

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 6:15-16

Student Notes

- **Does Grace Encourage Sin?**

Verses 15-16: Paul is still dealing with the earlier question of sin and grace: “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!” – Romans 6:1-2

In the first fourteen verses he’s answered the question, “Does grace encourage sin?”. He argued that if grace is understood properly it not only discourages sin – it outlaws it.

Verse 15: “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”

- **Two Analogies: One Conclusion**

Section 1 (vv. 1-14): Persistent sin is fundamentally incompatible with grace. Section 2 (vv. 15-23): Submission and the rights of one’s owner.

A shift in emphasis. First section: Our union with Christ. Second section: Before, we were encouraged to see ourselves as “dead to sin and alive to God.” Now, we are to see ourselves as the slaves of God, who used to be the slaves of sin.

A shift in conditions: First section, Paul emphasized what was done to us: For example, we were baptized, we were dead in sins; we were raised to life. Second section: It’s not what was done to us – but what we have chosen -- We offered ourselves ... and thus became slaves...

A shift in time and verb tenses: First picture: passivity – “we were

baptized.” Second picture: active – we offer ourselves to God.

- **The Same Question**

Paul begins each section with what some call the same “surprised question”: “Don’t you know?”

1). “Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?”

2). “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey?”

- If through baptism we were united to Christ, we are to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. How can we possibly live a life of willful, intentional, reckless sin?
- Since, at conversion, we offered ourselves to God to be his slaves, how can we possibly claim the freedom to willfully, repeatedly, recklessly sin?

- **A Voluntary Slavery?**

“Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey ...”

In Paul’s day, there may have been as many as one million slaves in the city of Rome. Most of them suffered the indignity of being captured in war, purchased at the slave market, or perhaps even having been born a slave.

A less obvious entry point to slavery: Selling yourself into slavery in exchange for housing and food. It was a “voluntary slavery”.

If in exchange for housing and food a person voluntarily became the slave of another, could he expect to retain personal freedom? Certainly not!

Paul's spiritualization of this historical arrangement: Two possible outcomes to this decision: 1. "Slaves to sin, which leads to death." 2. "Slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness."

Christ's words about of making ourselves slaves to someone.

-- John 8:34: "... Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

-- Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

- **The Obvious Conclusion:**

Becoming united with Christ in his death and resurrection is a voluntary act of self-surrender: 1. Self-surrender inevitably leads to slavery. 2. Slavery demands exclusive obedience.

In the context of relationship with God through Christ, once we have offered ourselves to God as his slaves, we are permanently and unconditionally at his disposal. There is no possibility of going back on this.

Since we have chosen our master, we have relinquished our rights to self-determination. Our only real choice is to obey God.