

Series: *No Longer a Slave to Sin (An Exposition of Romans 6)*

Main Idea: In Romans 6:19-24, God's Word gives us three incentives for holy living, three reasons why we should live as joyful slaves of God.

- I. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of our calling (19).
    - A. We have been called from a life of sin.
      - 1. Because sin is like cancer, we need more than a casual cut back.
      - 2. We need to practice radical amputation.
    - B. We have been called to holiness.
      - 1. Make sure you're connected to Christ.
      - 2. Make sure you're pursuing holiness, not just happiness.
      - 3. Make right choices in the use of your body.
  - II. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of the change that's occurred (20-22).
    - A. We used to be slaves to sin (20-21).
      - 1. We were free from righteousness.
      - 2. We did what was shameful.
      - 3. We were doomed to die.
    - B. We are now the slaves of God (22).
      - 1. We can experience victory over sin.
      - 2. We can experience holiness in life.
      - 3. We can experience eternal life.
  - III. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of the consequences (23).
    - A. Sin's wage is death.
    - B. God's gift is life.
- Make It Personal: Our joy is linked to two questions.
- 1. Have I received God's gift?
  - 2. Am I living in light of God's gift?

*Before sermon:* Redeemed people...SING THE WORD (March – Psalm 25:4-5)

We have come to the final verses in our Romans 6 series, *No Longer a Slave to Sin*. It's been a painful journey, and a good one too. We've been learning about our former master, the monster known as sin, and why he is no longer our master if we know Christ.

*Joyful Slaves of God.* Those words don't go together, do they? *Joyful* and *slave* and *God*? God has slaves? I thought He set us free? And who ever heard of slavery being joyful? Yet it's true. This slavery is different, for this Master is different, and He has much to say to us about our fullest experience of joy.

*Scripture Reading: Romans 6:19-23*

There was a buzz in the crowd when the bidding began. “I'll give you \$10 for him,” a voice in the back yelled. “Make it \$15,” chipped in another. I stood there beside the auctioneer in front of a crowd of potential buyers. I don't even remember the final bid, but I do remember the outcome. I became a slave for a day.

The slave auction was a fund-raiser for the Future Farmers of America, a group I belonged to in High School. The plan was simple. Citizens from the community were invited to “buy” a young person for a day's work. The person who bid the highest amount won the rights to a day's labor out of his subject.

There was no getting out of the deal after the auctioneer shouted, “Sold!” Though it would only be for a few hours, I recall a sort of helpless feeling when I contemplated the

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the 2011 series at WBC.

loss of my freedom. Thankfully, my new master was a kind and gracious man who in fact owned a candy shop.

I learned some things from that experience. One, a slave is at the mercy of his master. Two, a slave's interests are controlled by the one who owns him. Three, it makes all the difference when your master is good and generous.

Back to our title. *Joyful slaves of God*. This is who we are.<sup>2</sup> Verse 22 says we are God's slaves. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Your answer depends on how you view this Master known as God. And that takes us back to the story I shared at the beginning of last week's message. It's my story, and yours if you belong to Christ, the tale (the true tale) of two masters.

I was a slave to Master Sin with shackles on my wrists. I had foolishly believed his lie about free gold, and he gave me gold all right. Until I despised it.

Day after day after day I lusted for the gold nuggets scattered all around me, and scooped it close to me in a huge pile. And every night he came in and kicked the pile and scattered the nuggets across the floor.

"You can have as much as you want," he shouted. "But remember, you are mine!"

I would still belong to that cruel monster, bound by my lusts for his deceitful pleasures. Except for one thing. The grace of the King who paid my ransom.

Oh, what a costly payment it was. My King gave His life for me. Why He wanted me I'll never know, but He said He did. I'll never forget the day He told me He had come to do what was necessary to kill my former master, Monster Sin. And then He brought me to tears when He offered me an invitation.

He said He wanted me to enjoy life with Him in His beautiful kingdom. To work for Him in the task of rescuing other victims from Monster Sin. And this I have been doing now since that wonderful day when I became His joyful slave.

Why am I His joyful slave? It's not just because He is worthy, which He certainly is. It's because He loves me. Yes, my new Master loves me.

Allow me to ask the same question a different way. Why live a holy life? Why be honest on your timecard when others fudge on theirs? Why pay full price for computer software when you could save a whole bunch of money and just copy someone else's? Why be honest on your tax returns when nobody will probably ever know about that extra income anyway? Why, young person, should you keep yourself pure until marriage when your peers ridicule you for being old-fashioned and pious? Is it worth it to live a holy life? Is it worth it to live as a joyful slave of God?

