

INI - SDG

9th Sunday a. Trinity

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Hecla

Text: Romans 6:15-23 *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slave whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Theme: THE FRUITS OF SLAVERY

- Only one master
- Slaver to sin
- Slaves to righteousness

Dear fellow servants of the living God, made righteous through the blood of the Lamb, Christ Jesus, God's own Son,

Freedom - it's one of those words and concepts that we cherish in our nation. We often refer to America as the "Land of the FREE and the home of the brave." We speak of the soldiers who died in combat as men and women who gave their life in defense of freedom. We boast of our Constitutional rights which guarantee its citizens "freedom of speech," "freedom of religion," "the right to bear arms," and "freedom of assembly." The framers of our constitution included these rights for American citizens because in part these freedoms were lacking under the British government.

But how are these freedoms used? Let's take for example the Constitutional right of freedom of speech. Tyrannical governments try to control the speech of it's citizens. In a dictatorship like China or North Korea it's citizens are afraid to speak openly against the government for fear of being imprisoned. In such countries the media is typically controlled by the government so its citizens only hears what the government wants them to hear. In America, however, we are guaranteed the right to speak openly and freely without fear of repercussions. And what have we done with such freedoms? Freedom of speech protects such vile men as Howard Stern to pollute the ears and minds of millions. Freedom of speech protects publications such as "The National Enquirer" to spread lies and false rumors about public figures. Freedom of speech protects men and women who hate the president and call him a "warmonger" and a "Nazi."

We can take that concept of freedom and how freedoms are exercised and apply it to what we have been considering in the book of Romans. In the first five chapters Paul has written about the means of our salvation. He has clearly laid the foundation work that the only salvation is that which is found in the Gospel. It is God declaring us to be just through faith in His Son Christ Jesus. We heard that this justification comes not by works of the Law which we have done, but by grace through faith in Jesus. We heard that Abraham and David both rested their hope upon God as the one who would justify them through faith in Him. In Christ we have been freed from the curse of the Law and are now under grace.

The temptation is to then think that since we are saved by the merits of Christ and we cannot add to it or take away from His work, then we are free to do whatever we want. Paul addresses this question in the first verse of our text: ***What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*** Since we have been freed from the Law and the keeping of it to earn our salvation, are we then free to sin as much as we want? Such a horrid question makes Paul shudder as it should all Christians - ***“Certainly not!”*** ***“May it never be!”*** To emphasize the point Paul goes on to explain that there are only two types of slavery for all mankind. Let us examine this slavery as we consider ***“The Fruits of Slavery.”*** May God guide us by the light of His Word that we may see the blessings of being called into His slavery!

While we have never personally experienced slavery we know enough about it to know we don't want to be a slave. Even the word “slavery” makes us shudder a little bit. Being a slave meant your master was in control and you were to be obedient to him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If he needed water at 3:00 in the morning, the fact that you were sleeping really didn't matter - you were to get up, go to the well, and fetch a pail of water. If you had been working out in the field all day and were tired when you came in, it didn't matter, you still needed to first prepare and serve your master's dinner before you could think about feeding yourself.

Paul speaks of slavery in our text this way, ***Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slave whom you obey.*** Whomever you are a slave to, that one you obey regardless of the circumstance. Paul takes this and applies it to the question of whether those freed from the law are free to sin - ***whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?*** There is no middle ground for man. Either he is a slave of sin to death and obeys sin, or he is a slave of obedience to righteousness. No one can say he has been freed from slavery to sin so now he can sin as much as he wants to. It's one or the other - either a slave of sin or a slave of God.

Jesus likewise expressed this same point. ***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.”*** (Mt 6:24) You can't say you are a Christian who is free to sin as much as you want. If you are pursuing sin you are a slave to sin. We heard Jesus say in our Gospel lesson this morning, ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”*** (Jn 8:34) Man cannot claim to be on both sides. Either you are a slave of sin and serve that master or you are a slave of righteousness and serve your God and Savior. In Matthew 12:30 we read Jesus saying, ***“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”*** There are only two possible sides in this slavery of man's soul - either of sin or of Christ.

