***Ethical Conduct vs. Christianity
RO80-02***

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We are looking at Romans 6:19-23, which deal with "Two Kinds of Human Slavery," and this is the fourth in the series.

It is self-evident that man by nature loves his own ideas better than he loves the truth of Bible doctrine. Whatever the Word of God has to say to man is by nature alien to him, and man, in his natural self, finds it to be offensive. The Bible says that man by nature finds doctrine to be foolishness. So, people, in the nature of the case, pursue salvation by human effort or by some system of self-improvement rather than as a grace gift. They resist the idea of receiving eternal life as a gift from God, apart from their human doing.

So, the greatest plan is rejected very adamantly, and it is rejected even when people are shown that the Bible actually does teach such a plan of salvation. It makes no difference how many times you quote Ephesians 2:8-9, about being saved by grace alone, to a person who wants to reject the Word of God – he will reject it. No matter how much you show him from the Bible itself that this is what the Bible teaches, if he does not want to believe that, and he wants to follow his own human thinking, he simply will not give up that opinion.

So, we are filled with a world with thinking that is false, and that leads to actions which have consequences that become part of the rejecters eternity. That is true of us as Christians certainly. What we do has consequences that become part of our eternity. Certainly it is true of the unbeliever. He is constantly doing things that have become part of his eternity, including the loss of eternal life in the lake of fire forever.

The unsaved person actually ridicules the idea of freedom from a law system of human doing as justification for a person to do evil. That is the question that Paul has been taking up here in Romans 6 beginning at verse 15, because that very attack was leveled to him – that if a person is justified apart from human doing, then that person can just go ahead and do whatever he wants, and live a life of evil.

For many of you, this will be a self-evident, simple truth to accept. But don't think that that is generally the case. Don't think that that is generally the case, necessarily, for someone who happens to attend the Berean Ministries. Again this week, I had brought to my attention the fact that there are people, even within the orbit of the Berean Ministries, who simply cannot comfortably accept the idea that God's salvation is not based on what they do, even after they've heard it explained from the very Greek language itself that this is what the book of Romans teaches. They have great mental reservations that they can be saved apart from anything they do. People are in love with their own human viewpoint, and they are loathe to give it up. But that is a very dangerous game to play with God.

The apostle Paul firmly rejects the idea that grace implies freedom to do evil. This idea is not only monstrous, he points out, but for a Christian, it is impossible. And he has been teaching us the reason that this is impossible – that a Christian simply cannot actually live a life unto evil because a Christian is a slave of absolute righteousness. He was once a slave of the sin nature, but that is no longer true. He has been emancipated, and emancipated forever from the sin nature. He's now enslaved to absolute righteousness, and that's now his way of life. A Christian cannot have any other way of life except that of absolute righteousness.

Therefore, anything that's in the life of a believer which is incompatible with absolute righteousness becomes a point of tension in his life; it becomes a point of friction; it becomes a point of conflict; it becomes a point of great misery; and, it increasingly becomes a point of misery. And if we do not respond to the fact that God is saying, "Here is something that is out of keeping with absolute righteousness as a way of life, then He brings the most severe kinds of discipline and judgment. And that you can count on.

Since a Christian possesses positional sanctification, the only course in life that he is free to follow is one that contributes to experiential sanctification. God has never put us in positional sanctification, completely set aside to Him and to eternal life for the purpose of having us live a life which is evil. He has not planned it that way, and I guarantee you that God is not about to allow us to do it that way.

So, this is a very ignorant statement here in verse 15. Anybody who says, "That if you are a Christian, saved by grace, you don't have to worry about being lost again, and you don't have to worry about what you do ever taking that away from you, then you can go ahead and live a life of evil, is an ignorant person. He does not understand doctrine. A person cannot be a slave of two masters at one time. And the apostle Paul, in verse 20, again takes up the fact that we were on one side of the fence, and now we're on the other side of the fence, and he makes a comparison of both of those positions.

So, beginning now in verse 20, he says, "For when you were the servants of sin." The word "for" looks like this in Greek. It's the Greek word "gar." It's a conjunction. What it is doing here is referring back to the last phrase in verse 19, which calls for delivering one's body to the standard of absolute righteousness for the purpose of producing a lifestyle of holiness. Paul said at the end of verse 19, "Even so now," and the word "even so" referred back to the phrase before it, which was the time when our physical members were yielded to what he calls "filthiness and lawlessness" (for a lifestyle of lawlessness). He says, "As you were devoted to that, so even so now, yield (or deliver over) your members (your physical body parts) as slaves to absolute righteousness for the purpose of a lifestyle of holiness."

