

Romans: Verse-by-Verse

Romans 6:17-19

The source of Paul's rejoicing in Romans 6: We have become God's slaves. Paul is going to explain why this is the case as he describes our spiritual experience in four stages.

- What We Used To Be
- What We Formerly Did
- What Happened To Us
- What We Became

What Happened To Us: v. 18

"You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."

Paul is pointing to Sin as a power, not as an activity. All of our lives we are under the power or authority of the force of Sin – unless someone has rescued us.

That's the fullest meaning of I Corinthians 15:54-58

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." -- I Corinthians 15:55-58

Up unto the day we die-- Sin, as a power – will have authority over our physical bodies. But the day is coming that Sin will no longer have any authority over us – and that moment is the Resurrection.

Sin has no more authority over the believer in the realm of morality or holiness. We have been emancipated from its slavery – even though we are not perfect and cannot live a perfect life.

It's more of rescue operation than a complete transformation: Colossians 1:13: "He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves..."

"What We Became": v. 18

"[You] have become slaves to righteousness."

"So decisive is this transfer by the grace and power of God from the slavery of sin to the slavery of righteousness that Paul cannot restrain himself from thanksgiving. " – John Stott

We became the bond slaves of righteousness. There was nothing "iffy" about it. It was a decisive act on God's part. See: 1 Peter 3:18; Colossians 1:14

What have we seen so far?

- What We Used To Be
- What We Formerly Did
- What Happened To Us
- What We Became

Two Slaveryes – Towards A Greater Understanding

Verse 19: "Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness."

Paul knew slavery analogies had their limitations:

“I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves.” (See, also Hebrews 5:12)

What does Paul mean by, “I put this in human terms, because you are weak...?”

To some degree, he's pointing backwards. He's told them that in the past they presented their bodies as instruments of sin. That's the proof of human weakness. Now he wants them to see their current spiritual status.

A couple of ways to see this: 1. It can be a reference to the fallenness of our minds or perceptions. 2. It can point to our characters – that we are so vulnerable to temptation and need to be reminded of the obedience to Christ which we have committed ourselves to.

Going forward: Paul continues to compare and contrast the two slaveries we have known and outline the ultimate consequences of both of them. This becomes obvious in the ways that he uses the phrases, “just as” and “so now”.

John Stott: “Neither slavery is static. Both are dynamic, the one steadily deteriorating, the other steadily progressing.”

That's what we will see next time.