

d. Converse about the dichotomy of Jesus' invitation to sinners and why it is important.

Notes for Lesson 4

Question 1 ("Presenting Ourselves to God" Romans 6:12-13)

Both sections mirror each other and address similar questions concerning the matter of continuing in sin. The first section answers the question by pointing to the fact that we are Immersed into Christ and thus the old self is dead. The second section answers the question by pointing to the fact that the believer is no longer enslaved to sin but enslaved to God. Look at how each section mirrors the other.

1What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2May it never be!

15What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

3Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

16Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

These two sections are dealing with very closely related questions concerning the believer's inability to continue in sin. The lines of reasoning are closely related: one emphasizing the believer's spiritual condition being united with Christ; the other, his spiritual condition being enslaved to God. In both cases, Paul demonstrated that it is impossible for the believer to continually live in sin.

Question 2 ("Characteristics of True Conversion" Romans 6:16-18)

In the middle of Paul's explanation concerning believers as slaves to God, he made one of the most important statements in the Bible on what it means to be a Christian. We learned last week that all of mankind is enslaved to one of two masters: either to sin resulting in death or to Christ resulting in righteousness and eternal life. It is impossible to be slaves to both of these masters at the same time. Every person shows by his lifestyle which master he serves. Both of these masters insist on a certain type of conduct. So if you look at a person's habitual lifestyle and what characterizes his behavior, then you can determine who his master is.

Question 3a (“Characteristics of True Conversion” Romans 6:16-18)

As a believer, you have gone through significant change. What was once true of you is no longer the case. You are now in a different position. We have seen in our study that all of mankind is born totally depraved. Whether a person is a complete pagan, or whether he strives to be moral, or whether he has the law of God like the Jews and tries to keep it, there is no one who is righteous before God. There is no one who seeks after God. There is no one who understands truth and rightly reacts to the truth on his own. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We saw at the end of chapter 5 that we are all born in Adam and we have inherited his nature and participated in his rebellion.

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

By nature we are rebels and join with Adam in his rebellion against God. The process of becoming a Christian necessarily involves undergoing a change. All of the New Testament terminology referring to salvation speaks in terms of change; for instance, “born again,” “resurrected to a new life,” “old things are gone, new things have come,” and so on. The picture is not merely of some improvement along the way. Jesus told Nicodemus, *“You must be born again.”* Paul wrote, *“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”* A Christian is a person who has undergone conversion that can only be described by such terminology. Something has happened and you are now entirely different. “You were . . . and now you have become . . .”

Paul clearly spelled out what is involved in this transformation. This change involves our total person; namely, our will to obey, our emotions, and our minds.

Verse 17 *You became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed.*

This change involves your will— *“You became obedient.”* You now have a desire to obey. This change involves your emotions— *“You became obedient from the heart.”* This change involves your mind— *“You became obedient . . . to that form of teaching,”* which refers to doctrine that you embrace with your mind.

So the transformation a person undergoes in becoming a Christian is a change that affects his whole person: his will to obey God, his emotions, and his mind.

Conversion brings about change. A believer thinks with a new mind. He is moved by new emotions. He wills to live a new life to the glory of Jesus Christ. Next, concerning change, becoming a believer involves a change of ownership.

We saw this last week in our study of verse 16. I told you that man is a slave to sin by nature. The Bible makes it clear in a number of passages. For our purposes, we will look at two.

Colossians 1:13 *He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.*

Ephesians 2:1-3 *You were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

The Bible contradicts the idea of the freedom of man to choose to do what is right or to be good toward God. In reality, man is absolutely enslaved to sin. *“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin”* We saw that most people find the doctrine of slavery to sin or, in other words, total depravity, hard to believe. They say, “But I know a number of very good people who, although they are not Christians, are, nonetheless, moral people. How can you say that they are slaves of sin?”

The problem here is that we associate only “big” outward sins with slavery to sin, such as drunkenness, murder, adultery, or a life of stealing. Those who commit these offenses among others are slaves to sin. But that is not the only form that slavery to sin takes. The same slavery can be seen in many nice and polite people who are never guilty of “big” outward sins.