He begins in verse 20 with the word "For" – on the basis of having said that. He introduces the reason for handing yourself over to experiential sanctification, and why it's necessary to do that: "For when." The word "when" looks like this: "hote." "Hote" refers to the believer's pre-salvation days: "When you were." The word "were" is "eimi." This is the verb to express the status that one holds in life. This is an interesting tense because it's the Greek imperfect. The Greek imperfect tense is a tense which looks to the past, but it looks to the past in terms of repeated incidents of the past. So, the apostle Paul is saying here: "When in the past, you repeatedly were something" that he is going to describe. He's talking about something that believers were at one time (repeatedly and consistently, that is) in the past.

**Slaves**

It is active voice, which indicates that they were this by their deliberate choice. The mood is indicative, which is a statement of fact being presented. And what they were repeatedly in the past by choice was "slaves." Again, this is the word you've seen several times: "doulos." This is a Greek adjective, but it's used as a noun, and it means slave. So, translation "servant" does not connote the severity of the implication of this word – "slave," with everything that a slave connotes, relative to one's will and one's choices.

**A Slave of Sin**

A slave of what? A slave of what he calls "sin." And that is "hamartia." "Hamartia" here, as you may remember, is the Greek word for "missing the mark of God's standard of absolute righteousness." It happens to be in the singular "sin," so that it is thereby referring to not acts of evil, but to a nature of evil – the propensity to evil. Furthermore, the Greek says "*the* sin," indicating a specific propensity to evil – that of the sin nature with which we are born because of our involvement with Adam. That is the quality of propensity to evil, and you could call that the "OPE," if you wanted – the Old Propensity to Evil. The term "the old sin nature," sometimes, we have a little feeling that that expression might not be as desirable because it connotes the idea that you have a sin nature which is separate from what you are. We have a nature as believers. And we have a propensity to evil, and that can dominate, but our nature can move from a gross level in its early days.

That's what Paul is saying: from slaves to sin, to where we are slaves to absolute righteousness in practice, so that our nature does improve. What we are as human beings, that is, improves as we take in the Word of God, and as we are positive to it.

So, the old propensity to evil is the problem that we have. And you remember that that is in the genes of the human body. That is a genetic factor that we inherit from our human fathers. And we are slaves to that propensity to evil.

**The Sin Nature**

The sin nature is the sin inclination to evil. The condition described in verse 19 as handling the physical body over to filthiness and lawlessness as a way of life is what this is referring to. When he says, in verse 21, "When you were the slaves of the sin nature," he's talking about what he had referred to the verse 19 as guiltiness and lawlessness as the kind of life that the sin nature produces.

Enslavement to the sin nature is the great tragedy, and is the great problem of unregenerated mankind today. All the other reasons that are given for the tensions in man's world are false. The primary reason that human beings have a problem, whether it's on a personal level, or whether it's on a national level, or an international level, is because mankind is a slave of the sin nature. Slavery to sin, totally incapacitates a man spiritually. And when you are a slave of the sin nature, it ruins your thinking; it ruins your feelings; and, ruins your decisions.

Since we do not get rid of this old propensity to evil, it is possible for us, even as Christians, to ruin our thinking; to ruin our emotions; and, to ruin our will (to ruin our decisions). So, we are constantly aware of the fact that we live with this evil, but that we live in such a way that we can override it, and that we can overcome it. And that is what the apostle Paul is saying. Not only is he saying that it's possible for us to override the consequences of this genetic defect with which we were born, But he says, "It is absolutely necessary that you do so, because God will not tolerate your living under the slavery of the sin nature because you're not a slave to that anymore. Your status has been completely changed. And God says, "You're going to live up to what you really are, whether you like it or not. You are not going to be permitted to live up to what you are not in relationship to righteousness."

So, Paul says in verse 20, having told them to yield their physical bodies to a lifestyle of holiness: "I tell you this for when you were the slaves of the sin nature, you were free from righteousness." Here again, the word "you were" is the same one we've had just now: "eimi," the verb to express one's status. Again, it is imperfect tense, indicating repeatedly the status that they held before their salvation. It is active voice. That means that they chose to be in this particular status that he's not going to describe. It is indicative – a statement of fact.

