

Romans 6:15-23 Small Group Question and Answer Sheet

1. How does Romans 6:15-23 relate to what Paul has been saying in Romans 6:1-14

Answer: Romans 6:1 is a parallel question with verse 15. The difference is that Paul is asking two different questions. The first is an answer to a possible objection that “If grace abounds much more where sin abounded then we should go in sinning so that grace will abound.” That is the reason for the question in verse 1. In verse 15, Paul is answering a possible objection based on what he has said in verse 14. Someone might respond to what Paul has said by suggesting that “If we are no longer under law (*i.e.* under its power, dominion and condemnation) then we can continue to sin.” Paul is asking and answering two distinct yet related questions in this chapter.

2. What is similar and what is different about how Paul answers his question in verse 1 and how he answers his question in verse 15?

Answer: Paul answers the question in verse 1 by explaining that we have died with Christ to sin’s power (*i.e.* we have been definitively sanctified) vv. 2-14; whereas, he answers the question in verse 15 by going further and saying that we have not only been set free from sin’s power—now we have become slaves of righteousness.

3. Why does Paul use the slavery illustration?

Answer: While he sees its limitation (see v. 19), Paul realizes that it is the most adequate way to explain what is true of all men. Either you are a slave of sin or you are a slave of righteousness. You serve one of those two masters, and must necessarily serve them by the very fact that you are dead in sins or alive in Christ. Every man, woman and child lives in one of those two realities.

4. What are the two effects of living as a slave or sin or as a slave of righteousness?

Paul explains throughout the text that a slave of sin will reap death. They will reap death because it is the “wages” of unrighteousness and lawlessness. In contrast, a slave of righteousness will get everlasting life. The difference, however, is that everlasting life is not the “wages” of our righteousness. It is “the free gift of God in Christ Jesus” (v. 23). The fruit of our being slaves of righteousness through our union with Christ is sanctification (v. 22). That is a significant difference. If we said that the “wages” of our living holy lives was eternal life, that would be legalism. Eternal life is the wages of Jesus’ saving work for us.

5. Does Paul tell the believers in Rome that they have to “Do” something to become slaves of righteousness?

No. He explains what has already happened to them in Christ. Sinclair Ferguson puts this so well when he writes: “There's something in me that keeps saying to Paul, 'Just make it simple for me. Just give me three things to do'...and he's saying, 'Oh don't you get it? Don't you see that the single most important thing for you to understand, if you're going to live the Christian life in the sweet grace of Jesus Christ, is to understand who you now are in Jesus Christ--before you DO?’”

6. What should we do with these truths?

These are truths that we need to meditate on and believe on a daily basis. We need the Gospel—and the realities that the Gospel brings to bear on our lives—to sink down into our minds and hearts. Again, Sinclair Ferguson explains: “We're so interested in doing a few things that will make a difference that we don't have the patience to understand that the Gospel needs to make a difference to us. Paul will come on to this in chapter 12 verse 1 and 2...when he answers the question, 'What is it that transforms lives?' And his answer? 'It's what happens in people's minds--first of all; it's when we take the Gospel in and the revolutionary transformation that it makes to our identity.’” - Sinclair Ferguson on Romans 6:15-23

7. When you examine your life—with all of its accompanying sin—what is the mark that you are not a slave to sin, but to Christ?

Even though I continue to have the remnant of sin and corruption in my nature, I love righteousness and hate sin. Even when I sin, I am grieved by and do not want to fall into it. I want to be free from sin's remaining effect on my life. I long to walk in paths of righteousness and to be pleasing to the gracious master who has set me free from its enslaving power through His death and resurrection.