

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

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In the very first verse of the book, Apostle Paul refers to himself as a bondservant of Christ. A bondservant was a slave who after being freed voluntarily serves his master, once he had submitted himself to the master's service he would serve that master for the rest of his life. As Christians today we celebrate the freedom Christ has given us but have we ever considered that He would love for us to voluntarily submit ourselves to Him as bondservants, why would He want that? Read on.

Romans 6:15-19

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 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.

Once again the Apostle uses this method of asking a question and immediately answering it himself, a method commonly used by the Rabbis. He asked that since they were under grace and not under legal obligation should they continue in sin; his answer is a very adamant "No". He then explains that when they choose to sin they submit themselves to the sinful nature and eventually will become enslaved by it once again. The solution to this is to submit to righteousness, i.e. to live in obedience to the doctrine (teaching) that they have received. Those who become enslaved to sin will reap the consequence of death but those who obey the teaching will become righteous. Just as they were once slaves to sin, meaning they could not help but to follow their sinful nature now they were to submit themselves as slaves to righteousness, people who could do nothing else except that which was in accordance to the teachings of God.

The Apostle tells the believers, especially the Gentiles, that they were to live in obedience to the doctrine that they had received. What doctrine was that? The New Testament was still in the process of being written, so the only doctrine that they received was teaching from the Tanak, the Old Testament. Remember in those days the only place one could go to hear teaching on the Word was in the synagogue. So what Apostle Paul is telling Gentiles is that they should obey the Tanak. This was the only set of laws that taught what we call Judeo-Christian morality in those days. His emphasis on submitting the members of the body to either sin or righteousness implies that he is speaking of sexual sin in particular. He would not have had to emphasize it so strongly to Jewish believers but the Gentile believers who were coming out of a very immoral society needed strong teaching on this.

Whilst we enjoy the position of being a child of God and the freedom Messiah has given us, we see in this passage that Messiah is calling us to submit ourselves voluntarily to Him as slaves so that we always to choose to do what is right.



Romans 6:20-23

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

Notice the Apostle says “when you were slaves to sin”, indicating that he was not speaking about himself; we know that all are sinners but he says that they were free in regard to righteousness. This tells us that he was speaking to people who originally did not know God’s standard of righteousness given in the Torah, these then were people who did not have Torah i.e. Gentiles who had recently come to faith. He asks them what benefit did they reap from that life and gives the answer; death. Now he says they have been set free from the power of sin they have become slaves to God the benefit is holiness leading to eternal life in Messiah Yeshua. The consequence of sin is death but the gift of God through Messiah Yeshua is eternal life.

One principle we learn here is that sanctification is a process, one that goes on throughout our life in this world as we submit ourselves more and more to God we are set apart more and more and will ultimately reap the reward of eternal life in Messiah. Salvation is both a one-time thing as well as a daily walk. God save us once when we place our faith in Yeshua yet He calls us to live in obedience day by day. Yet we cannot do this in our own strength therefore we need to rely on His grace every day to help us overcome and live the life He calls to. His grace is sufficient for us.

