

## Free from Sin, Enslaved to God Romans 6:12-23

False advertising at its best is funny, but at its worst is fatal. And the hands-down worst case of false advertising in all of human history is sin. Sin promises fun and satisfaction, but delivers just the opposite. It leads us down a path of addiction, shame, and death. Fortunately, we have a choice. We can obey our new Master, the Lord God, and enjoy His power, His peace, and His freedom.

Came across some great examples of false advertising...

- whale pool, insta-pool, hotel (see pictures)
- **Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound**
  - o after the Civil War
  - o claimed to cure "all womanly ailments and weaknesses"
  - o great commercial success
  - o no actual medicine – but was 20% alcohol!
- **worst: Dr. Koch's Cure All**
  - o Starting in 1919, Dr. William Koch
  - o cure all called "glyoxylide"
  - o claimed cured "practically all human ills," including tuberculosis, cancer, allergies, infections
  - o charged as much as \$300 per shot!
  - o turns out: just distilled water
  - o tragic: patients died because they stopped using their prescription medicines

**False advertising at its best, is funny – at its worst, is fatal.**

**Our passage this morning is all about false advertising!...**

### Quick Review

- Romans all about the righteousness of God
- Ch 6-8: God is Righteous in Sanctification – making believers righteous through the Spirit
  - o **justification** about STATUS and INSTANTANEOUS
  - o **sanctification** about CHARACTER and a PROCESS
- Ch 6: Motivation for sanctification – we're already justified, so why bother with sanctification?
- Revolves around 2 similar questions...

### QUESTION:

- similar to 6:1 but distinct (read 6:1)
  - o let sin reign – pictures sin as a master that wants to rule over you
  - o motivation: so that we get more grace (5:20 – where sin abounds, grace super-abounds)
- read 6:15a
  - o about committing sins rather than living under sin's rule
  - o different motivation: READ 6:14
    - because we no longer live under the law but under grace
    - Paul's contrasting 2 ways of life – 2 ways of approaching God:
    - **life "under Law"** – approach God through the commandments of the Mosaic Law – obey Law to receive blessing
      - That way of approaching God has come to an end

- **life "under grace"** – approach God by grace alone – receive his blessings as a gift.
  - we are free from the requirements of the Law
- **OKAY, SO IF THAT'S TRUE – then the logical question**
  - If I'm free of the Law, then why not indulge sin?
- **After all, sin is attractive, easy – why not give in?**
- Advertised as:
  - Fun – what everyone's doing – satisfying – too hard to resist
  - So why not give in?!

**Answer: Read 6:15b – No!** Emphatic

**Explanation: Why? 6:16-23 -- Because sin is falsely advertised**

**Paul gives us 3 truths to cut through the false advertising**

**(1) Unnecessary (READ v17-18a)**

- **Advertised as necessary** – world, Satan, flesh
  - "You're a man – you can't help doing that..."
  - "You're a woman"... "That's the way you are..."
- **But that's a lie** – for a believer: sin is NEVER necessary
  - covered that last week
  - because of what God has done through Jesus, sin no longer owns us
  - **why? v17b** – because we "obeyed from the heart..."
    - = believed the **GOSPEL**
  - **result: v18a** "having been freed" – past tense, passive voice
- So, don't give into sin because sin's no longer your legal master
  - no claim on you – has not authority
- **Sometimes that's hard for us to believe**
  - been sinning a long time!
  - often seems natural – feels like I can't resist it
  - like a chained elephant...
    - conditioned to believe they cannot break away
    - so they never try
  - **That's the hold sin has on many of us**
    - has convinced us that it is undefeatable, irresistible
    - But it's not – not anymore!
- **So how do you break free of it?** Look back... [Read 6:11-12]
  - "**consider**" = believe that sin is no longer your master – you can resist it – it has no authority over you
  - So, "**do not let sin reign**" – break the chain – walk away.

**(2) Inappropriate (read v18b)**

- **Advertised as your right.** World/devil/flesh: "you deserve this little indulgence – your little pet sin
- **But that's a lie – we have a new master, and He doesn't approve of sin!**
- "slave of righteousness" (v18) = "of obedience" (v16) = "of God" (v22)
- God freed you from sin, by buying you for Himself
  - you are His slave, His possession
- We don't like the sound of that!
  - Pride ourselves on freedom & independence
- **What we don't understand: absolute freedom is not in our nature**
  - absolute freedom is not possible for us
  - by nature – we are dependent, subservient creatures
  - cannot change that fact of our nature.
  - A favorite Calvin & Hobbes cartoon...