The Master Himself answers these questions for us in today's text. There are good reasons why we should live holy lives as joyful, grateful slaves. Romans 6:19-24 gives us three powerful incentives/reasons for holy living, for living as joyful slaves of God.

#### I. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of our calling (19).

As we learned last week from verses 15-18, we have two obligations if we are to experience freedom from sin in our lives. First, *we must not rationalize*. That's verse 15. We must not excuse sin in our lives any longer.

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<sup>2</sup> I could have used the title "Grateful Slaves of God" which is related. Gratefulness comes first, and then joy follows. We see this in Paul's response in 6:17 and 7:25, "Thanks be to God!" The appropriate response to being rescued from Master Sin is gratefulness to our New Master who set us free to serve Him.

Second, *we must recognize the truth*. That's verses 16-18. Truth #1, all people are slaves. I may be a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness, but I am a slave nonetheless. And truth #2, all who are in Christ have experienced a change. The change is that though I was enslaved to sin, I have been delivered from sin and have become a slave of righteousness. Far from being free to do my own thing, I am now free to do what is right. I am free to serve my new master.

This brings us to our first incentive. Why should we live a holy life as joyful slaves of God? It's because of our *calling*. Paul explains in verse 19, "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations." The KJV rendering goes like this, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh."

Interesting phrase. What does Paul mean by it? He seems to be apologizing. Why would that be? He tells us why. He says he is using the analogy of slavery to depict the Christian life. "I put *this* (his teaching about how to overcome sin) in *human terms* (that is, by using the illustration of slavery) because you are weak in your natural selves (NIV)."

Slavery was common in the Roman Empire. Many Christians were slaves, and the letter of Philemon reveals that freedom was a prized possession and difficult to obtain. Paul knows his reference to slavery could be misconstrued.

Remember how the religious rulers were incensed when Jesus used the slavery analogy? The dialogue went like this in John 8:31-34, "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How can you say, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Whoever commits sin is the servant [slave] of sin."

That word *slave* is an explosive word, and rightly so. So if the slave illustration can be offensive, why did Paul say he used it? He says he did so "because you are weak in your natural selves" (NIV). The ESV says, "because of your natural limitations". Paul doesn't elaborate on the nature of his readers' weakness or limitations. Perhaps he is saying they were intellectually weak (that is, they needed a blunt illustration like this so they could grasp the point). Perhaps they were morally weak and needed a shocking reminder of the audacity of compromising with sin. I don't know.

I do know that people, including Christians, are at different levels of ability to handle truth. A good teacher doesn't merely *dump* truth on people. He *ministers* truth to them in the most meaningful way, in a way that will connect with them.

And what does it take to do this? Effort. Work. Time. Thoughtfulness. Love. A good teacher exegetes not only the Word, but his audience too. Like Paul did. He put this spiritual truth "in human terms" for the good of his readers in Rome.

Thank you so much Sunday School teachers and youth leaders and those who teach our children on Wednesday evenings. Thank you for investing time and effort in learning the Word and the people under your care.

Now, what exactly did Paul say? He said he used the slave analogy to show us Christians that we have a special calling. In two senses, as he explains in verse 19.

**A. We have been called from a life of sin.** Notice again verse 19, "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.”<sup>3</sup>

Notice the contrast between what *used* to be true of us and what is *now* true. Paul begins with a description of our pre-Christian days. What was true of us before Christ rescued us? We were slaves to sin. What did we do with our bodies? We offered the very parts of our bodies to our cruel master.

What was the result of our service to “Master Sin?” Paul says it led to “impurity and to ever increasing wickedness (NIV).” The KJV translation is “to iniquity, unto iniquity.” The phrase points out the progressive (actually regressive) nature of sin.

Sin always leads to more sin. Impurity leads to ever-increasing wickedness. Sin doesn't stay constant, and the reason is self-evident. Sin doesn't satisfy. The sin-fantasies that thrill us today are boring tomorrow, so we demand more and bigger sin.

It reminds me of the story from the old west. When the western part of our country was being settled, roads were often little more than wagon tracks. Those rough trails posed serious problems for the people who journeyed on them. On one winding path was posted a sign which read: “Avoid this rut or you'll be in it for the next 25 miles!”<sup>4</sup>

To change the analogy, sin is like cancer. It increases. It spreads. It's impossible to dabble in it. To get rid of it, drastic action is needed.

