

THE BOOK OF ROMANS
"Servants of Righteousness"
Romans 6:16-23

INTRODUCTION

1. This chapter is to the believer as John 3:16 is for the non-believer. It is good news. It is the answer for godly living.
2. The meaning of being united to Christ is clearly expounded (vv. 1-10). The consequences of that union and the appeal follow (vv. 11-13).
3. The provision to fulfill the exhortations (vv. 11-13) is also given (v. 14). It is God's grace which bestows inward power to obey. Righteous living is handmaid to grace (v. 15). It is safe to say on the basis of what has been revealed here that: 1) Union with Christ in His death should mean the end of response to the sin nature. 2) Union with Christ in His life should mean the communication of new life and power. Consider the latter by the motives characteristic of those united to Christ:-

1. NEW OBLIGATIONS vv. 16-18

a. Choices v. 16

Here is the beginning of the answer to the question posed (v. 15). The phrase "know ye not" is just a reminder. Faith in Christ is, after all, faith in the ruinous power of sin (1:32). Now the choice set out is clear: to whomever one yields himself to obey, he becomes that person's slave. If the yielding is to sin, the end is death; if the yielding is to obedience (grace), the end is practical righteousness. The two particles "whether . . . or" show that life has but two ways open, there is no middle course. Everyone must make a deliberate choice.

b. Decision v. 17

Paul gives thanks that the Romans had been handed over (by grace) to a mould (type) of doctrine. They were taking shape from it by obedience from the heart. This is worthy of thanks to God for it is a reminder of the blessed and holy contrast between the past and the present.

c. Result v. 18

This verse continues the thought of the previous one. The happy condition described is in fact being set at liberty from sin (aorist passive). In that liberty, one becomes (aorist passive) a slave of righteousness. There is no intermediate moral condition between the one service and the other. Glory to God.

2. NEW DUTIES vv. 19, 20

a. Explained v. 19

Paul virtually apologizes for the use of the word slave, particularly since so many of his readers were actually slaves. Their imperfect state, however, apparently demanded a harsh paradox to fit it (cf. 5:17). The "infirmity" (weakness) was not moral but intellectual.

b. Compared vv. 19, 20

The past found the Romans with their members yielded as slaves to the two monsters uncleanness and iniquity (lawlessness) so that the issue was iniquity. All the horrible activities of the flesh are involved (Gal. 5:19-21). The appeal is made to now yield those members as slaves to righteousness unto or issuing in a state of mind and heart called holiness. The new slavery has^{as} its goal holiness or sanctification. What a contrast! The only freedom a slave to sin has is freedom from righteousness (v. 20).

3. NEW REWARDS vv. 21-23

a. Past v. 21

Paul quietly has moved from the enslavement produced by sin to its legitimate result--death. Thank God they now had shame over their past (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3,4). They had no fruit then, only pain. But sin never sees its own hideous face until the Gospel provides believing eyes.

b. Present v. 22

God has worked in their lives. They are now free from the sin and slaves to God. That is something new. Now they have (present tense) fruit unto holiness. The end of this eternal life. Note the order and number of terms--service to God, holiness, eternal life. The middle link of the three cannot be omitted (Heb. 12:14).

c. Future v. 23

This is an appeal to the believer. Albeit a general law of God's moral universe. That which comes to sin is wages i.e. what is due (soldier's pay). What comes to God's servants is the gift of God, eternal life (service is due Him and merits no reward, Lk 17:10).

CONCLUSION

How can we continue in a state from which we have been delivered (v. 15)?