

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 6:20-22

Student Notes:

Romans 6:20-22 -- ESV version:

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

A quick outline of what Paul is going to cover: Two kinds of slavery, two types of fruit (consequences), and two terms of service.

- **Two Kinds Of Slavery: v. 20** - *“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”*

Slaves To Sin

When we were Sin's slaves, we were from the controls or limitations of righteousness.

Paul is addressing these Roman Christians. If anyone knew about being free from the restraints of righteousness – they would have. Few societies put greater emphasis upon sexuality – immoral sexuality – than the Romans.

Paul tells them that before their conversion they were ALL slaves to the power of Sin. Not some of them, but all of them. Paul says they apply to all of us. All of us were once slaves of sin. None of us were neutral, self-determining beings. See: Romans 3:23

Righteousness is limiting! When we walk in righteousness it does limit our sin-tendency. It does restrain our choices. It does draw the line between right and wrong, moral and immoral.

Freedom from righteousness (the legitimate claims of God upon our lives) is actually slavery to something else. It looks like freedom; it feels like freedom; it appears to be freedom – but it really isn't. A better for it is "license".

Slaves To God

Verse 22: "You have become slaves to God."

We tend to picture ourselves as free people who decide who we want to serve. But you can't escape the idea of being God's slaves – as portrayed in the Bible: See: 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 1:1; Revelation 1:1; Revelation 22:3.

Paul: "You been set free from sin and have become slaves to God...".

"Although that sort of slavery is better called 'liberty'." – John Stott

- **Two Kinds Of "Fruit"**

Paul's question in verse 21: *"Therefore, what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death."*

- **The "Fruit" of Slaves to Sin:** Paul: "We are now "ashamed" of what we once described as "freedom".

Shame and humans have gone "hand in hand" since the Garden of Eden: Genesis 3:9-10 -- "But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked?"

Adam never answered that question.

What were the benefits of being Sin's Slaves? Well, one of them was shame – or guilt. See: Ezra 9:6; Micah 7:16; Ezekiel 16:63.

When we were free from the restraints of righteousness, when we were free from slavery to God, what were the benefits? Paul says we experienced a sense of remorse and guilt. Looking back, we realize it wasn't freedom at all.

“They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.” – 2 Peter 2:19

The Second “benefit” or result of being the slaves of Sin: *“For the outcome of those things is death.”*

There are two ways to read that verse. 1. Sin resulting in death. 2. Eternal death and separation from God.

Both apply, but I think the ultimate weight is on the second explanation: Being Sin's slaves will eventually result in what the book of Revelation describes as “the second death”. See: Revelation 20:14; Revelation 21:8

The “Fruit” of being slaves to God

Verse 22 – *“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”*

Two stages: Present Sanctification and the Full, Future realization of eternal life.

1. Sanctification is a benefit of being God's bond-slave. Properly speaking, sanctification is a process, but holiness is a quality. You can

become more sanctified, but you really can't become more holy. There aren't any verses that say, "Become more holy!"

Sanctification is a "right now" process, whereby we are being separated from the world and separated to God. When we left the servitude of Sin, we became the bond-slaves of God. The result was – we were initially separated from Sin and separated to God. As we continue to walk with God, that separation is to continue; it is a continuing separation.

Philippians 2:12: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."

Eternal Life

v. 21: "What benefit [literally, "fruit"] were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death."

The ultimate result of living in slavery to sin is eternal death. In contrast, the ultimate benefit of being a bond-slave to God is eternal life.

John Piper: "This is the only path that leads to eternal life: being freed from the slavery to sin, enslaved to God, bearing fruit in a life of holiness, and finally eternal life. ... We are not playing games. Eternal life is in the balance."

- Bondage to Sin results in shame and ongoing moral deterioration, culminating in the "second death".
- Bondage to God results in progressive sanctification, culminating in eternal life.

Next time we will see, "Two Terms Of Service"