For example, people can be enslaved to the pursuit of wealth. The goal to become wealthy is very acceptable in our American culture. By the way, materialism is not just for wealthy people. A person can be poor and still be enslaved to materialism. Many human beings spend their entire lives attempting to amass wealth.

Furthermore, there are the secret sins that enslave. Lust, enslavement to pornography affecting both men and women, boys and girls is at epidemic levels. Then there are the “respectable sins,” as Jerry Bridges in his book by the same name, labels them. These are sins that are acceptable: gossip, selfishness, jealousy, envy, discontentment, pride, and anger. People can look good on the outside, but their souls are truly and wholly enslaved.

Paul has spent much of his time in Romans arguing that man's main problem is his enslavement to sin. That has been his main thrust in chapter 6.

Romans 6:6-7 Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7for he who has died is freed from sin.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not be master over you.

Romans 6:17-18 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient 18and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:19-20 For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness. . . . 20For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Romans 6:22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

So no doubt, man begins enslaved to sin. But at the point of conversion, the believer has a new master, and we learned that last week. I told you that the same work that has delivered Christians from enslavement to sin has also made them slaves of God, as it says in verse 18, *“Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”*

We saw that this gets to the crux of why the believer cannot continue in sin. By Christ's act of redemption on the cross, He has purchased men and women for Himself to serve Him. We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”*

I told you that Paul used terminology which is all synonymous concerning our new masters. We are slaves to righteousness, slaves to God, and slaves to Christ. In speaking to slaves in Ephesians 6:5-6,

Paul wrote, *“Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”*

All believers are slaves to Christ, slaves to God, slaves to righteousness. Our wills and our minds and our emotions have been transformed so that we strive to do the will of God from the heart.

So the first characteristic of true conversion is that becoming a Christian brings change. The believer is transformed in his thinking, his emotions, and his will. Furthermore, he has a change of masters. The believer obeys Christ rather than sin.

Question 3b (“Characteristics of True Conversion” Romans 6:16-18)

“You obeyed that form of doctrine (teaching, instruction).” This clearly indicates the type of evangelism in which Paul was engaged. What was the form of teaching that Paul referred to here? What was the Gospel according to Paul? What would Paul say at an evangelistic crusade? It is the same form of teaching that he has written about over the first five chapters in Romans. Paul began with a healthy explanation of sin and judgment that reached all the way back to Genesis and the creation.

Romans 1:18-20 *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

Today the church tends to boil down the Gospel so that it can fit on the front and back of a note card. The danger in this approach is that we communicate a shallow Gospel which in turn leads to shallow conversions.

For example, much of evangelism today begins with “God loves you.” The response of prideful, self-centered, unregenerate man is, “Well, of course He loves me. What is there not to love?” But even a cursory look at the evangelistic sermons in the book of Acts shows a far different starting point of Gospel proclamation.

Peter preached in Acts 2:22-23, *“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”* Peter’s sermon was not seeker-sensitive.

Again, Peter ended that evangelistic sermon in Acts 2:36-37 by saying, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified.”* [Listen to the response to this kind of evangelism.] *37Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said, “Repent, and each of you be baptized.”*

Acts 3:13-15 records another Gospel presentation. *“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. 14But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”*

In all of these Gospel presentations, there is first an exposure of sin. But the church today seems to think that this approach will not work in our modern culture. This approach is not popular. The truth is that this approach has never been popular. I believe the church as a whole has grown somewhat ashamed of the Gospel which is presented in Scripture. Paul began this letter to the Romans by explaining in detail the Gospel that he preached. He said in Romans 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*

How did Paul begin his presentation of this Gospel of which he says, *“I am not ashamed”*? Let's read Romans 1:18, *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*

The message of the Gospel is a message that starts with man in sin and under the wrath of a holy God. That is an essential part of the message. You don't skip around the message of sin and judgment. The doctrine of sin is a vital part of the *“form of teaching”* to which Paul referred. A Christian understands that he was under condemnation, bound for hell, hopeless and helpless in sin, and under the wrath of God. A Christian understands the terrible nature of the soul apart from God. Every human being starts out enslaved to sin and a child of the devil. All of this is part of the message.

