

The Miserable Service Of Sin And The Profitable Service Of Righteousness.

Text: Rom 6:19-23

1) The miserable service of sin

Suggested Hymns:

2) The profitable service of righteousness

440, 388, 353, 839T320, 377

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Romans 6:19–23, *¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*

²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Apostle says of the subject which he has under consideration, *¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.* The subject which the Apostle has under consideration is: *Whether the grace of God permits Christians to sin.*

We know that God forgives us our sins of His own free grace and mercy, for the sake of our Saviour Jesus who died for us, and we know that God never tires of forgiving, that He is always ready and willing to forgive, and that He never refuses us when in true repentance we come to Him after we have sinned.

May we commit sin, then, knowing as we do that God will forgive us? May we think that we can sin just as we please, and rely on the restoring mercy and

condoning grace of our God? Most emphatically St. Paul answers this question in the negative.

And to bring this matter home to them, to explain it the more, to convince the Romans that it is a wrong and blasphemous conclusion to think that you can sin as you please because you know that God will forgive you, he says, ¹⁹ ***I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.***

In other words, he is telling us, *Let me speak to you of this important subject as you speak among yourselves. It is the weakness of your flesh, it is your own unenlightened human reason which draws this fatal conclusion that you may sin because God is merciful. Let me show you that this conclusion is wrong, by an illustration which you will readily understand.*

And now he introduces an illustration with which every Roman was quite familiar. At that time Rome was filled with slaves whom the Roman armies had brought from all parts of the world into the capital city, and who, after each conquering tour, were sold to the highest bidder.

Nothing was better known to the average Roman than the relationship of master and servant. So the Apostle pictures both, sinning and righteous living, as a service, and shows what a miserable service the service of sin is, and what a profitable service is the service of righteousness.

Let us therefore consider *The Miserable Service Of Sin And The Profitable Service Of Righteousness*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Miserable Service Of Sin.

Our text begins, ¹⁹ ***I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.***

The service of sin is, in the first place, a service of uncleanness, and leads from iniquity to iniquity. How can you, as a child of God, consent to sin when you are tempted, and do the thing which you know is wrong, and which God has forbidden, expecting to obtain forgiveness?

Is the service of sin a praiseworthy service? Is it a noble act to sin? Is it not a service of uncleanness, a degrading service which stains your character and makes you look hideous in the sight of God and man?

You have been cleansed with the blood of Jesus Christ; how, then, can you return to the filth from which you have been washed clean? And if once you consent to sin, and do not forthwith return in true repentance; if once you enter upon the fatal course, where is the end?

Having once chosen sin for your master, will you not soon be the most miserable slave? Look at the drunkard! There was a beginning in his downward career. He consented to sin. He did not resist. He kept on until he was swallowed up in the vortex, and what a miserable slave has he made of himself!

Look at the sensualist! It was love to sin which delivered him into the hands of the devil, and so he went on from sin to sin until he is hopelessly gone, perhaps a physical wreck in the very prime of life and a living carcass.

This is the curse of sin, that it makes a miserable slave of the sinner, and leads him from iniquity to iniquity, from one sin to another. Woe to the person who falls a prey to that unquenchable tyrant!

It is, furthermore, a service, which renders free from righteousness, as the Apostle continues, ²⁰ *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

The reckless sinner often boasts of his liberty, of his freedom, that he can do just as he pleases. How often we hear the unbelieving children of this world, who do not connect themselves with any church, boast of their freedom and independence!

And when you Christian young men and Christian young women are enticed by seducers who want to coax you into some sin, perhaps to go to a place you know you should not go and you refused to join them, do they not sneer at you and say, "*Oh, you belong to a church; you must act the part of a holy one; you are afraid that the pastor might get after you! While as for me, I am free; I do as I please; I am old enough to look out for myself, and will not let anybody interfere with me!*"

Yes, you reckless sinner, you are free. But you are not to be envied the liberty which you have. You are to be pitied for the freedom of which you make such a great boast. You are free from righteousness. You are without God in the world. You are without anything that is pleasing to your divine Maker.

You are an abomination in the sight of God, and He looks down upon you in His anger and wrath as long as you abuse those members of yours, which He has given you for a better and nobler purpose, because you use them in the service of sin.

