

ROMANS 5-8: Living Your Life God's Way

How Is Your Life Going So Far?

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Hey guys, welcome to the Man in The Mirror Bible Study, it's great to see you. Our passage for today is Romans 6, verses 15 to 23, Romans 6, 15 to 23. The title of our talk today is *how is your life turning out so far?* How's your life turning out so far? We're going to ask three questions today. I'm going to try to give you answers to three questions today. Those three questions are really our points. So if you're taking notes, go ahead and write these questions down now. I'll give you them at the top so that you can see where we're going and have some time to write them down.

So the first question is this. Is the Christian life better than the non-Christian life? Is the Christian life better than the non-Christian life?

The second question is related to the passage here. What's so good about being a slave of righteousness? That's the metaphor that Paul uses. What's so good about being a slave of righteousness?

Then the third question that we're going to answer is how do we live as if the penalty of sin is paid and the power of sin is destroyed? How do we live as if the penalty is paid and the power is destroyed?

So we're in Romans 6, and really Romans 6 has two sections to it and Paul talks about the power of grace with two different metaphors. The first half of the chapter, of the section, he uses the metaphor of baptism and in the second half of the chapter, he uses the metaphor of slavery. We'll see why he uses that and even deal with the fact that that may feel pretty uncomfortable.

So Paul frames these arguments though, in exactly the same way, he asks a question, the same question in two different ways. So if you look in your scripture in verse one, he says, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin, that grace may abound? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" In the second part in verse 15, he says, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law, but under grace?" So, this is really asking the same question, two different ways. If we're under grace and not under the law, should we just not worry about sinning? Should we just go ahead and keep on sinning? Is it okay to keep on sinning? Paul answers both of these questions, as you might imagine, in exactly the same way. He says, "By no means. By no means."

Then he uses those questions then to set out the argument about exactly what grace is. You might even say that grace is like baptism, and grace is like slavery. Now, he's using metaphors and so he's not saying that grace is baptism, or that grace is slavery. He's saying it's a like them, there are certain things about baptism, there are certain things about slavery that help us understand grace a little bit better.

So with baptism, where grace is like baptism, is that when Christ paid the penalty for our sins, it's like our sins were washed away. Baptism is a symbol of those sins being washed away from us. Now, when Paul talks about slavery, how grace is like slavery, or there's something about slavery that helps you understand grace, it's not the way that we would think of slavery. Like I said, we'll talk about that, but it's really talking about the power of sin, the power of sin.

So the penalty of sin is the first half of Romans chapter 6 and then the power of sin is the second half of Romans 6, and so our Big Idea encompasses the whole chapter. I'll go ahead and give you that right up front too. The Big Idea is this, is that **grace doesn't just save us from the penalty of sin. Grace also saves us from the power of sin. Grace doesn't just save us from the penalty of sin, it saves us from the power of sin.**

So let's look at our passage, Romans chapter 6, verses 15 to 23. "What then? Are we to sin because we're not under law, but under grace? By no means. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey? Either of sin, which leads to death or of obedience, which leads to righteousness. But thanks be to God that you, who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and having been set free from sin have become slaves of righteousness. I'm speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness. So now present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness, but what fruit were you getting at that time, from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and it's end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord. This is the Word of the Lord."

So we see in this passage, in the second half of this passage, Paul is using this metaphor of slavery. Now, this begs the question is, is living the Christian life better than living the non-Christian life? Is the Christian life better than the non-Christian life?

IS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BETTER THAN THE NON-CHRISTIAN LIFE?

I have a friend named Jeremy, he works with us here at Man in the Mirror. He's heading up our efforts to find new ways to disciple guys under 40. He's got some friends that he's told me have come to him with what they call de-conversion stories. It's the story of them walking away from their faith. He says, "When guys come to me and share this with me and one said ... well, I've had a few guys do this. They act like they have this newfound freedom. But when I look at their lives, what I really see is the anger and the bitterness and the frustration that they say made them walk away from their faith hasn't gone anywhere. They're still angry, they're still bitter, they're still frustrated with life. So as they tell me about why they had to do this, sometimes I'll just look at them and I'll say, 'You know what, here's my problem. You don't see many better off. In fact, you seem worse off.' At the end of the day, I like my life with Christ a lot better than I like your life without Christ."

So Jeremy would make the point that, "Yeah, you know what, the Christian life is better than the non-Christian life, because I've seen the effects of walking away from Christ, putting yourself back in slavery to sin, as Paul would say and I've seen the effects of fighting for your faith and fighting to be a man under grace and to be obedient to Jesus. I've seen that that leads to sanctification. That leads to actually someone becoming a better person, a better man, a more Christ-like man at the end of the day. So I like my life better with Christ than I like yours without Christ, yes."

If you look at verse 21 in Romans chapter 6, Paul asks this same question. In verse 21, he says, "But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things for which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." So what we see is all around us, people are bearing the fruits of unrighteousness. What unrighteousness does is unrighteousness leads us to really look for ... If we're not going to find satisfaction in God, we're going to find satisfaction in other things. So those things are idols.