Paul further clarified in the first chapters of Romans that morality cannot save. Trying to keep the Ten Commandments cannot save. You cannot save yourself. It does not matter how good and moral and religious you may be. This too is all part of the message. This is the doctrine of the Gospel that one must begin to understand before he or she can become a believer.

It was only after laying the foundation of man's plight that Paul then proclaimed the indescribable grace gift of Christ Jesus.

Romans 3:21-25 *But now apart from the Law [apart from being good] the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.*

This is the message, this is the *“form of teaching”* that was given to the Romans which they obeyed. This is what produces change. Again, I believe we are seeing a shallow Christianity because there has been shallow evangelism. Biblical doctrine found in the Gospel is ignored or at best simply given a nod. But solid conversion happens when we preach the Gospel whether it is popular or not.

Paul exhorted Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-3, *“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.”*

Question 3c (“Characteristics of True Conversion” Romans 6:16-18)

What is a clear, unmistakable characteristic of true conversion? Obedience. What can make you assured of your salvation? Obedience. What is a necessary result of salvation? Obedience.

Note that Paul did not say, “Though you were slaves to sin, you believed from the heart that form of teaching.” He said, *“You became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching.”* There are people

in hell who mentally assented to the facts of the Gospel. You say, "How do you know that, John?"

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" 23And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."

Three brief observations on Christ's words. First, these people knew enough doctrine to call Jesus master and God. "Lord, Lord." They gave mental assent to who Jesus is. Second, they did not do the will of the Father. They did not obey the form of teaching given to them concerning the Gospel. Jesus said, "Only those who do the will of My Father." Third, there was no change in their lives. They just continued to "practice lawlessness," which is another way to say sin.

There are those in hell who heard and knew the Gospel but did not act upon it. They did not do the Father's will. They were attached to the church, but they were never born again. There are people who are still slaves to sin, but enjoy reading the Bible and discussing theology. The religious leaders of Jesus' day are prime examples. They searched the Scriptures, memorized Scripture, and talked about Scripture, but they missed the central Person of Scripture, Jesus the Messiah. Again, the whole person is involved in conversion: the will to obey, the emotions, and the mind. Mental assent alone is not saving faith.

It has been a sad practice of the Christian church to create a separation between salvation and sanctification, between being born again and the living of a new life. Paul's whole point in chapter 6 has been that you cannot separate salvation from sanctification. There is no value in a supposed faith that does not lead inevitably to a changed life. James agreed with Paul at this point in writing, "Faith, if it has no works, is dead." Faith that does not demonstrate itself in a new life is not saving faith; it is only intellectual assent.

Here is a vital biblical statement that is missed today concerning the necessary obedience and sanctification in the life of the believer. The statement is this: "The primary objective of God in establishing salvation for us in Christ is not simply that we might be forgiven and be saved from hell and have eternal life. God intends that salvation also transform us here and now." I want to give you a number of verses supporting this.

Titus 2:14-15 [Jesus] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

You cannot stop at forgiveness. Everything in the Gospel leads to salvation from hell, eternal life in heaven, AND to good works, good deeds, a changed life.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "What does this 'form of doctrine' tell us? It tells us about the terrible character of sin, about our appalling position as slaves of sin, and under the wrath of God. That immediately produces a hatred of sin, and alarm about the results of sin and a desire to get away from

sin. . . . The essence of sin is disobedience towards God, His Word and His way; and therefore the essence of the opposite, which is faith, is obedience to God. The Christian man is the man who obeys God.”

Question 3d (“Characteristics of True Conversion” Romans 6:16-18)

Wayne Grudem rightly addresses the role of commitment and obedience in saving faith, writing, “When Jesus invites sinners, ‘Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,’ He immediately adds, ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me’ (Matt. 11:28-29). To come to Him includes taking His yoke upon us, being subject to his direction and guidance, learning from Him, and being obedient to Him. If you are unwilling to make such a commitment, then you have not truly placed your trust in Him.”