1. *Because sin is like cancer, we need more than a casual cut back.* Here's the casual-cut-back approach to sin. A person says, “Instead of watching six unwholesome movies this week, I'll cut back to only two.” Or, “Instead of drinking every night this week, I'll curb my intake to just two nights.”

Friends, this kind thinking underestimates the cancerous nature of our old master. If we're going to get rid of sin, we need more than a casual cut back.

2. *We need to practice radical amputation.* Radical amputation is what the Savior called for in Matthew 5:29-30. He said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Someone has wisely observed, “Bad habits are like comfortable beds--easy to get into but hard to get out of.” That's why drastic action is needed, not a casual cut back but radical amputation.

And here's the good news. If we are in Christ, we *can* get rid of sin. Why? We've been called from sin! We've been delivered from the chains of the old life. We're no longer slaves to our old passions. We can be different, and (don't miss this) we **MUST** be different. Why? Because not only have we been called **FROM** sin, but **TO** holiness.

**B. We have been called to holiness.** Notice carefully our new responsibility at the end of verse 19 (NIV), “So now offer them [the parts of your body] in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”

I'm struck by the language here. Paul doesn't give us an option, but an imperative. In our pre-Christ-life, we were slaves to impurity and we yielded our members to increasing lawlessness. But now, in our new in-Christ-life, we are slaves to righteousness

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<sup>3</sup> NIV “Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.”

<sup>4</sup> [Frank Clark, Register and Tribune Syndicate.](#)

and we are commanded to use our bodies in ways that lead to holiness (that is, to sanctification).

Here's the climax of Romans 6. Grace is not to be abused, but cherished. How do we show we cherish the grace of God? By living holy lives, as joyful slaves of God.

This is why He saved us, brothers and sisters. In fact, He had this goal in mind before He ever created the universe (not to mention us!). Consider Ephesians 1:4, "For He (God the Father) chose us in Him (God the Son) before the creation of the world to be HOLY and blameless in his sight." Please note that our holiness is connected to God's sovereign choice and effectual call. He has chosen and called us to be set apart *from* sin and set apart *unto* Himself. Our holiness, our Christlikeness, is why He has saved us.

Now the million dollar question. How do we, the former slaves of Master Sin, now experience holiness, as our new Master desires for us? Let's talk about three essentials.

1. *Make sure you're connected to Christ.* To change you must be in Christ. You must be a born again, justified, slave of God whose total trust in life is in His Son, Jesus the Christ. But not just connected to Christ, but living in vital union with Christ. This is what Jesus meant when He said in John 15:4-5, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

2. *Make sure you're pursuing holiness, not just happiness.* I'm talking about having the right purpose in life. God called us to be holy, not merely happy. Is that what you want? There are many things in life that may not make us *happy*, but will contribute to our *holiness*. Things like trials, for instance. A difficult marriage. A hard to love neighbor or child. Chronic pain.

Why does the Lord allow His children to face such difficulties? There's mystery in this for sure, but here's one reason. He intends to use the hardship He allows to increase our holiness, to grow us up in greater resemblance to our new Master.

Friends, if we are in Christ, we have the potential to be holy. But we must *want* to be holy, more than anything else in life.

By the way, please notice the progressive nature of holiness in verse 19, which says, "Slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification." Just as sin leads to more sin, so the more you use your body for right purposes the more you grow in holiness.

When a person says, "Well, I tried that once, but it didn't work," he just raised a red flag. He's not thinking right. Holiness isn't something we "try" once. It's a gift we receive and then put into practice the rest of our lives.

3. *Make right choices in the use of your body.* This includes the very *parts* or *members* of your body. Tongue. Hands. Eyes. Ears. The NIV says, "Offer them [the parts of your body] in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness." Holy living boils down to right choices with regards to the use of our body parts.

I heard a quote a long time ago that has served me well in life. "No one gets holy in a hurry." Holiness doesn't happen quickly. Positionally, yes, the moment we trust Christ. But the experience of holiness takes time. And intentional use of our hands, feet, etc.

There's no room for being passive here. If we want to grow in holiness we can't sit back and rest in past right choices.

“Well, I used to use my eyes to read the Bible everyday. And I used my mouth to teach a children’s class too.” That’s good. When was that? “Oh, I guess it’s been a few years ago now.”

