

Free to Serve!
Summary of Romans 6
Dr. Jerry Nelson

In the first five chapters of Romans, Paul has made a sustained argument that as sinners under condemnation our only hope of salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

If people understand him correctly, it raises a question: If salvation is fully and only of grace, if we can't earn it or un-earn it because it is all of grace (unearned), why **wouldn't** that lead us to conclude that we can go on sinning and it won't make any difference? Or as the Apostle Paul asked it, (6:1) "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" And, (6:15) "Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Both times Paul responds the same way, "By no means!" God forbid that we should abuse the doctrine of grace by making it a license to sin.

Paul gives us two reasons why the doctrine of grace doesn't encourage sin but calls us instead to holiness: 1. vv2-14 because we are connected to Christ. 2. vv16-23 because we are slaves to God. If you truly became a Christian, something happened that makes continuing in a lifestyle of sin totally incompatible.

Why does the doctrine of grace not lead to sin? For the first reason Paul says, "We DIED to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" The logic of the passage goes like this: CHRIST died to sin. WE died in Christ because WE are connected to him. Therefore WE died to sin. (Moo p354) Just as we were, by conception/birth, connected to Adam so that Adam's sin became our sin, likewise, by faith, we are connected to Jesus so that his death and resurrection become our death and resurrection (verses 3-5). Because our "old self" was crucified in Christ when Christ died, that old self is no longer master over us. We are now freed from sin's domination and free to not sin - (v12 "Don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions". So Paul concludes, "So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

In verses 15-23, Paul gives the second reason why the doctrine of grace doesn't lead to more sin but to holiness instead: "Because we are slaves to God." Now catch this - becoming a Christian is not just a "get out of jail free" card. Becoming a Christian means being "in Christ," becoming a Christ-follower. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "You are not your own, you were bought with a price..."

He writes this in the context of a principle which he has stated in 6:16 "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— (for example you can be a) slave to sin, which leads to death, or (a slave) to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"

We like to think we are free, that we can choose to sin or not sin anytime we want to and that we are in control of our destinies. But God says that when we offer ourselves to sin, living in a lifestyle of sin, it proves one thing – that we are slaves to sin. We thought we were free to take it or leave it but we too soon find out we are caught in it - we are slaves to it. We don't control it, it controls us. And that lifestyle eventually proves we weren't Christians at all.

Likewise, Paul says, when you give yourself to obedience you soon find out that you are a slave to it - God truly is your master. The very act of becoming a Christian, by God's grace, means you have moved from the realm of sin and death to the realm of obedience and life. It's inconceivable to Paul that you would want to go back to death. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know? You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness