

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Free from Sin, Part 1

Scripture: Romans 6:15-18

Code: 45-48

Well, tonight we're going to be looking back at Romans chapter six, and before I formally get into the message, let me just say how deeply appreciative I am of your faithfulness in coming. I have just been thrilled with the full church because this is difficult. It strains us to comprehend it in many ways. We have to think along with the thoughts of the apostle Paul. We have to have our mind in gear. I'm reminded of what Peter said about Paul in 2 Peter 3:16, that in all his epistles he speaks of things which are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other Scriptures. Paul did say things that were hard to be understood. Peter even confessed to that, and I confess to it, and I know you do as well.

So, it's been very gratifying to have such faithfulness as we've gone through these very, very closely-knit theological discussions of the apostle Paul in the Roman epistle. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have been very, very intricate, very profound. Theological education in brief, believe me, occurs when one studies these great portions of Scripture.

Now, tonight we come to the second half of Romans 6, and as we look at Romans 6:15 to 23, I want to title this section, "Free from sin. Free from sin." Let me read you verses 15 to 23 so you'll have it in mind as we approach it.

"What then? Shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether to sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness. But God be thanked that whereas ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things of which ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus said in John 8:34, "Whosoever commits sin is the slave of sin." All men who live a life of committing sin are slaves to that sin. In fact, every person who comes into this world is under the

tyranny of sin. It controls their thoughts. It controls their words. It controls their actions. To put in the terminology of Romans 6, verse 17, "Ye were the slaves of sin." Verse 20, "Ye were - " again " - the slaves of sin." Twice in that passage. He says you used to be slaves, *doulos*, bondslaves to sin. And the ultimate end of being a slave to sin we found in verse 21 at the end, "For the end of those things is death." And verse 23, the beginning of the verse, "For the wages of sin is death." To be a slave of sin is to die. Sin ultimately kills.

And when you think about what it means to be a slave to sin, it's a horrifying thought. Years ago, Dr. Guthrie's great words, prosaic words about sin were written. They have become very insightful, even in this society and perhaps will give you a feeling for what it means to be a slave to sin. He wrote this; "Sin is a debt, a burden, a thief, a sickness, a leprosy, a plague, a poison, a serpent, a sting. Everything that man hates, sin is. A load of curses and calamities beneath whose crushing intolerable pressure, the whole creation groans. Who is the undertaker that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is the sorceress that first deceives and then damns his soul? Sin. Who with icy breath blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Sin. Who changes gentle children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters, and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocence? Sin. Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by division in the church rends Christ's seamless robe? Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite asleep and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who, winning smile on her face, honeyed flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality, and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair siren is this who seated on a rock by the deadly pool smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray and flings her arms around our neck to leap with us into perdition? Sin. Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne and impels sinners mad as Gadarene swine to run down the precipice into a lake of fire? Sin."

Sin, that terrible life-wrecking, soul-damning reality which clings like incurable cancer to the human breast and ultimately devastates, sin to which men are enslaved. And men cry to be free from sin, but they cannot. They run to flee its guilt, but they cannot find relief. And because men are the slaves of sin, this passage is so marvelous because it says in verse 20, verse 18 and 22, "Being then made free from sin," and verse 22, "But now being made free from sin." That this passage becomes to all those haunted by their sin, a promise of deliverance, free from sin. What a great thought. Sin which devastates, sin which destroys, sin which kills.

The greatest gift that God could ever give a human being, bar none, would be to be free from sin, free from sin; to be restored to the place of righteousness, to be able to fulfill all that we were intended to be when God made us before sin invaded our human stream. Free from sin. What a thought! From its penalty, from its power and from its debilitating and killing presence, free! I can't think of a more

wonderful thought than that, can you? So, this masterful passage is all about being free from sin, and you ought to really find a tremendous amount of comfort here and a great cause for rejoicing.