Okay, what are you doing with your body *now*? To be growing in holiness, we must make right choices in the use of our bodies *now*.

I saw Romans 6 illustrated during a hospital visit several years ago. Someone was in surgery, and I was sitting in a hospital waiting room. From the box in the corner of the room, MTV was blaring its sensual programming. I wanted to turn it off, but noticed four people already in the room who were watching the TV. There were two young ladies, a young man, and a man who was about 70 years old. I looked at their eyes. They were glued to the screen. I looked down and tried to read, and then finally when the others left the room, I changed the channel, with a glarring reminder of the enslaving power of sin.

Sin is enticing and luring. Sin tries to pull us in. Even Christians. Our former master is constantly inviting us to come back to him.

Can we resist him? Yes, but to do so we must continually remember our calling. Our new Master has called from sin to holiness. This is our first incentive for living as a joyful slave of God.

## II. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of the change that's occurred (20-22).

Paul uses the same slavery analogy to make a strong contrast.

**A. We used to be slaves to sin (20-21).** Verse 20 takes us back to what was true of us before conversion. “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness [the NIV says “you were free from the control of righteousness”].” What were we? Slaves who belonged to Master Sin. What was true of us under that master? We were free. How so? We’ll talk about that in a moment.

But first, notice the rhetorical question that Paul asks in verse 21. “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.” The NIV asks, “What benefit did you reap at that time from those things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!”

So think back to the days when sin was your master. I know this is not pleasant, and I know it’s not wise to dwell in the past, but we need to remember. What was true of us when we belonged to Master Sin? Three painful realities.

1. *We were free from righteousness.* Ironically, before we became a Christian, we did have a type of freedom, according to verse 20. From what were we free? Righteousness. Paul’s not saying that non-Christians can’t do right things. They do many “right” things in man’s eyes. They raise productive kids, accomplish important tasks at work, find discoveries for diseases, and more. Paul’s not denying that. He’s talking about doing right things in *God’s* eyes.

This is the sinner’s problem. He lacks righteousness. This is what the book of Romans is all about. God is holy and demands righteousness. But from birth, we lack righteousness (1:18). We’ve inherited an unrighteous nature from Adam, and we make unrighteous choices from the very beginning of our lives. We can’t earn righteousness, either, but must receive it (3:21-24). God’s righteousness is available to us only in the gospel of Christ (1:16-17).

This is the first reality from our pre-Christ days. When we belonged to Master Sin, we were free from righteousness. This led to a second painful reality.

2. *We did what was shameful.* Look carefully at verse 21. Notice first it's plural ("ye" in the KJV), as Paul is talking to all his Christian readers in Rome. Then realize this is a rhetorical question, intended to drive home an obvious point. Next, consider the word "fruit" (NIV 'benefit'). The word means "result, product, gain, or advantage."

Here's the idea. Paul is saying, "Remember your pre-Christ life? Remember how you used to live? Remember the things that used to be so important to you before Master Jesus set you free? What benefit are you reaping from those things now?"

And notice his description of those pre-Christ activities. He calls them "the things of which you are now ashamed." Think of the activities you did before Christ saved you. It's not pleasant, but think of the self-centered, sensual ways you used your time. What fruit did it produce? For some, the fruit is a destroyed liver, or a broken marriage, or a sexually transmitted disease, or a trail of fragmented relationships.

It's shameful to think about how we lived, isn't it? J. B. Phillips paraphrases, "You blush to remember." Indeed we do.

So what's the point? It's this. If it's painful to remember what we did when Master Sin controlled us, why do we keep going back to him? If self-centered, sensual living produced such shameful fruit, why not joyfully embrace our new Master right now, God Himself, and resolve to live for His *holy* purposes?

But that word *ashamed* needs further attention. In our society we've lost the biblical sense of *shame*. We're not ashamed of sin anymore. Opra makes a talk-show about it, the sit-coms make comedy out of it, the musicians sing about it. And far too often, the message is the same. You don't need to be ashamed, for there's no shame in sin. In fact, there's no such thing as sin. So do whatever you want to do with your life. It's your life. Be proud of who you are do whatever your beautiful heart desires.

Master Sin smiles at such declarations. After all, they come from him, and he knows exactly the fruit they will produce.