Just as there are no off days for a slave, so too those who are slaves of sin - there is no vacation or down time for these slaves. Paul writes to the Romans, ***“You were slaves of sin.”***

By nature all men are born slaves of sin. Sin is man's master and sin he serves day and night. Sin rules the body and leads the slave to do all sorts of wicked and shameful things. In verse 19 we read, ***"You presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness."*** Rarely do alcoholics or drug addicts use heavily their first time. It began with that first buzz. After time the buzz wore off so more alcohol or more drugs were used. And the more the addict uses the more accustomed he becomes to the drug of choice, therefore more is used in an attempt to get a buzz or a high again. Such is the slavery of addiction and for that matter the slavery of any sin - whether it be sex, gambling, stealing, or murder. The slavery of sin drives one to more and more lawlessness and uncleanness.

Sometimes you hear Christians complain that the people of the world have all the fun. We see "clubbing" and drunkenness being glorified on television. Popular music and movies glorify sex outside of marriage. It looks like they are having all the fun and feel no guilt about any of it. It seems as though they have no inhibitions about anything that they are doing. They're just living life and doing whatever feels good.

Paul reminds the Romans and us of the wages that the master pays out to his slaves. Verses 20-21 of our text, ***For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*** What is the fruit of slavery to sin? What wages do these slaves earn? The first half of verse 23 nails it on the head - ***"The wages of sin is death."*** There is the payout. The ONLY thing that sin pays to its slaves is death. Sin brought physical death into this world. And sin brings eternal death to all its slaves.

So think about those people you see on TV, in the movies, and on the radio that glorify sinful living. Those individuals that boast of how drunk they were last night or how many women they have slept with. It suddenly doesn't look so glamorous and fun. Suddenly it looks their life begins to look like an open grave and their words are the words written on a tombstone. Suddenly their lives look pathetic and depressing as we see them serving their master, sin. It is horrifying to know that the only fruit of this slavery is death.

While it is sad to see and hear of such slaves try to glorify their slavery to sin, Paul reminds the Christians in Roman and each one of us that we are slaves, but our Master is much greater. Verses 17 and 18 of our text, ***God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*** By nature we all were born with sin as our master and we had no way of freeing ourselves from that slavery. There was no "underground railroad" which we could use to escape to freedom. We too were doomed to an eternal death in hell. But thanks be to God that all changed! We were set free from sin. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to purchase our freedom. As we say in the explanation to the 2nd Article, ***"He purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil. Not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death."*** Jesus gave His lifeblood as the price to set us free from this slavery to sin.

Then God sent His Holy Spirit to bring us to faith and make us slaves of righteousness. In the world we see those who are slaves of sin using the members of their body for more and more sinful behavior. Paul writes that now that we are slaves of righteousness we should apply the exact opposite for our lives. ***"Now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness"*** or "sanctification." Having been brought to faith in Christ, rather than using our

bodies for more and more sinful behavior, present your bodies as living sacrifices unto God. As we heard in our New Testament reading from this same chapter, Paul writes about “*walking in newness of life.*” Paul also writes to Timothy, *Flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. (1 Tim 6:11)*

We know how many Americans abuse their freedoms for selfish behavior. Having been freed from sin, how will we use our freedom? To sin more and more? Again with Paul we shudder at such a thought and answer, *Certainly not!* Instead, Paul writes, *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* While the slave to sin works harder and harder only to be paid with eternal death, the Christian is given something much more grand and glorious as a gift. We have been set free from sin - Christ Jesus set us free when He was offered up because of our sin and was raised again because of our justification. We have been made slaves of God. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, thus we HAVE our fruit to holiness. It is the Spirit who has brought us out from the slavery of sin, and brought us into the kingdom of light. And the end is eternal life as a free, gracious gift earned for us by Christ Jesus our Lord and given to us from God.

These two slave masters could not be more different. And the fruit of that slavery could not be more different. The slave of sin serves and obeys sin and receives his wage of death. The slave of God is given freedom from sin, is given holiness, and is given eternal life as a gift a free gift. *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Amen.*