

ROMANS 6:12-23 "Slaves Of God, Or Slaves Of The World
Which Are You?"

THEREFORE!..... This is how our text starts this morning. The general rule of thumb is that when we see such words as therefore we go back a few verses to see what the THEREFORE is there for.

Last week we ended with Rom 6:10-11 "The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

Paul is demonstrating how Jesus is alive and how death has no influence on Him. In the same way, we are to count ourselves dead to sin. The word "count" in the NIV which is the word "consider" in the NAS and "reckon" in the KJV is the Greek word *logizomai*, and it means to take an inventory; estimate.

Paul is saying to carefully take an inventory of God's truth; the reality of your relationship to God through Christ, and then act on the truth in such a way as to live in that truth by the new power we have in Christ through the Spirit.

If Christ is alive then we need to take inventory of the new life we have in Him. If Christ is not subject to death and the power of sin then we must take inventory of that truth in our lives and see how we are walking in that truth.

None of this is to suggest that we are like Christ, in the sense that we are sinless, or that we can attain unto perfection in this life. Paul is simply saying that we need to consider or reckon ourselves to be what Christ has made us and declared us to be in Him.....
Delivered from sin's dominion and penalty.

If we've been given this new life in Christ are we in fact living in that life or are we entertaining the life of sin from which we've been delivered?

This is Paul's point and in case there is any temptation to wonder how we should view ourselves he says in verse 11..... "count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

If we are alive in Christ then THEREFORE a particular result must be taking place. A particular outward manifestation must necessarily be showing the inward reality of life we have in Christ, who has given us this life.

Rom 6:12 "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

If we are dead to sin because of the life we've been given by Christ, then let us not allow sin to be our master. Don't let it reign in your mortal body.

The word reign means to rule. Who is to be ruling and reigning in us? The One who has purchased us from the old master of sin. We have a new Master who will not share us with the old one.

However, our old nature in Adam, whose reign has been broken in Christ, doesn't like the idea of being rendered powerless and so it wants to re-assume a position of ruling in our bodies.

This is where the battle lays for each of us. Who will we serve? The nature of death or Christ who purchased our freedom from that death with His own life?

Paul recognizes that all of us are confronted with this problem. But he will not recognize that we have the excuse to choose sin, thereby conceding to its power.

He says, 'if you've been given life in Christ then don't live in death which allows sin to continue to reign.' But Paul doesn't put the blame on the old nature, he places the responsibility squarely on us who are new creatures in Christ.

It's a matter of choice and obedience. There is no excuse as, 'the devil made me do it, or the old man is just too powerful.' That's a lie. How can the old nature be more powerful than God who has given us His Spirit? "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

This is what Paul means to say in Rom 6:13 "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

What is it going to be? Instruments of wickedness or instruments of righteousness? It's either one or the other.

"Do not offer the parts of your body to sin." This language is not limited to hands and feet and legs and arms. The parts or members of our body would also include our intellect, our will and our emotions.

In other words, don't let sin dominate any area of your life. Once it does it will inevitably affect the other members. A little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough.

You can't toy with a little sin thinking that it won't affect other areas of your life. And the result, according to the word of God, is that if you allow sin to reign then you have in effect given yourself to the enemy.

In fact, the word instrument, when speaking of instruments of wickedness or instruments of righteousness is a military term denoting a weapon.

Your life is a weapon which can either be used against the Kingdom of God or for the King of kings to be used to fight against the "rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

This is the point Paul is making in Eph 6:10-12 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Though we struggle with the old nature, also known as the Adamic nature or the sinful nature, that nature is fueled by the enemy with his temptations and deceptions. Our struggle is spiritual in nature and we've been given the Spirit of God to overcome; the Spirit of God who was given to us so that we may be more than conquerors in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, "offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

Rom 6:14 "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."

I like what Charles Hodge says..... "It is not a hopeless struggle in which the believer is engaged, but one in which victory is certain. It is a joyful confidence which the apostle here expresses, that the power of sin has been effectually broken, and that the triumph of holiness effectually secured by the work of Christ."

We are not under a system of law which requires perfect obedience and only brings condemnation. We are under God's grace which has given us life that we couldn't earn if we wanted to. This is why William Barclay in his commentary on Romans says, "The inspiration of the Christian comes, not from the fear of what God will do to him, but from the inspiration of what God has done for him."