And, finally, it is a service which brings shame and eternal death, which is the wages of sin. The Apostle says, ²¹ *What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.*

Sin brings shame. How true that is! Who can describe the inward shame which sin often brings to the sinner? St. Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, speaks of those people who have their conscience seared with a hot iron;¹ and what must the sinner suffer inwardly when that stern monitor, the voice of conscience, is roused, accusing, censuring, condemning him, and leading him into despair!

And how miserable the outward shame makes which sin brings to the sinner when his iniquity is exposed and made known before the world so that he is made to feel as though he could not show his face! And such shame is not the worst fruit of sin.

A man may lull his conscience into a fast sleep, and not be ashamed of his misdeeds; and he may escape exposure of his sin, and be honoured and esteemed in the world in spite of his shameful transgression. But he will not escape exposure in the hereafter.

If he does not repent of his sin and find forgiveness in Jesus' blood and righteousness before he quits this life, his sin will follow him into eternity and bring him into eternal damnation. "*The wages of sin is death,*" says the Apostle. Eternal death in hell and torment is the pay which the sinner receives for his evil deeds. Truly, sin is not a thing to be played and trifled with. Every child of God should be careful not to yield his members to the service of sin!

2. The Profitable Service Of Righteousness.

But rather we should yield our members servants to righteousness, as the Apostle says. The profitable service of righteousness is the second part of our meditation.

Here, in the first place, let us call attention to the fact that the service of righteousness is a service which only a true child of God can render. The unbeliever may lead a moral life, a life which is blameless in the sight of men, he may abstain from gross sins, be generous, good and kind, and do good everywhere; but he cannot yield his members servants to righteousness.

Scripture says in Romans 14:23 that *whatever is not from faith is sin*. And as long as you have not been changed from a child of this world to a child of God, all your outward good deeds are just as many sins in the sight of God.

Faith alone can make you capable of serving to righteousness unto holiness, faith in the Saviour Jesus who bled and died on the cross for your sins. And then the service of righteousness will not be slavery; it will not make you miserable and wretched, as the service of sin does.

Faith will make you willing to serve with gladness. You will find pleasure and delight in the service of righteousness. You will desire to lead a pious, godly and holy life on this earth, and always try to do better, even though sin clings to you, and you daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment.

But although the old man of sin within you be ever so powerful and strong, the new man who has been created within you in regeneration will enable you to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and will make you willing and pleased to serve to righteousness unto holiness.

This service of righteousness is a service which brings the most desirable fruit, as the Apostle says, ²² *But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life*.

Holiness is, in one word, the fruit which you will reap if you yield your members servants to righteousness. In his Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul gives a more detailed description of this fruit where he says in Galatians 5:22–23, ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control*.

Are not these the most desirable virtues? Is it not much better to be adorned with such Christian virtues and to have a good conscience than to serve sin, to do wrong, and to feel miserable? Is it not more profitable, even in an earthly way, to do right than to do wrong?

Will not even the honourable children of this world respect, honour, and esteem the righteous man with Christian virtues, while they despise the slave of sin?

Blessed, therefore, is the person who is freed from sin, freed from the bondage and from the curse of sin through faith in the Saviour Jesus Christ, and a servant to God! He is truly free, and his liberty is not a vain delusion as is that of the servant of sin. He serves a good master because he is a servant of God, while the slave of sin is the devil's servant.

His is a truly profitable service because it brings the fruit of holiness, while the servant of sin enjoys his sinful pleasure only for a short time, and is made miserable both in this life and in the life which is to come.

Finally, there is a blessed termination of the service of righteousness. The Apostle says, *and the end, everlasting life*. But here we must observe that we do not obtain eternal life in compensation for our righteous living. There is no relation of cause and effect here.

We do not get eternal life because we have been good and have done good in this life. The Apostle distinctly says at the end of our text, *but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

Do you hear that, my friends? You cannot obtain eternal life in any other way than as a gift of God, as an unmerited present, which He extends to you of His free grace, and in no other way does God extend to you this free gift of eternal life than through Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ has gained eternal life for you by His redemptive work, by His fulfilment of the Law, and by His suffering and death, by His merits which you must apprehend and make your own through faith. But the bliss of eternal life is preceded by the service of righteousness upon this earth.

If you are truly making for heaven, you will show it and prove it in this life by your walk and conversation, by following after holiness, by righteous living.

May the Lord grant us all, His grace that we perceive what a miserable thing is the service of sin, and what a profitable service is the service of righteousness. May He strengthen us all to shun sin and to walk in true holiness to the glory of His holy name! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Timothy 4:2