So they might be idols like racism, and greed, and lust, and anger, and bitterness. These are idols that we begin to make the most important parts of our lives and they lead to the unrighteousness. They lead to sins like discrimination, and rampant consumerism, and adultery, and pornography, and looting, and

violence. The fruits of unrighteousness lead to death. You can see that living a life full of these fruits is not a great life at all, but Paul contrasts this, you remember in Galatians 5, Paul talks about the fruit of the spirit and the fruit of the spirit is the result of living a righteous life. Living a life obedient to Christ leads to our sanctification and through the power of our sanctification, through God's sanctifying us, we see these much different fruits.

What are the fruit of the spirit? The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Those are the fruit of the spirit. Those are the results of living the Christian life. So is the Christian life better than the non-Christian life? Well, it is if I have to choose between idols of unrighteousness versus the fruits of the spirit of righteousness. Yes, I would say to you guys that living a life under grace, living the Christian life, experiencing the fruit of the spirit, it does make the Christian life better than the non-Christian life, which brings us to then our second point, which is what's so good then about being a slave to righteousness?

I mean, what a horrible phrase in today's day and age, especially that brings up all kinds of negative pictures and connotations, rightfully so. But I just want to remind you that Paul's not writing in 21st century America he's writing in 1st Israel. So it doesn't mean exactly the same thing, but even Paul acknowledges that this isn't the best metaphor in the world. So remember I said at the top, Paul's making a logical argument. He's a trained theologian, he's a trained academic, he's writing to the Romans, probably maybe one of the more educated sets of Christians. They would probably be educated in rhetoric and debate and so Paul is laying out a device for argument using metaphor to help make his point. So he's using the metaphor in the first half of this chapter, we talked about his baptism and in the second half, his slavery in verses 15 to 22.

Now, Paul is making a logical argument based on a supposition. The supposition is this, we are all slaves. We are all slaves to something. So he's saying that you're either a slave to the law, or you're a slave to grace and being a slave to the law, leads to death and being a slave to grace, leads to life, leads to sanctification. In the last verse in this chapter, it leads to eternal life.

Now, like I said, Paul even acknowledges this isn't a great metaphor. If you look in verse 19, he says, "I'm speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations." In other words, maybe it's not the greatest example in the world, but it's the example that makes my point and in this age, this would make sense to the people that were there. I just want you to understand that Paul doesn't take slavery lightly. In fact, in Galatians 4:7, he says, "You are no longer a slave, but a son." And you are no longer a slave, a slave to what? Well, in that same vein, he's saying you're no longer a slave to sin, but you're a son of the Father, of God. So Paul doesn't regard slavery as a positive thing.

I also will point you even to Jesus, used this exact same metaphor in the exact same way. Jesus in John 8:34 to 36. In fact, let me go over and read that to you. "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.' Just like Paul has said, the slave does not remain in the house forever, the son remains forever. So if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

So this is the exact same metaphor, in talking about being a slave to sin and how the son sets you free as a slave to sin. Now Paul's going to turn this metaphor a little bit sideways here and what he's really talking about is when you're a slave to something, it has power over you. So that's really what Paul's talking about. So the power of sin is death, the power of righteousness is life.

If you live under the law, the law leads to sin and sin leads to death. If you live under grace, grace leads to righteousness, to sanctification, and that then leads to eternal life with Jesus. That's this very simple argument that Paul was making. So what's so great about being a slave to righteousness?

WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT BEING A SLAVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Well, the power of righteousness in our life is the power of sanctification. The power of grace in our life is the power of life. So we want to be under the power of God's grace. We want to be under the power

of righteousness. What's so good about being a slave to righteousness? Because you are a slave to something that is making you a better person, that's making you a better man, that's making you the man that you want to be, that you were made to be. We want to be under that power. If we're going to have to be under some kind of a power, we'd rather be under the power of righteousness.

You can say, "Well, I don't want to be under anybody's power. I'm a free man." Well, you're you're under the power of gravity, you're under the power of physics. We're under the power of the sun either heating us up in the daytime, or the power of the weather bringing snow or hurricane. So, we're all under power but some of those things have power to do evil, or bad, or hurtful things to us, but righteousness only has the power to make us better.

So being under this power, the result ... Paul says, if you look at verse 23, in a way, Romans 6:23, should memorize this first because it's basically the gospel summarized in a sentence. He says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The wages of sin is death, the free gift of God is eternal life." That's the choice. Do you want to be under the power of death or under the power of life? I want to be under the power of life. That's what's so good about being a slave to righteousness. So this brings us back to our Big idea then. Once again, **grace doesn't just save us from the penalty of sin, it saves us from the power of sin**

HOW DO WE LIVE AS IF THE PENALTY HAS BEEN PAID AND THE POWER IS DESTROYED?