J. Vernon McGee shares an interesting observation in his commentary on Romans, "I receive scores of letters from young people who were formerly known as 'hippies' and have turned to Christ. They are ashamed of that old life." Then McGee gets personal, "When you drop into sin, does it break your heart? The difference between a child of God and a child of the Devil is that a child of the Devil just loves doing what the Devil wants done. But to the child of God it is a heartbreak."<sup>5</sup>

Does your heart break when you sin, not because you got caught, but because you know your new Master is grieved? Are you ashamed of sin? When sin was our master, we were free from righteousness and did what was shameful.

Your attitude towards sin, my friend, is a convincing indicator of whether you truly know Christ. Yes, you delight to know you're forgiven, but you're still ashamed of the sin that made forgiveness necessary. And this brings us to a third painful reality.

3. *We were doomed to die.* We see the sobering climax at the end of verse 21, "Those things result in *death*."

Do you like driving on toll roads? I don't. Several years ago I was traveling to Harrisburg, PA. and intentionally took the longer route to avoid the toll. I don't like the feeling of getting on a road and knowing it will cost me to get off of it.

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<sup>5</sup> McGee, p. 118.

A life of sin is like a toll road. As a non-Christian I'm zooming down the road mile after mile, doing my own sinful thing and thinking I'm getting away with it. What I'm failing to realize (and need to realize) is that there's a toll that must be paid to get off this road. The toll? For the end of those things is *death*, says Paul.

He's talking about spiritual destruction, ultimate spiritual destruction in hell, but also the destruction of life that accompanies sin in the here and now. I think about what is happening to hundreds and thousands and millions of young people (and older people) who are giving full reign to their passions. They think they're free, but they're actually enslaved and destroying themselves and those around them. The ticket booth is coming. The toll must be paid. Those things result in death.

And that's what we *were*. Slaves to sin. What are we now?

**B. We are now the slaves of God (22).** Verse 22 says, "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life."<sup>6</sup>

Why should we live holy, grateful, joyful lives in service to our Master God? The first answer is because of our *calling*. The second is because of the *change* He produced. We used to be slaves to sin, but because of His grace, now we belong to Him.

Here's where the slave analogy breaks down and why Paul apologizes for using it. It's almost unthinkable to use the same term "master" to refer to both sin and God. Why? To say that God is a very different kind of master than sin is a huge understatement.

Our former master (sin) devastated our lives, for he was a taker and a killer. But our new Master (the Lord) restores our lives, for He is a giver and a healer. Paul identifies three wonderful benefits that we can experience because of Him.

1. *We can experience victory over sin.* That's what verse 22 says. We know that because of Christ's death and resurrection, we are free from sin's penalty. That's Romans 1-5. But this verse says more. We have been "*set free from sin.*" Paul's not talking about perfection, as he will make clear in chapter 7. But he is letting us know that we have the power not to sin.

Do you know what this means? We can face this coming week with confidence. Every one of us who knows Christ need not be battered down by sin. We can be overcomers. We can experience victory over sin. Here's a second benefit.

2. *We can experience holiness in life.* According to verse 22, having become slaves to God, "the benefit you reap leads to holiness" (NIV). The ESV says, "The fruit you get leads to sanctification."

Holiness. Sanctification. This isn't just for a few elite Christians. This is the norm. Paul is talking to every believer who read this letter in Rome. And to those who would later read it, including us. As slaves to God, we are free to live a holy life.

Think of the most godly person you know. Perhaps it is your grandmother. Maybe it's your friend at school. Whoever it is, know this. If God is your Master (and He is if Christ is your Savior), then you can become like that person. We can experience holiness in life.

3. *We can experience eternal life.* Verse 22 concludes (NIV), "And the result is eternal life." According to Jesus' words in John 17:3, eternal life is both something we possess *and* anticipate. "Eternal" speaks to both quality and quantity. If you are a

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<sup>6</sup> The NIV says, "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."



Christian you have available to you a quality of life unknown to your lost neighbors. Yet that's just the beginning. What you have in Christ will never end. You are guaranteed a life to come, *eternal life*! So don't keep it to yourself. Share it with your neighbors!

Friends, these benefits are yours in Christ. The next time your old master whispers in your ear, "Ah, go ahead, enjoy yourself, just like you used to. After all, you're under grace now. God will forgive you!" What should you do?

Use the language of Romans 6 and say, "God forbid!" I have a new Master now and I joyfully choose to serve Him. Because of my calling. And because of the change that's occurred.

