

Slaves Of Righteousness

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

Every slave has a master. If he did not, he would not be a slave. Earlier in Romans 6 Paul had discussed how one can let sin rule over him so that he is enslaved to it. In vs. 12 he says, *"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."* Sin will rule if you let it! It will take you over so that you obey it. What a sorrowful condition, being enslaved to something that leads to death as Paul points out in vs. 16. Thankfully, Paul gives another option in vs. 16 besides being enslaved to sin. He speaks of *"obedience leading to righteousness."* In other words, we do not have to let sin be our master. We can obey God and become a slave of righteousness!

Paul continues in vs. 17 to show how the Romans, who were once slaves of sin, had become slaves of righteousness. He says, *"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."* The question is, "What was that form of doctrine and how did they obey it?"

The form of doctrine is the gospel. Paul told the Galatians in Galatians 1:8, *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."* It is clear that there was no other true gospel or doctrine other than the one Paul taught. We find in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 the basis of what Paul taught. *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."* The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is what Paul taught, and therefore this is the form of doctrine that the Roman brethren obeyed.

Finally, how did they obey it? Paul already told them how, earlier in chapter 6. Romans 6:3-4 says, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* This is how they obeyed that form of doctrine: the death,

burial, and resurrection of Christ. And it is still the same for us today. In a spiritual sense we die to sin, bury the old man with his deeds, and rise to walk in newness of life.

Now that one has new life, what is he a slave of? "*And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*" (Romans 6:18). Now instead of using our body to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, we use it in service to God. Paul says in Romans 6:13, "*And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" Our body, in other words, should be presented as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

It is very hard to ignore and resist all the lusts of the flesh, but we must! We should set our minds on things above, and try our best to strengthen the inward person so we can be pleasing to God (Colossians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 4:16). Being a slave of sin can have its rewards but only ones that are mortal. Being a slave of righteousness has even greater rewards: everlasting rewards that God will give us when we enter our heavenly home where we will stay throughout all eternity!

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