

Bible e-Study on the book of Romans (6)

Slaves

20 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! 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. [Romans](#) 6:20-22

NUGGET – Verse 19 makes reference to St. Paul needing to use everyday images people understand, like slavery, to make his point. Slavery is something that people in his day lived with and even, according to our nugget verses, *offered* themselves to. People *CHOSE* to be slaves. That's not to say every slave chose that life, but it was a choice that people understood in that day very well. It was all around them and the point of these verses is to make clear that such a choice is what we all make as well day-by-day and hour-by-hour.

That is something they understood and we need to understand. Take careful note that these verses do not give you the choice to not be a slave! The juxtaposition in verse 22 of having "been set free" with having "become slaves" is not just happenstance. That's a deliberate pairing that St. Paul makes to drive home the point that we *are* slaves! That is the state of our earthly condition. Slavery is the given. Slavery and freedom are those points of human understanding that Paul employs for the benefit of his readers. And slavery is not an option you can 'opt out' of.

Look back up in verses 6&7 *6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be SLAVES to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set FREE from sin.* There St. Paul sets up what he explains in our nuggets verses – that we are set free from sin and, *AND*, that we are now free to be slaves of righteousness!

When Luther addresses verse 22 he speaks of how we become a slave. He says in the context of the verse, *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves, "THROUGH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH"* so says Martin. It is not by our will that we become slaves to God; rather it is by the gift of faith.

We are not set free to be free agents for ourselves. We are not set free to be free in the absolute sense. No one is free in that way. No, we are free *from* slavery to be become slaves of righteousness. And that of course is what Jesus did on the cross. He gave us his righteousness purchased there. He became *THE* to slave to sin, not His own (as He had none!), but He became the slave to our sin.

And in so doing He died the death we owed. And *that death* sets us free from sin (vs 7). We cannot be slaves anymore to that thing that held us captive under death – sin – because, in Jesus, we have *died* to sin, and so we are set free from it! We are now free to live our everyday lives as slaves under the righteousness of Jesus. And the reward of that is what happened to Jesus, not death but life – eternal life!

APPLICATION -

1. When you put on your watch you make yourself a slave to time. We live by the minutes and hours that pass on over the face of that watch. As you bind yourself to your watch, let that remind you that God has bound Himself to you in the blood of Jesus Christ. That He has set you free by faith from the slavery to sin *we* had bound ourselves under. We are free now to live those minutes and hours and days under the service, in slavery to, the righteousness that is our in Jesus Christ.

PRAY – O Lord grant that we live our days in joyful and grateful service to You. You have granted us the righteousness won on Your cross by Your holy and innocent suffering and death. May Your mercy be reflected through us day-by-day. In Your holy name, amen.