Now, remember that Paul is discussing the great doctrine of sanctification, which is connected to the doctrine of justification. And now having discussed that in chapters 3, 4 and 5, he is showing the result of that, and the result of that we saw in the first half of chapter 6 is to be made holy. And the result of that in the second half of chapter 6 is to be made free from sin. And to be honest with you, folk, they're one and the same. And Paul is just looking at the same great reality from two angles. And so in this chapter we learn the great reality of what sanctification is, and we also learn the great reality of how it is connected to justification. When we were saved, when we were redeemed and made right with God, it was to make us holy and free from sin. That was the intention.

Now, we learned in the first fourteen verses of the chapter that we're united with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, and thus we have died to sin and risen to walk in newness of life. The penalty for sin has been paid in that death. The power for sin has been broken, and we walk now in newness of life, alive to God. And now in verses 15 to 23, Paul demonstrates that we are made holy in another analogy. Not only have we died in Christ and risen in Christ and now are walking in a new life, having died to the old one, but we also have become slaves to God and in so doing the slavery to sin which was characteristic of our former life has been broken. So, he really is coming at the same thing from two different perspectives. He shows the believer has a totally new relationship to sin after salvation, different than before because he died in Christ and rose in Christ and because he has a new master which obviates the old master. That's the thrust of the second half of the chapter. And in both cases, his point is to show that a truly regenerated person cannot go on in the same pattern of sinning that was characteristic of his life before he was saved. Why? Because we are no longer in the same relation to sin. We have died in Christ and risen. We have now, in the second half of the chapter, a new master which means we no longer are under the old master.

So, whether you look at it from the first half or the second half of the chapter, you're going to see the same thing. A truly justified, redeemed, saved individual is going to have a different relationship to sin than he ever had before. It cannot continue as it was.

Now, I want you to look at this passage, it's a very simple passage, although on the surface it appears to be perhaps difficult. We're going to break it down and take a few elements tonight and a few elements next time, but let's start with the antagonist. We used that same kind of little outline for the first half of the chapter and the second follows the same thought. It begins with a proposed question. We'll call this the antagonist. And by that, I mean the one who's antagonistic toward Paul's doctrine of salvation by grace. The legalist can't tolerate that, that grace kind of thing. And this is what, typically, they would say, verse 15, "What then?" I mean, if we're saved by grace, and if as you've just said in verse 14 we're no longer under the law, "Shall we sin then because we're not under the law but under grace?"

In other words, to some people who are legalistic, grace appears like a license, grace appears like lawlessness. I mean, when you come to a group of people like the Jewish people who all their lifelong have been trying to earn their way into heaven by good works and you say to them, "All your good works are nothing but filthy rags, they don't mean a single thing. You can be saved by the free gift of God given to unworthy sinners." That's very hard for them to handle. It sounds like lawlessness. It sounds like liberty to sin. It sounds like it doesn't matter how you live, and that's where the antagonist comes in. He is saying, "Look, if you preach this message of salvation by grace, in other words, that I don't do anything to get saved, and I can't do anything to get saved, and none of my goodness matters in my salvation, and it's all grace and God is going to forgive me, and I'm not under the law and I'm under grace, then, boy, you've just turned me loose."

Well, Paul's answer in the first half of the chapter is simply this. No, we haven't turned you loose because God's put in you a new nature and your new nature, your new creation, your new self, your new identity isn't going to do that. You understand that? And if you do do that, you indicate that you're not under grace and you're not a recreation at all.

So, the first antagonist question came in verse 1 and it was, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And now the question is much like it, "Shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace?" The idea is the same. Does the doctrine of salvation by grace give freedom to sin in an unrestrained way? And that is the accusation that is made against this doctrine. And you can imagine that in the context of the Jewish society in which Paul ministered that they would be just saying, "Wait a minute, you can't go around doing that." And that's why, for example, when he preached in Galatia in the cities of that territory known as Galatia, and he preached salvation by grace through faith, the Jewish people followed him along, and they came into all those churches and said, "No, no, no, no, no. You've got to be circumcised. You've got to keep all the law of Moses, and if you do that, then you can come to Christ."

