**Lesson 15: From Shame to Sanctification**

Text: Romans 6:15-23

**Introduction**

In Romans 6:14, Paul declared that believers are no longer under the law, but under grace. “Not under the law!” No doubt that would draw Jewish objection! The Jews wrongly assumed that being free from the law would open the floodgates to sin. They could only envision lawlessness. They could not comprehend that the same grace of God that sets us free also teaches restraint (v. 15, Titus 2:11-12). The believer’s freedom in Christ is designed to lead to righteousness, not sinful living. In this section, Paul demonstrates that freedom from sin is NOT freedom to sin! He explains why they should yield themselves as servants of righteousness.

1. **Believers should choose to serve righteousness because a change of ownership took place at the moment of salvation. (v. 15-18)**
   1. Everyone serves a master. (v. 16) “Either people are under the power of sin, or they are under the power of God. The question is not, then, whether one will have a master, but which master one will serve” (Douglas Moo).
      1. The Old Testament provides the account of Ahab’s submission to Benhadad (1 Kings 20). He became the *servant* of Benhadad because *he yielded himself* to Benhadad. He found that when you yield some ground to a wicked man, he desires to take it all. This illustrates the way sin wants to rule our lives. Sin tightens its grip on your life every time you yield to temptation!
      2. Paul expected them to understand this principle (v. 16a). If you yield yourself as a servant, you have a master. The verb “obey” carries the idea of submission and compliance.
      3. There are only two choices. (v. 16b) Daily you choose between sin and obedience.
      4. “Just two choices on the shelf, pleasing God or pleasing self.” (Ken Collier)
   2. They were the servants of sin. (v. 17-18)
      1. Paul’s words echo the words of our Savior in John 8:34, “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
      2. Obeying the gospel set them free. (v. 17) They obeyed the “form of doctrine.” The word “form” means type or pattern. This speaks to the authoritative nature of the message of the gospel.
      3. Paul viewed placing faith in Christ as submitting to Him as Lord. It makes no sense for those who claim to be Christians to submit to any master other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians ought to be under Christ’s authority!
   3. Because they had been made free from sin, they were made servants of righteousness. (v. 18; John 8:32, 36; Galatians 5:1)
      1. Man’s only freedom comes when he submits to God’s rule in his life. This may seem like a paradox, but it is true. You are free when God is your Master. You are free when you are a slave of righteousness!
      2. Being a servant of righteousness means that you do what righteousness wants you to do.
         1. When you are tempted to lust, you should do what righteousness wants you to do.
         2. When you are tempted to lie, you must do what righteousness wants you to do.
2. **Believers should choose to serve righteousness because doing so yields superior results. (v. 19-23)** 
   1. Paul said he communicated in this way because of the “infirmity of your flesh” (v. 19). Since our flesh is weak, we need someone who will bring it down to our level.
   2. Serving righteousness results in sanctification. (v. 19)
      1. They had yielded themselves as “servants to uncleanness.” *Uncleanness* refers to immorality. They were slaves to their own lusts. *Iniquity* literally means lawlessness. At one point, they were living without any regard to that which is right. “Iniquity unto iniquity” conveys that their sin went from bad to worse! Slaves of sin go to deeper levels of sin to satisfy their lusts. This is evident in the progression of sin in our own society.
      2. They should present themselves as “servants to righteousness unto holiness.” *Holiness* refers to sanctification. Their lives were to be dedicated to God. Yielding yourself as a servant of righteousness leads to Christlikeness! You become like the One you serve.
      3. “Committing ourselves as slaves to doing what is right before God results in living that is increasingly God-centered and world-renouncing.” (Douglas Moo)
   3. Serving sin results in shame and ends in death. (v. 20-21)
      1. When they were servants of sin, they were free from righteousness. (v. 20) You are obligated to the one to whom you belong. Since they did not belong to God, they were not obligated to serve God. They were owned and dominated by sin.
      2. The fruit produced in their life at that time did not bring fulfillment. Rather, it brought shame and disgrace. The end result was death. (v. 21)
   4. A change of allegiance came to their lives the moment they trusted Christ. (v. 22)
      1. Since they had been made free from sin and made to be servants to God, shame was replaced by sanctification!
      2. Not only is the fruit of their daily lives better, the end result is far superior. They have been delivered from eternal death to eternal life.
   5. Verse 23 brings the entire chapter to a climax.
      1. Wages refers to compensation. Normally, wages are desirable, but not in this context. What you deserve for a life of rejecting God is eternal separation from God.
      2. Instead of receiving what they deserved, they were granted the gift of God, eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
3. **Central Idea: The Roman believers should yield themselves as servants of righteousness because they were set free from the devastating rule of sin so that they might become like Christ.**
4. **Application: You should yield yourself as a servant of righteousness because you have been set free from the devastating effects of sin so that you might become like Christ.** 
   1. A believer who is dominated by sin has yielded to sin. If we apply verse 16 to everyday life, it removes many of the excuses offered as to the presence of sin in the life of a believer. It is not one’s personality, nationality, or circumstances that are to blame for sinful habits. It is the result of yielding to sin.
   2. Remember that Jesus did not simply save you to take you to Heaven. He saved you to make you holy! The fruit of serving the Lord is personal holiness. If your life is not manifesting the fruit of holiness, you must be choosing to serve the wrong master. Yield to the Lord today!

**Conclusion**

Too many believers are living under the rule of the wrong master. Instead of serving Christ, they are serving sin. This should not be! This doesn’t have to be! You serve the one to whom you yield yourself. If sin has been dominating your life, it is because you have yielded to it. Through the power of Christ, you can yield yourself as a servant of righteousness. Salvation takes us from shame to sanctification, and ultimately to Heaven!