Grace is undeserved. But grace is not to be viewed as some cheap excuse to continue to offer our bodies to sin with the idea that God will forgive anyhow.

We saw this in Rom 6:1 "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" The obvious answer is, 'May it never be.'

And now to drive the point home Paul repeats it in a little different way.

Rom 6:15 "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!"

And then he goes on to give us the true inspiration for our choosing to obey God rather than seeking self's pleasures and will.

Rom 6:16-18 "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."

There's a contrast here between slaves. And by the way, there are only two kinds of slaves in this world, in the spiritual sense; slaves of sin resulting in death, or slaves of God by faith, resulting in righteousness and obedience.

Paul is saying that when we choose to disobey God and seek after slavery found in sin, we show the world that we prefer the old master.

However, when we choose to walk after Christ we show the world that He is our Master who loved us and now resides in us so that we may tell the world that they no longer have to be enslaved to death and its ultimate outcome of separation from their Creator.

That's why Paul exclaims in Rom 6:17 "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted."

The teaching Paul refers to is the teaching concerning Christ and His gospel. He says, 'you've wholeheartedly obeyed and entrusted yourself by faith to your new Master'.

When we do anything wholeheartedly we put all of ourselves into it and this is what Paul implies. 'Your obedience came from wholeheartedly trusting God and His teachings which is the word of God.'

There's a direct correlation between the teachings, with which we've been entrusted (God's Word), and our ability to walk in the Spirit, which is what Paul is addressing here in our text by suggesting that with our new nature in Christ we no longer seek to walk in the flesh.

He puts it another way in Gal 5:24-25 "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

Gal 5:16 "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

What does it mean to live by the Spirit, so that we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature?

Sometimes to describe what something is it's necessary to show what it is not. And so we read another contrast between the two.

Rom 8:5-8 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man [Or mind set on the flesh] is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

To be Christians, led by the Spirit, our minds and wills must be actively engaged in seeking and understanding the word of God which is His will and then submitting to it as we seek His grace and strength to walk in His ways.

Rom 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."

This doesn't mean that the seat of our spirituality is our mind. But the mind can be used by God to help us know Him better so that our new man will be better equipped to move Godward.

Living in the Spirit is therefore to seek continually the eternal things of the Spirit and obey by faith.

2Co 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Our daily renewal is made sure because we were renewed, given life by the Spirit. And therefore our daily renewal is the fruit of our initial renewal or life in Christ by faith in Him.

Tit 3:4-6 "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior,"

The Spirit of God is actively at work in our lives renewing us on a daily basis, and the renewal process involves renewing our minds with the things of the Spirit; the word of God, prayer, fellowship, worship.

To neglect any of these means of the Spirit is to neglect our ability to be renewed by the Spirit as our Lord desires. Invariably, when we're not seeking the things of the Spirit, (where the things of this world grow strangely dim), then the things of this world become much more attractive and the flesh is being fed instead of the inner man renewed by the Spirit.

This is Paul's point in verse 17, that being a slave to sin, when you've delivered from the penalty and power of sin doesn't make sense.

In fact, being slaves of sin is put in the past tense. And then he goes on in Rom 6:18 "You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."

Our affections have been changed because our chains have been loosed. We find ourselves more and more hating the old sinful ways and loving the righteousness of our God and the holiness that He enables us to walk in.

It may not be a perfect walk, but it will be a holy walk because of our love for our new Master, who bought us, and removed us from the path of destruction we once loved.

Often times Paul will use analogies which he admits fall short of fully explaining the reality of our relationship to God, but he knows that without such simple analogies we may miss the point entirely.

And so he says in Rom 6:19 "I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. 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."

It's not as though they didn't have the mental capabilities to understand a deeper analogy, it's just that their spiritual lives were somewhat weak in accepting and putting into practice a more in depth, or more spiritual explanation.

Slavery was a common experience in the realm of these people, and so Paul naturally gravitates to something which was common to them all. We do the same thing today. It's not as though we're trying to speak down to anyone, we just want to use those illustrations which will be understood and accepted and will most effectively transmit the truth so that action will result in the lives of believers.

To the first century Christian slavery meant someone was bound to another person. Paul says, 'the person to whom you are bound will determine your service.'