And Paul had to write Galatians and say, "Don't you let anybody bewitch you. Don't let anybody add works to your gracious salvation. If anybody comes along and preaches that, I don't care who it is, even an angel, let him be accursed." The doctrine of grace stands, folks. With all the accusation, it still stands. And there have always been those critics who said the doctrine of grace leads to lawlessness. This is the criticism of the antagonist, and may I say to you what I said earlier in our study? Grace preaching and grace teaching always is liable to this charge. It always is. It always exposes itself to this criticism, but we aren't going to change it because I'm not afraid of that. I'm not afraid of saying to someone, "You come to Jesus Christ by grace, that is by God's free gift of salvation independent of anything you've ever done and disregarding everything you've ever done; you come by grace and I believe if you do, God will create you anew, as the Bible says, and you're not going to go out and abuse the reality of that grace." Now, you may abuse it now and then but it isn't going to be an utter life style.

So, the antagonist asks the question, back at verse 15 again, "Shall we sin?" Deliberately, is the idea, persistently, continuously, habitually. Shall we now who have been delivered from being under the law, and by that he does not mean that we are no longer responsible to obey God's Word. What he means is under a system of law, righteousness; under a system of law, salvation; under a system of works; righteousness. Since we've been delivered from trying to earn our salvation, since it's a free gift of grace, that's what under grace means, shall we just go on and sin? Does grace free us to do that?

Well, the answer again, first point is the antagonist, here's the second point, the answer. *M genoito*, verse 15, the Greek says. The Authorized translates it "God forbid." And it could be translated "No, no, no, not on your life. No way. Impossible, ridiculous, absolutely not." It is an utterly unacceptable thought. To even ask the question is to prove you're not a Christian. And believe me, there have been people who have done this.

I can remember that there was a lot of this activity going on about 12 or 13 years ago out here. And I was having conversations with some college students who were saying, "Man, I've just gotten into what they were calling 'super grace' and I don't have to confess my sin, and God doesn't care what I do and, boy, I'm free in grace and I can live anyway I want to live. And just sow my oats and just I'm under grace." And the very continued life style which they exhibited was seemingly evidence enough to me that they never did know what it was to be under grace because grace not only grants an undeserved salvation, it transforms a life. And the pattern is changed, the pattern of sin.

So, the antagonist is in verse 15 and the answer is in verse 15. No, no, no, no. But Paul doesn't just give you short answers like that, he explains them. So, come to verse 16 with me and let's look at the axiom, the axiom. What is an axiom? It's a general truth. An axiom is something you don't prove; it's self-evident. It doesn't need proof because it's obvious, and that is exactly what you have here. You have a very simple axiom stated. And it starts out by saying, "Know ye not?" The assumption is that you know this. "Don't you know this, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey?" A very simple axiom. If you sign up to serve a certain master, you're bound to serve that master. I mean, it doesn't take a brilliant person to figure that axiom out. It is obvious. It is self-evident. It's simply saying this, a slave is bound to obey his master by the very nature of his slavery. I mean, that's what slavery is. If you sign up to be a slave to somebody, you sign up to obey them. That's just axiomatic, and that is the essence of what Paul wants to get across, a very important point. If you give yourself to any master, you become the slave of the master.

Look at it again in verse 16. "To whom you yield yourselves –" *doulos* to obey, servants or slaves, " - his servants ye are whom ye obey." I mean, you do it because you yielded yourself. Now particularly is that not true when you willingly yielded yourself to that individual. You give yourself to a master, and you become the slave of that master. That's obvious.

Then he goes on in verse 16 and makes an application. "Whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness." Now he personifies these two masters. One is sin and one is obedience. Sin, by the way, is disobedience, right? So one could said to be disobedience and the other obedience, and to what standard do we either obey or disobey? God, right? So, the whole issue then is some people yield themselves servants of disobedience to God, and some people yield themselves servants of obedience to God.

To put it in the terms of chapter 5, men are either in Adam or in Christ. To put it in the terms, that's 5:17, of chapter 5:21, men are either under the reign of sin or the reign of grace. So, in this sense, you're either serving sin or you're serving obedience. Now let me just say it as clear as I can. There are only two options, people. That's all, just two. There's no middle ground. Two to choose from. You choose to serve sin or you choose to serve obedience. You choose to obey God or you choose not to obey God. And if you don't obey God, you become the subject or you are naturally the subject of the prince of the power of the air, Satan himself. It is a universal law then that a man becomes a slave of whatever master he commits himself to, just a simple axiomatic principle.

It is also axiomatic in that same principle that you never can serve two masters. You are committed to one or the other. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve – " what? " - two masters; for either you love one and hate the other, or you hold to the one and despise the other." And in that case, he said, you can't serve God and money. You can't serve two masters. It is the nature of slavery that you can't have two people giving you orders if you're a slave. Once you've chosen your master, by the very definition of that act, you become bound in obedience to that master.

Now that's the basic substantive axiom that the rest of the text flows from. Just as we saw in the first 14 verses, the idea that we were buried with Christ and we've risen with Christ. Here, the idea is the slavery analogy. When you became a Christian, what did you say, in effect? I submit myself to whom? To God through Christ.

Now let me put it as simply as I can. There is no salvation apart from such a conscious submission. That would destroy Paul's whole point here. When you come to Christ, you come as a slave to a master, as a servant to the Lord. No other terms. And when you say, "I come as a slave or a servant to the Lord and Master," you are affirming your commitment to be subject to Him.

Now if you are – back to verse 16 – if you are the slave of sin, what does it lead to? Death. And we're going to hear that a few times before we get to verse 23. And if you are the slave of obedience, what does it lead to? Righteousness. Sin leads to sin, leads to sin, leads to sin, leads to death. Sin begets sin, begets sin, begets sin, begets death. "Men," says Charles Hodge, "hurry on from one degrading service to another until it wrecks their ruin."

But, on the other hand, if you serve obedience and obedience is personified at this point as if it were a master, if you serve obedience, it leads to righteousness, to righteousness, to righteousness. And as we shall find in verse 23, ultimately to what? Eternal life. So, you have your choice. That's your choice. You can be a slave to sin which you are by nature, or you can be a slave to God, which you are by new creation.

Now let me say something very important at this juncture. One who comes to God through Christ and says, "I take you as my Savior, Master and Lord," is not, listen to me, and this is Paul's whole point here, he is not only ethically bound, he is not only ethically bound to obey, he is creatively made to obey. And that is a very important truth. When you become a Christian, it is not simply that you are ethically bound to obedience; it is that you are creatively made unto obedience.

And if you have any question about that, then you don't understand Ephesians 2, which says that we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has before not wished or not hoped or not wanted but ordained that we should what? Walk in them. Salvation is unto good works, without equivocation. So note that because many people have fouled up in Romans 6 because they don't understand that concept. Paul here is not talking about an ethical binding, that is a binding of moral conscience. He's talking about a remaking of the nature of an individual so that the obedience factor is a reality. There is an ethical reality there as well, but it begins with a creative fact and moves to an ethical responsibility.

So, Paul is dealing, now mark this, with a state of being, with a fact; not an ought, not a command. You say, "Well, what you're trying to say then is that everybody who is saved is transformed." You got it. In the first 14 verses we saw the transformation through the figure of death and resurrection, right? Here we see the transformation through the analogy of having, in a sense, died to the old slavery to live to the new slavery. In the next chapter, chapter 7, we're going to see the same analogy, only that time it will be in a marriage situation where you've got a former husband and a new husband. And Paul is banging the same thing, that there is a new creation. And even though we are in the presence of our bodies, even though we still possess the flesh, even though we can only experience imperfect holiness, we will obey. We must obey. It is an essential in our new creation.

Now, if you want to see a comparative text on this, Colossians 1:21 would be helpful. "And you - " that's us, " - that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." Now when God reconciled us at the cross, something happened. You say, "Yes, He brought us to God." That's right, but something else happened, look at this. He reconciled us to present us holy and unblamable and unreprouvable - " where? " - in His sight."

Now you can go back to Romans. When God redeemed us, that new creation became holy and it will issue in a consequential behavior change. Obedience – listen, I’ll say it another way –obedience is a certainty in the life of a truly justified person. Now that is not to say that there won’t be sin there, and that is not to say that there won’t be times when that sin appears to dominate. But obedience will be there if obscured even at some points.

And so, we can say if a person continues in unmitigated and continued habitual, persistent, willing sin as he did before he supposedly came to Christ that no matter what he thinks, he’s not a Christian. So the very fact of the question asked in verse 15 is ludicrous for someone to say, “Well, then, if we’ve come under grace and we’re not under law, let’s just sin like mad.” You show by asking such a question that you’re not even a Christian. If you continue as a slave to sin, 1 John says you could not belong to God. You couldn’t. First John 1:6, “If we say we have fellowship with Him and continue to walk in darkness, we –” what? “ - we lie. We do not the truth.” First John 2:4, “He that says, ‘I know Him,’ and keeps not His commandments, he is a liar, the truth isn’t in him.” 3:9, “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin. His seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he’s born of God. And this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Whosoever does not righteousness is not of God. Neither he that loveth not his brother.”

In other words, if you’re a Christian, you’re going to manifest righteousness; you’re going to manifest obedience. Doesn’t Peter say the same thing in 2 Peter 2:19? “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” Great principle. Whatever dominates you is indicative of who your master is. And that’s why we say, “You show us a person who lives in an unmitigated life of sin, and it really doesn’t matter what they claim.”

Matthew Henry put it this way, “If we would know to which of these two families we belong, we must inquire to which of these two masters we yield our obedience.” Now, let’s go back to what we said last week, just so you understand it. If you’re a real Christian you may sin, but the real you is going to hate that sin. And you’re going to be where Paul was in Romans 7, you’re going to be saying, “The things I want to do, I don’t do. The things I don’t want to do, I do, O wretched man that I am!”

And so, there are two reasons in this chapter why a believer will not continue in sin under grace. Number one, he’s united to Christ. He’s died to sin; sin has no power over him. Number two, he is a slave of a new master, and he will obey the new master by a very definition of his slavery.

Now, having looked at the antagonist and the answer and the axiom in verse 16, verses 17 to 22 become the argument in which he unfolds all of his thinking based on the axiom there. And then in verse 23, he finally closes with what I’ll call an absolute. We’re not going to get through this, but let me just introduce you to the argument in verse 17 to 22, just a marvelous, marvelous thing.

Paul is now explaining the principle of verse 16, explaining the axiom, applying it to the situation, and he does so by drawing an extended contrast between these two slaveries: the slavery to sin, the slavery to righteousness. He just runs them out. He starts with their position and then their practice and then their promise. He moves through the three phases: when they started, where they're going, and when they end up.

Let's look at the position, first of all, of these two slaveries. Verse 17, "But God be thanked that whereas you were the slaves of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered, being then made free from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness." Now you see both of them there, don't you? On the one hand, in verse 17, you were the servants of sin. In verse 18, you have become the servants of righteousness. Now those are the initiating points that we want to look at. This is positional talk, and I'll explain that as we go.

Look at verse 17, "But God be thanked," and this is an important footnote. Whenever you're talking about someone's salvation, who do you have to thank? Who do you have? God. You didn't come to Christ because you were so intelligent. You didn't come to Christ because you surveyed the field and you said this is the thing I want to do. You didn't come to Christ because somebody convinced you intellectually because of a whole bunch of data that this is true. You didn't come to Christ for any other reason really than that God brought you. That's right, "No man comes unto Me except the Father does – " what? " - draws him." And you always thank God for salvation because He is the author and finisher of our faith. It is God alone who can break the slavery to sin. Salvation is of God and no other. There is no salvation apart from that which God has given.

In Romans 1:8 at the very beginning of the epistle, Paul says, "I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of through all the world." I thank God for what has happened in your life. Well, that's basic. And by the way, you will find that same concept all throughout the whole of the New Testament. The transformation that takes us from death to life, from sin to God, is one that God works Himself.

Having said that, then, let's look at the rest of the contrast here. He then says, "You were the servants of sin." That's an imperfect tense verb which means it's a past time of continuous reality. In other words, in past times, you were continually in the past, continually a slave of sin. Now that is the natural condition of every man. People don't want to admit that. They don't like to hear that. To put it in a very consistent way with the way we've been speaking in the last couple of weeks, what he's saying is, "From the start, you by nature have been sinners, continually. That's your nature. That's your natural condition, involuntary forced and harsh dominance has been opposed on you by being born in the world. You know where you got all this sin? Where did you get it? From your mother and your father, and they go back to Adam and Eve."

And so, men and women born into this world are born into this tremendous condition of slavery to sin. In Romans 3, in fact, it sort of helps us to see what it means. In verse 10, "There is none righteous, no not one, none understands, none seeks after God. They're all gone out of the way. They're all together gone sour," is what that verb means. "There is none that does good, no not one. Their throats an open sepulcher, their tongues have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing. Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery in their way. The way of peace have they not known and there's no fear of God in their eyes."

So, this is a description of human kind, slaves of sin. Men don't realize it. You know, they think they're free. And you inevitably come to somebody with the gospel, and you tell them about coming to Jesus Christ, and they're afraid to come to Christ because they're afraid it's some kind of bondage, and they think they have such liberty. They don't have any liberty. There's no such thing as freedom to an unregenerate person, none at all. They're slaves. But he says this, "You were slaves of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart." Oh, I love that.

What does that say? Well, it wasn't external, was it? When they came to Christ, it wasn't something they did on the outside. It wasn't some water baptism or some church membership or signing some card or putting their hand up or walking down an aisle or doing some religious rite or saying their beads or lighting a candle or whatever, taking a pilgrimage. It wasn't something outside; it was something inside from the heart. And what was it that happened in their heart? They obeyed. They obeyed.

In other words, listen, even though it is the work of God, you're not passively transported from one master to another. You're not just involuntarily picked up and slapped over somewhere else. And people who get into the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, very often, see people being saved without even knowing it. You can read theologians who say you can be a redeemed person and not even know it because it's happened. God already did it, He just hasn't announced it to you yet. I find that very difficult. Because you never see salvation occurring apart from the act of commitment to Christ. In this particular context, it's spoken of as obedience, obedience. Gladly and eagerly, with a sense of the slavery to sin, you rushed to make God your new master.

And what did you obey? Some nebulous vague spiritual thing? No. This is marvelous, and a lot of people think, "Oh, I believe, I believe in believing, I believe." And they, you know, you hear that all the time from people. "Oh yes, I'm a believer." What do you believe? "Oh, I believe God. I believe." Well, there's more than that. It says this, verse 17, "You obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine." Isn't that good? It isn't a question. "Well, I believe if you just believe, you'll be all right." No. You believe that form of doctrine, the body of saving truth. Form is *tupos*. It has a lot of uses. The way it's framed in this verse is marvelous and the Authorized has missed the nuance. It should read that you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine into which, get that, into which you were delivered. Not

which was delivered to you, into which you were delivered. Boy, that's a tremendous thought.

Let me give you the idea. The word *tupos* here means "mold, a mold, a casting mold." And let's assume that the mold is in the shape of a servant. When you came into this world, you were poured into a mold, and you came out after the molten metal cooled, and you were lifted from that mold and plunked down in the world. You were a slave of sin. You were a slave statue and your slavery was to sin.