### III. We should live as joyful slaves of God because of the consequences (23).

The familiar verse 23 reads, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in [or 'through'] Christ Jesus our Lord." This is a great verse, yet please notice something. We often use this verse in evangelism (it's part of the "Romans Road") and usually apply it to the lost (and it certainly does apply). May I remind you, however, that the context of Romans 6 is Christian living, and the subject is sanctification not justification. Romans 6:23 contains a warning for the saved (after all, this letter was written to Christians).<sup>7</sup>

"There is a sin unto death," John wrote in a letter designed to help Christians have assurance of their salvation (1 John 5:17). In the Old Testament, Samson would not yield himself to God but preferred to yield to the lusts of the flesh. What was the result? It was death (Judges 16). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (1 Cor 11:30)."

Every Christian needs to ponder this. If I as a believer refuse to surrender my body to the Lord but choose to use my body for my own sinful purposes, I am in danger of being disciplined by the Father, and this could mean death (see Heb 12:5-11).<sup>8</sup>

I must never forget that there are two clear, distinct options in life.

**A. Sin's wage is death.** "For the wages of sin is death." Why is that? Because Sin is a cruel master, and he makes sure his subjects get their due. On the other hand...

**B. God's gift is life.** "The gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul uses two military words here.<sup>9</sup> For "wages" the Greek term is *opsonia*. *Opsonia* was the soldier's pay, something he earned by his service to his commander. It was something that was due to him and could not be taken from him.

For "gift" Paul used the Greek term *charisma*. *Charisma* was a totally unearned gift which a soldier would sometimes receive. For instance, on special occasions, such as the emperor's birthday or the anniversary of when he became leader, the emperor would hand out a free gift of money to the army. The soldiers had not earned it; it was a gift they received because of the kindness of their Majesty.

The symbolism is clear. Sin is like an emperor that pays its subjects what they've got coming to them, what they've earned, and the wage is death. But God, by contrast, does not pay wages, since no man can put Him in his debt. God extends a gift to those who serve Him, and the gift is nothing less than eternal life.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wiersbe, 533.

<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, 534.

<sup>9</sup> Barclay, 91.

<sup>10</sup> Cranfield, 146.

Friends, the point is this. There are two lives from which to choose. Paul calls them two slaveries. By natural birth, we are slaves to sin. By supernatural birth, we become slaves to God. Jesus put it this way. There are two roads in life. One is broad, and the other is narrow. The broad road leads to destruction. The narrow road leads to life.

That's the ultimate reason we should live a holy life, as God's joyful slaves. We know there are eternal consequences. Sin pays a costly wage. Thankfully, our Savior paid that debt for us. We who have received God's grace-gift possess eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Is it worth it to live a holy life? It sure is. It's worth it because of our calling, the change, and the consequences. I exhort you, in light of these incentives, to say no to sin and yes to the wonderful Master who offers you life in His glorious kingdom.

Make It Personal: Our joy is linked to two personal questions.

1. *Have I received God's gift?* The gift of God is eternal life. The gift of God is the life God offers *in Christ*. To really live you must know Christ. You must receive God's gift.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (John 3:16).”

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:23-25).”

“God demonstrated His love for us in this, while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).”

Have you accepted God's amazing gift? If not, I invite you to do so right now. And if you have, you need to do something else.

2. *Am I living in light of God's gift?* We who are in Christ must daily choose to live like it. We are no longer slaves to sin, so let's live like it. We are slaves to God for righteousness, so let's live like it. All to the glory of God and His amazing grace!

**Closing Song:** #201 “*Grace Greater Than Our Sin*” (sing all four verses)

Community Group Discussion:

1. Today we're concluding our series, *No Longer a Slave to Sin*. How has the Lord used this series in your life? What have you learned about Him and yourself?

2. After reading today's passage, Romans 6:19-23, discuss the title of the message, *Joyful Slaves of God*. The words don't seem to go together, do they? Joyful slaves? Slaves of God? How is slavery the means of our fullest joy?

3. In verse 19 we are told to present our members as “slaves to righteousness”. What does this mean? How does it “lead to sanctification” as the rest of the verse states?

4. What do we learn about freedom in verse 20? In verse 22? How is this concept of freedom different from what the world believes about freedom?

5. Verse 23 is a familiar and wonderful verse which is often used in evangelistic presentations. But what is this verse actually saying in its context? How can it bring great hope to us as Christians this week?