be victorious over sin when we are under the grace of our Lord Jesus. We can actively offer ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness.

II. SHALL WE SIN BECAUSE WE ARE UNDER GRACE? (15-18)

Look at verse 15. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!* This question might be raised from the declaration that we are not under the law but under grace (14). The idea is that if we are under grace, sin does not matter because we are not under the law. So we can sin with impunity, that is, we are free to sin without having to worry about punishment. It is like saying if speed limit signs are removed on I-81, we are free to drive at 150 mph without having to worry about getting a ticket. It sounds logical, but what is in the mind of the person who asks the question? Clearly he is looking for excuses to sin and a license to sin. He wants to let sin reign in his body. What is Paul’s answer? He said, “By no means!” It is because anyone who wants to remain in sin does not understand what the grace of God really

means. To give us his grace, God sacrificed his one and only Son Jesus. Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins. His innocent blood flowed down on the wooden beam to make a puddle. Even the nature could not bear to watch the sufferings of the Messiah. Darkness came over the land from noon to 3:00 p.m. It was all because of the sins we committed that Jesus had to suffer and die. How can we even think about sinning more if we really know the grace of our Lord Jesus? By no means!

Last week, I watched a documentary in which several heart transplant recipients were talking about their second chance in life. One of them said, “I’ve been given a new life. Everyday is a gift for me.” And then he added another comment that impressed me. He said, “I must not go back to the way I used to live—smoking and drinking heavily.” We have also been given a new life through our Lord Jesus Christ. We received more than a heart transplant. We received the gift of eternal life in the kingdom of God. We must not go back to our old ways of life as slaves of sin!

Paul says in verse 16. *Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?* Paul again implies that we have only two choices. If we obey sin, we are slaves to sin, which leads us to death. If we obey God, we belong to God, which leads us to righteousness. He again used the phrase “Don’t you know?” to remind us the importance of knowing the spiritual truth. We should know that our identity is changed when we believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection. We are no longer slaves to sin. We are children of God. We must know this ownership change and live as God’s children, not as slaves to sin. Jesus is our Master. He is not only our Savior but he is our Lord. We obey him. Paul reiterates this important truth in verses 17-18. *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.* We used to be slaves to sin, doing bad things we didn’t really want to do, but couldn’t help but doing them. Thank God for setting us free from the bondage of sin! Now we obey the word of God from our hearts, because God is our Master. We are his children. We belong to him. We obey his word from our hearts, not in a legalistic ways, as the Pharisees did. Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!

III. WAGES OF SIN OR GIFT OF GOD? (19-23)

Look at verse 19. *I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.* Paul used slavery as an example to make his point about how to overcome sin. He knew that slavery was not a perfect example. Many of the believers in Rome were slaves or former slaves. It was not a pleasant topic. Slavery is not a pleasant topic for us either, because of our painful history in the U.S. Nevertheless, Paul used it to teach us how serious it is to remain in sin. He urges us again to offer ourselves to righteousness. He says, “Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led

ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy” (19b; NLT).

Paul continues in verses 20-21. *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!* When we were slaves to sin, we were free from the control of righteousness. That’s true. Those who ignore God can do whatever they feel like doing according to their desires. If they want to have sex with many people, no spiritual policeman would be there to control them. Free sex sounds like freedom. But Paul describes them as “slaves to sin.” It is because they are in fact slaves to sin. More importantly, Paul says: “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!” It’s true. I did not get any benefit from my sins, other than some temporary pleasure that left a bitter taste in my mouth and a scar in my mind. I am ashamed of the bad things I had done before Jesus rescued me. I feel terrible even now to think about what I did. But the purpose of Paul’s teaching is not to make us feel bad. We should not dwell on our past to the point we cannot move on. God has forgiven all our sins because of what Jesus has done so that we can actively offer our body to God. Still, I think it is good for us to think about our past sins from time to time, just to remember how terrible sinners we had been and what great grace God has given us, so that we may be thankful to him and not become proud before him. That is what Paul reminds us in verse 22. *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.* The benefit we reap from offering ourselves to God is sanctification. The Greek word for “holiness” in both verse 19 and 22 is *hagiasmon* (ἁγιασμόν) which is also translated into “sanctification” (as in RSV). Sanctification is a process, not one time event in our life.

Finally Paul declares in verse 23: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Why is death called “wages” and eternal life a “gift”? It’s because death is a compensation for a sinful life. If we live a sinful life, we will get a big paycheck at the end called death which is actually living in hell eternally. On the other hand, eternal life is a gift from God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It cannot be earned by our effort. It is given to us by God as a gift through our Lord Christ Jesus.

In this passage, Paul makes it clear that there are only two ways to live. We are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Some people may say, “What? I am not a slave!” When Jesus told the Jews, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” they objected saying they had never been slaves of anyone (Jn 8:31-33). In fact, they were slaves to many different enemies in their history, including Assyria, Babylon, and Rome at that time. Most of all, their leaders were slaves to legalism. My point is that it is not easy to recognize we are slaves and admit to be slaves. But Paul says that all of us are slaves, either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. There is no middle ground. We cannot ride on the fence. We must choose one. Which route would you rather choose, knowing that one leads to eternal death or hell and the other to eternal life with Christ in the kingdom of God?