But God be thanked that you responded to the true gospel by obeying the form into which you were poured. And it's as if, in Paul's analogy, when God saw you as a slave to sin, by His great grace, He melted you down and reduced you to the basic elements. And while you were hot and molten, He re-poured you into a new mold. This mold is the form of doctrine into which you were delivered. You can see it, 2 Timothy 1:13, the form of sound doctrine. That word "form" is used 16 times in the New Testament. There is form to this.

So, here you are. You've been melted down by conviction, by the beginning work of the redeeming Spirit and now you are re-poured into a new mold. And when the metal is cooled and you have hardened and you are lifted out, you're in a new shape. What is your shape? You have conformed to the mold into which you were poured, and what is that mold? It is the form of doctrine. What does that mean? You have conformed to the pattern of truth that is the gospel. You now are a living statue of the reality of the gospel. Great thought. You're new, all new. The teaching, and think of it this way, the teaching to which you submit yourself when you become a Christian stamps you with its image. You ought to know that's a great thought.

Have you ever noticed – this is true of everything in life? People live the way they learn to live. It's true. People live the way they learn to live. You come to Grace Church long enough, and we'll pour you into our mold. We really will. And you'll go bouncing out like a little "Gracite." That's it, it happens! And that's all right because it says Jesus said, "And when a man is fully disciplined, he'll be like his teacher." That's okay, that's okay. I mean, after all, you come out of a certain family, and you bear the image of that family. It's put you in its mold, hasn't it? That's precisely what it says in Romans 12:2 when it says, "Don't let the world put you in its mold." You've been poured into a mold of the form of sound teaching regarding the gospel, and you've been cooled there, and you've been plopped out, and you are a living reality. You now are a slave statue all over again, but you're a slave to God. And only God could melt down that old person and pour that ingredients back into a new mold and shape that new person. The one who once was stamped with false teaching is now stamped with the image of the true doctrine of God. So good.

And let me just take it a step further. You have to fit the form, folks. You don't become a Christian by just floating all over the place and believing whatever you want. I had a luncheon the other day when I spoke to The Full Gospel Business Men International Luncheon. Afterwards, a man came up to me

and he said, "I've been in this group for a long time," and he said, "I'll tell you how I think you get to God." And I said, "All right, you tell me." He said, "Well, you see, there's just a lot of steps." And this is what he said exactly, "And up there at the top there's this door, and behind it is this guy name Jesus." And he says, "What you really want to do is try like 'blank' to make it up the stairs and to get through the door, have a guy like the guy Jesus let you in." And he says, "When you're on the way up the stairs, you've got all these preachers and movements hollering at you but you just keep going up the stairs, and I call it the stairway of hope. That's how I think it is."

I said to him, "Sir, bless your heart, you are not a Christian, and your stairway is hopeless. You need to depend on Jesus Christ. You don't even know what it means to be saved." You see, you can't invent your own mold. You understand that? There's a sound form of doctrine, the teaching of the gospel, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, confess your sins, affirm His Lordship, His death, His resurrection. There is a gospel content. There is a form, and if you are to come out in the image of the servant of God and to bear His stamp, you will have been poured into His mold. You understand that?

People, that's what bothers me about this thing they call the "Local Church." There's one down here, down the street. And the title of the main book written by Witness Lee who headed up that movement is *Christ vs. Doctrine, Christ vs. Doctrine*. And the book is full of their doctrine because you can't say anything in terms of teaching that isn't doctrine because doctrine means teaching. But they're trying to set up the idea that Christ is against formal teaching. It's not true. My goodness, have they ever read the epistle of the Romans? You practically need a Ph.D. to wade through it; it's so profound in its theological content.

So, this is the statement of our position. When you came to Christ, you were melted down and poured into a new mold, and you have come out a new statue, a new image and you bear the mark of a servant of God. Isn't that marvelous? Because you obeyed when the gospel call an reached your heart. Foolish to try to fight doctrine.