- Calvin has a moment of freedom...
    - Misunderstood the nature of his freedom....
      - free to act like a bird? YES. Free to be a bird? NO
  - Same for us
    - Can we act free? Yes. Can we be free? No.
  - Biologically and spiritually, all humans are slaves...
  - ...of one of two masters.. either sin or God
    - sin – obeying our animalistic impulses or external temptations
    - God – obeying His Word & His Spirit
  - **biblical “freedom” = ability to follow God and become all that He intended you to be**
- If you’ve trusted in Christ, then you are a slave of God
    - brings new obligations and expectations
    - sin not excusable to our new master!

### **(3) Destructive (16,19-23)**

- **Freshman in Dunn Hall – free!! Can do anything you want!**
  - never do laundry
  - stay up till 4am
  - eat pizza rolls everyday
  - drink beer all night
  - play video games 24/7 (guy who ate baby food!)
- **free to do it, but not free from the consequences!**
  - no laundry: stink
  - no sleep: get sick
  - pizza rolls: get fat
  - beer all night: hangover
  - 24/7 video games: fail out of A&M
- **Made foolish decisions because they believed the false advertising of sin.**
  - “You’re free! Do whatever you want. You’ll love it!”
- Learned: **Sin promises fun & satisfaction, but it delivers the opposite**
- **That’s Paul’s 3<sup>rd</sup> point – contrasts the consequences of obedience & sin**
- **READ 6:16,19-23.**
- **1) Grow as slave of obedience vs grow as slave of sin (v16,19)**
  - **How does this fit what we studied a few minutes ago in v17-18?**
    - v18 – no longer a slave of sin
      - about STATUS as slaves
      - before conversion: legally a slave of sin – sin legally owned me
      - after conversion: legally free of sin – God owns me
    - v16 – about our EXPERIENCE of slavery
      - whether or not sin owns you, if you sin, you give sin authority over you
      - you live like a slave of sin even though you aren’t
      - **Denver Moore** – not a slave, but lived like one
  - Paul’s point: whichever master you obey, you make yourself, by experience, more and more a slave of that thing
    - you give power & authority over you to sin or obedience
  - **If Obedience: obedience begets obedience**
    - obedience becomes more habitual – natural, easier
  - **If Sin: sin begets sin**
    - **v19** – lawlessness results in “further lawlessness”
    - sin becomes more habitual –more unavoidable, more extreme

## **I believe v16 is PAUL's THEOLOGY OF HABITS and ADDICTIONS**

**Modern research:** Dr. Nora Volkow, director of National Institute on Drug Abuse and a pioneer in the use of FMRI imaging to understand addiction – what her research has concluded:

*... everyone will become an addict if sufficiently exposed to drugs or alcohol. That can go for nonchemical addictions as well. Behaviors, from gambling to shopping to sex, may start out as habits but slide into addictions. In fact, almost anything deeply enjoyable can turn into an addiction*

*The pleasurable activity or substance causes the brain to release dopamine, providing feelings of enjoyment and reinforcement to motivate a person to seek out those activities again. Over time, a given amount of a substance or a particular activity releases less dopamine, meaning that more is required for the same physiological affect. That's desensitization – it leads to progressively expanding addiction... [which] has long term affects on the brain's wiring.*

### **That's part of the science behind Paul's theology.**

- God designed the human body to develop habits
  - o repetitive action builds a habit that becomes hard-wired in the brain
    - When it's a good thing – you build a righteous habit – that leads to further obedience in the future
    - When it's a bad thing – you build a sinful habit that leads to a sinful addiction
- Paul's point: **all sin is addictive**
  - o no "small sins" /minor/pet – all lead down the path of addiction!!
  - o All sin fuels a biological process of addiction
    - need it more
    - need more of it
    - If you give in today, you're more likely to give in tomorrow
    - You see that pathology, for example, in sexual sin...
- GOOD NEWS: obedience works in a similar way
  - o More you obey today, the more you want to obey tomorrow.