So, how then do we live as if the penalty has been paid and the power has been destroyed? The penalty of sin is paid and the power of sin is destroyed? I want to encourage you to become a freedom fighter. Remember Jesus said, "When the son of God sets you free, you are free indeed." I want to remind you today, if you are a follower of Christ, you are free from the power of sin. Now, does that mean you don't sin anymore? No, I wish it meant that. It means you don't have to sin anymore, but as fallen human beings, we sin, but what it does mean is that the process of sanctification is going on. So we will sin less and less. The desires of our heart will change more and more to be in accordance with God's will, with God's love and His mercy.

So we had to fight for that. As men, we need to be freedom fighters. We need to fight for that faith. So the first thing to understand when you're thinking about this is, is look at verse 17, and that this is becoming who you are. Sanctification doesn't just change the outward appearance of what you look like, or the outward appearance of how you act. It changes who you are.

If you look in verse 17, I had an interesting experience with this verse. I misinterpreted this verse the first time I read it. He says, "But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed."

When I read that phrase, "Obedient from the heart," at first what I thought it meant was, oh, now instead of being a slave to sin and compelled to sin, now out of the goodness of my heart, it's my desire, it's my own desire, but that's not really what this phrase means at all. When he says obedient from the heart, this phrase from the heart means that your identity ... this is from your identity, you've actually changed on the inside. The process of sanctification changes you on the inside. Frankly, it changes you from the inside out. So your behavior may be the last thing to change but the first thing that changes is your heart. You go from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, the scriptures says. From a hard heart to a soft heart, and then that soft heart, that heart for the Lord will begin to influence your behaviors, will maybe begin to take away the anger and the bitterness that you're experiencing, or the hurts from your past or the bad habits that you've developed.

So, as we're thinking about then how to live as if the penalty is paid and the power is destroyed, I want you to think about being intentional about those things that aren't obedient from the heart, that don't reflect Christ. What are the compulsions and the besetting sins and the habits that you're struggling with? And name them. If you're not a journaler, I want to really urge you to become a journaler and

journal those things in your life and your heart that you want to see God change. Then I'll give you three different ways that you can to bring about change in your life and your heart.

The first one is spending time with God in His Word, in prayer, just talking to Him on a regular basis, spend time with Him, listen to his Word, listen to Him in prayer, take those things to Him and ask Him to help remove them from your heart, from who you are and from how you act.

The second thing I would urge you to do is have some brothers and have a community, so that would mean maybe a couple of really good friends, you might eventually become accountability partners, you can't start that way, you better earn that trust, but find a couple of guys that you can develop these trusting, loving relationships with, guys that can speak truth into your life, that you can feel so safe with, that you can reveal the areas of your life that you want to work on so that you can live as if the penalty is paid and the power of sin is destroyed in your life and they can help remind you of that and be a part of a church. You need the Word preached to you. You need to be part of a community of believers that takes care of each other, and that makes an impact in the world around you.

Then the third thing I would say is if you have some things that you're struggling with, that you just feel like you just can't get past them. Maybe you've got some tremendous hurts in your past that has led to some brokenness in today. Maybe it's sexual brokenness from sins that have been committed against you in your past, or issues from maybe if you served in the military and you're still dealing with the ramifications of some of your experiences in the military, or a first responder, some of those experiences. I really want to urge you, go get some professional Christian counseling, find someone that you can talk to that can help you work through those things, because you don't live as a slave to the law, as a slave to sin anymore. The power of sin has been defeated, it's been destroyed. But if it still is influencing your life, you might need someone to help you work through those issues.

Let's say you're a disciple maker. Maybe you've got a guy that you're mentoring, or that you're discipling and he's struggling through some of these issues in his own life, trying to figure out how to live a life as if the penalty is paid and the power is destroyed, help that man get into God's Word, pray with him and pray for him regularly. Remind him often of this promise that he doesn't need to feel guilty anymore because Jesus paid for the penalty of his sin. He doesn't need to feel powerless anymore because the power of sin has been destroyed and walk with him to help him address those issues. If you've got one of those guys, that's going through some of those really tough issues and need some counseling, be the man that encourages them and maybe even goes with him to get him started with a good counselor. That's the best thing you can do in a man's life who wants to live a life as if the penalty is paid and the power is destroyed.

So my challenge to you, brothers, is to remember that grace doesn't just pay the penalty for our sins. It destroys the power of sin. It doesn't just save us from the penalty of sin, it saves us from the power of sin. Let's live like freedom fighters, fighting for our freedom under Christ. Freedom from the power of sin. Remember that Jesus, when he frees you, brother, you are free indeed.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your servant, Paul, for the way that he lays out the gospel so methodically, so logically Lord. But Lord, where he's so logical and methodical that sometimes it's hard for us to really comprehend it. So would you give us the patients to really dive in to scripture like we see here in Romans? To go beneath the surface to the core meaning of what Paul's trying to teach us, Lord. And Lord, would you help us to accept the fact that you've paid the penalty for our sin, that you've freed us from the power of sin in our lives, that we don't have to live as slaves to the law, or as slaves to sin, or a slaves to death, Lord but instead, we can live as slaves under the power of righteousness, under the power of your love, under the power of your sanctification. Lord give us lives that are powerful, and that impact those around us, Lord and help us to love you, to bring you glory and to build your kingdom. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.