By the way, the word "obeyed" there, I just can't resist this, and I think we'll stop at this point, but I can't resist. Don't tune out yet. I shouldn't say that. But the word "obeyed," it just seems to hit me so strongly. Just in case you haven't noticed, that's the fourth time we've read it in three verses. That's right; obey, obey, obey, obey, obey. You see, that is the key concept; the obedience of the faith. That is obeying the gospel. The obedience of life; that is a Christian responding to the Word of God. Believing Jesus Christ is the initial act of obedience, and then it becomes a life of obedience, obedience, obedience, obedience. We never get our independence, folks. You hear me? We never do. We never get to the point like kids do when they burst out of the house and call their own shots. We're always under the Master. We're always under the Lord, and we're always to obey.

And may I suggest to you that there is inherent in that concept, the very heart of the meaning of the doctrine of salvation that a Christian is marked as one who does what? Obeys. And if you don't, you

can't be one no matter what you say. Obedience is the expression of faith. Obedience says I believe God, I believe His Word, I'll act on it. And all true justification produces obedience. And the longer we live with Christ, the more obedient we ought to become.

Titus 2, have you read this recently? Verse 11, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." And what did it do when it came to us? "Well, it taught us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age." That's what it did. Verse 14, it says, "Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of His own zealous of good works." Isn't that good? We were saved to good works. We're saved to purification. It's very simple.

Peter says this. He says in 1 Peter 1:22, "Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth." Oh, that's so good. See, when you came to Jesus Christ it purified your soul. You became a new creation and a life of obedience is the result. This new casting means a whole new master, and he says it in verse 18, "We became free from sin." Great thought. Oh, not free from sinning. We do that now and then. Not free from temptation, but free from the mastery and the tyranny of sin where we couldn't do anything but sin.

You say, "You mean, before you're a Christian all you do is sin?" That's right. All you do is sin. Even your good deeds fall into the sin category because they're not for the glory of God, and when men do good deeds just so they can be good men, that's pride, and that's a sin. What amazes me is how much men love their slavery. Have you noticed that? They don't even know they're slaves to sin. They love it. Men love darkness rather than light.

But you've been made free from that and became the servants of righteousness. And that's a creative alteration, not only an ethical responsibility. We are now free. Now, listen to me very carefully, I'm going to close with this thought. We are free for the first time in our life. A sinner is not free. All he can do is what? Sin. Who's the only person who has a choice? A Christian. So for the first time in your life, you're free. Not free to do wrong. Oh, no, no, you've done that a long time. For the first time in your life, you're free to do what? Right. That's Christian freedom. And the people who go around saying Christian liberty gives me the freedom to do wrong, do not understand Christian liberty. Christian liberty, the liberation of the soul, is for the first time in my life I can do right! Marvelous thought.

Well, there we see the initiation, the position, the difference between the servant of sin, the servant of righteousness. One has no freedom. One has freedom to do right. Now, we'll go from there next time to see the progress of these lives and the promise. One ends in death and one in life. Let's pray.

Lord, thank You for our teaching time tonight and thank You so much, Father, for Your grace to these dear people in saving them. Thank You for the hunger in their hearts for the Word. We know this is

not entertainment, and we know it's taxing and the body is weary and the mind as well, sometimes. And, Father, I just thank You for their loving support, for their hunger for Your Word that makes them set aside the time and prepare the heart and the mind to receive the deep things of God. And, O Father, bless them, fill their cup with the water for which they thirst. Fill their spiritual stomach with the food for which they hunger. Thank You that we're free from sin, for the first time free to do right, free to do Your will because there's a new life principle in us that does righteousness. Thank You, Father, that You didn't just save us and write it in a book but You changed us that we may enjoy the reality of that salvation in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And all of this causes us to thank You for Christ, our Redeemer. We pray in His name. Amen.

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