When you were bound to sin, you sinned and were condemned. Now that you are bound to Christ you are to live unto His honor and glory and please Him.

Rom 6:20-21 "When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. 21 What benefit did you reap at that

time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"

For those who were slipping back into the ways of the world Paul brings to mind what kind of slavery they were moving towards. He reminds them that when they were slaves to their master SIN, they were free from the control of righteousness which is a positive way of stating a negative.

You were free from the control of righteousness, which means you were enslaved to disobedience and the desire to serve only self. Paul then asks, 'what benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of?'

There's a PSA, a public service announcement, on the radio which talks about AIDS..... The whole gist of the spot is to alert teenagers that what may appear to be only foolish behavior could result in death from the AIDS virus.

In this PSA, there are about 3 or 4 teenagers sitting around and discussing and laughing about the stupid things they did when they got high or drunk. 'I got so drunk one time that I put a table cloth on my head and stood up on the table and danced around.'

Another says, 'I got so high once that I couldn't stand up and I fell into a wall.... Ha,ha, ha...'

And then the last girl relays her "getting high" story and how it started out as something innocent and ended up with her getting AIDS from some stranger.

Paul is saying that there was a time in your life when sin seemed like a laugh. In fact, many people are proud of their sin. But Paul reminds them that there's nothing funny about sin, because it's very deadly. There are no benefits in it.

Rom 6:21 "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!"

If the things of the old nature could only result in death, then why, as though they were a laugh, to get entangled in all over again, knowing there's no benefit in them, would you want to become enslaved to those things again which not only dishonor you, but the God who saved you from that death?

Paul says, we are free!

Rom 6:22 "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."

He brings us full circle. Once you were lost, but now you've been found. Once you were blind, but now you see, to quote the song Amazing Grace.

This life is a constant contrast for the child of God and it's a continual choice to either serve self or God. But when those choices must be made, never forget what God has done for you.

"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."

There were no benefits being enslaved to sin where the only result was death. Being free from the penalty of sin, and its headlock effect and consequent death grip, is of great value. Because in Christ we are free and we are forgiven and it leads to the kind of life which produces the fruit of holiness which is the fruit of the Spirit.

In fact the phrase in verse 22 of the NIV says... "the benefit you reap leads to holiness. The NAS puts it "you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification."

The word benefit is taken from the Greek word *karpos* which means fruit. If you are alive in Christ then you will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

This is spoken of in Gal 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Notice that Paul doesn't say the fruits of the Spirit, which would suggest that the Spirit only gives us certain ones, like the gifts of the Spirit which are many, but not all given to everyone.

Rather, the fruit of the Spirit is all inclusive and suggests that if the Spirit resides in us, as He does with all Christians, then all aspects of His fruit, spoken of in Galatians, will be alive and growing in us.

Will I ever be patient? Will I ever demonstrate faithfulness as I ought, or is it only reserved for a select few as the Spirit decides to dole out certain fruits.

No. The Spirit is at work in our lives as He is conforming us into the image of Christ who has freed us from sin, in whom we are now enslaved as opposed to our former slavery in the world and the old nature, and who gives us the benefit or the fruit of that life in Him resulting in sanctification.

And what is the outcome of Christ being our new Master? Verse 22..... Eternal life.

The fruit of the Spirit is a gift from God as is the eternal life we have in Him alone. And even as we end chapter 6 Paul is still making contrasts concerning this.

Rom 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To try to earn God's favor will get you the wage you deserve. Death. Why? Because anything outside of God's provision for eternal life is sinful, because it's not based on faith in Christ alone for salvation.

Believe me we don't want what we deserve. We want a gift. We want mercy and grace. That gift, that grace, that love and mercy are all found in only one person. The Lord Almighty Jesus Christ, who is Savior.

When we leave here today no one will follow you home to keep a record of how you walk in the Spirit. But, the Lord is always with us, not to condemn, but to encourage us to walk after Him and love Him above all.

Let's not use grace as an excuse to sin. Let's see the grace of God for what it is. Totally undeserved and totally sufficient to bring us into a love relationship with the living God.

Rejoice in that relationship you have in Christ and seek the things of the Spirit daily so that you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

And don't ever forget that everything related to our walk with God is not by our might or by our power, but by the Spirit says the Lord.

I like the way Paul puts it in Col 1:9-14 "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. 10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in

every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, 11 being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."