### **2) sanctification vs shame**

- obedience brings **Sanctification (v19,22)**
  - o define: progressive growth in righteous CHARACTER and BEHAVIOR
  - o Phil 2:12-13
    - our part of sanctification: obey
    - God's part: give us BOTH the ability and desire to obey
- sin brings **Shame**
  - o = painful feeling of humiliation, regret due to wrong, foolish behavior
  - o v21a "things of which you are now ashamed" – still felt shame
    - shame lingers, it sticks
  - o fun of sin fades, replaced by long-lasting pain

### **3) eternal life vs death**

- **Obedience leads to eternal life (v22-23)**
  - o "eternal life" – we think about heaven – true, includes that
  - o But – eternal life is not just future...
    - Jn 6:47 "has eternal life" – you have it now
    - Jn 17:3 = a growing relationship with God
      - eternal life is living now like you will live then
      - enjoying His power, peace, joy, blessing
  - o So, if you obey, you get to enjoy eternal life early!
- **Sin leads to Death (v16,21,23)**
  - o "**death**" – often **holistic** in Romans – as in ch5
    - refers to all of the negative consequences of sin

- broken relationships
- absence of joy, peace, and power in life
- physical death
- ultimately, eternal death – separation from God forever
- Believers saved from eternal death
- **But if we choose sin, then we choose to walk the path of death**
  - v23 – “wages” of sin is death – always true
    - for believers & unbelievers alike
  - Thomas Watson, “Sin hath the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages.”

**So, clearly, sin is not a good choice!**

**Promises fun and satisfaction – but it delivers just the opposite.**

**So how do we avoid it? How do we resist the allure of sin? APPLICATION**

- For all of us: **Find Regular Accountability**
  - another mature believer of the same gender
  - keeps you vigilant
  - gives you 1 more reason not to give in!
  - if you sin, gets you back on your feet quick
- If you’re really struggling: **Get Help**
  - Celebrate Recovery – Tues nights at Grace Southwood
  - a pastor or biblical counselor
- **Pursue God, don’t just avoid sin**
  - READ v13
  - “present” – to put something at someone’s disposal
    - sacrificial language – present something to God as worship
  - present your “members” (any part of yourself – physical or immaterial)
  - **no longer to sin... but to God**
    - if you’re busy giving your time, effort, and energy to God’s service, then you leave no time for sin
    - can’t be occupied with 2 things at once!
    - daily devotion – leave no room for sin
  - let your life be about the good you do, not just the evil you avoid

**Questions for Romans Sermon #14 – 6:12-23**

*Note: these questions have been written for small groups studying Romans together. You can also adapt these questions for your family or for personal study.*

1. BIG IDEA: Read Rom 6:12-23. What is the big idea of this passage? How does it relate to the previous section (6:1-11)?

2. To understand Paul’s question in 6:15, answer the following and then summarize the question in your own words:

a. What preceding statements or concepts would motivate such a question (in other words, why would someone ask this question at this point in Romans)?

b. How is this question similar and/or different from the question asked in 6:1?

c. Summary in your own words:

3. Compare the two choices we have in regard to whom/what we serve. For each comparison, define or explain the key word(s).


What determines whom/what we serve? In other words, how do we choose column A or column B?

4. APPLICATION: Practically speaking, how exactly do we apply the instructions and commands of 6:3, 11-12?
  - a. “know”
  - b. “consider”
  - c. “do not let sin reign”
  - d. “do not present”
  - e. “present”
  
5. APPLICATION: Why do you think so many believers today experience so little spiritual victory in light of this passage?

***End by memorizing 6:12-14***

### **Additional Review Questions**

6. Beginning in chapter 6, Paul transitions from the topic of "justification" to "sanctification."
  - a. Define "justification."
  - b. What does the term "sanctification" mean in 6:16,22?
  - c. How is justification like and unlike sanctification?

### **Additional Interpretive Questions**

7. What questions came to your mind during this sermon? Write them down and bring them up with your group.
8. If you knew a believer who was living in habitual sin, how might you use 6:12-23 to help him or her turn away from sin?
9. Explain the transition in 6:12.
10. What is the meaning of "death" in chapter 6? Does it carry more than one meaning or nuance (cf. 6:2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,13,16,21,23)?
11. In what sense can the believer be a "weapon/instrument" of unrighteousness or of righteousness? Give an example of each. Does behaving like a "weapon" of unrighteousness necessarily imply an active pursuit of evil?
12. What is the "benefit" to which Paul refers in 6:21,22?

### **Additional Application Questions**

13. Why don't we always "feel" like serving God?
14. How can/should we respond when we don't feel like serving God?
15. How would you explain the progression of application steps ("know," "consider," etc.) to a young believer?
16. How would you describe your personal battle with sin at this time in your life? Are you regularly winning or does sin seem to often have the upper-hand? Or have you simply surrendered to sin in one or more areas of your life? In what situations or circumstances does sin seem to have the most sway over you?
17. According to Paul, all sin can be addictive – give into a sin today, it becomes a habit tomorrow, that leads to an addiction in the future. Have you ever seen that progression at work in your life or another believer's life? How do you escape from that progression once it has begun?