What was the status that, in one's unsaved days, we deliberately chose to have. That is that we were to be free. The word "free" is "eleutheros." "Eleutheros" is an adjective, and it means "not under restraint," and "not enslaved." Here it means to be free from the governing power of something.

**Free from Righteousness**

We deliberately, in our past unsaved days, chose to be free from the power or the authority of something. And what was that something? Righteousness: "dikaiosune." "Dikaiosune" is the word that refers to actions which are compatible with the character of God. Now again, in the Greek Bible, it is a specific righteousness because it says, "*the* righteousness – the specific righteousness, meaning the absolute righteousness of God. This is sometimes described as not only righteousness, but "+R" (absolute) righteousness. This is the word for actions which are compatible with the character of God. God's character is absolute righteousness. So, he's talking about being free from something that had to do with absolute righteousness. We could translate it as: "You were free in regard to absolute righteousness."

**Freedom**

I think that's a very interesting word that God the Holy Spirit uses here at this point. All of us forget that what is true of people today has always been true people in the past. And one of the things that has always been true of unbelievers is that they have described their enslavement to the sin nature as "freedom." They have described indulging what the sin nature wanted as being freedom.

You and I are very much aware that today. The rebel movements on various levels of our society are consistently described as being freedom. This is man achieving freedom. Freedom because of what? Because he can indulge himself in evil. The whole French Revolution, which became a monstrous terror and a generative experience for the French people, was based upon the fact that they were going to gain liberty. That was one of the things that they pursued: freedom. And how did they do it? By cutting themselves off from all spiritual controls. Freedom was man's thinking apart from God's control.

So, unregenerate man has always characterized the indulgence of evil as freedom. And I think it's interesting that God the Holy Spirit should have led the apostle Paul to use that kind of a word here in describing what people think their condition is when they are slaves of the sin nature. That's when they think they're really free.

**Biblical Morality is Required**

Paul's statement does not mean that unsaved people were not under obligation to obey God's rules of morality. Sometimes people try to interpret this verse as saying, "Well, you see, as long as you're not a Christian, then you go ahead and do whatever you want. It doesn't make any difference." I've heard preachers say that, and that's not true. You see, that's why we have the divine institutions. The divine institutions place certain restrictions on people whether you're a Christian or not. The Bible, because of the divine institution, makes it clear that there's a certain relationship in marriage. Whether you are a saved person or an unsaved person, that relationship holds. You cannot have multiple wives like the Mormons and the Moslems, for example, say. You cannot go through a series of wives. The Bible forbids that.

You cannot go taking other people's lives at your will (upon your decision), in a Mafia-like way. The Bible condemns that. And you cannot say that, as long as you're an unbeliever, you can do whatever you wish. That's not true. The Bible has a basis of morality, and morality is imposed upon believer and nonbeliever because this is the way that God preserves the human race from destruction during the era of the angelic warfare when Satan is in command of this earth. So, biblical morality is really required of believer and unbeliever in a society. It doesn't have anything to do with salvation. Morality has nothing to do with salvation, but it is required of everybody. Biblical standards of morality provide sinful man with a basis for personal freedom without chaos. And that is the clue – personal freedom without chaos. And that is the purpose of biblical morality.

Somehow unsaved man has to be able to relate himself to every other unsaved person without chaos resulting. And the only way to do that is on the basis of biblical morality. So, when the unregenerate man says, "Well, indulging in evil, now I've got freedom," he is very, very much mistaken, because freedom (real freedom) comes when you're a slave of absolute righteousness.

Paul says that, while the unbeliever describes himself as free, he almost, in a sarcastic way, says, "The only thing you ever were free from was absolute righteousness. That's what you are free from. While you were wallowing in your barnyard morality, when you were wallowing in your animal-like activities, under the guise that now you're experiencing fulfillment, the only thing you were free from was absolute righteousness. But you were not free from anything else. You are a slave in every other sense of the word. Freedom from the guidance of absolute righteousness, as a matter of fact, causes people to do things that animals would not to.

I can describe for you, and you can describe for me, many things that human beings do that animals never would do, and that is described as freedom. I can be an animal. I can be what? I can be what Paul, up in verse 19, says is filthy and lawless: "And now I've got freedom." Paul says, "Don't kid yourself. The only thing you were free from under that pre-salvation condition was absolute righteousness, and a relationship to reality in life.

The unbeliever feels actually elated that he doesn't have to keep from doing certain things. He can actually throw himself into the arms of filthiness and lawlessness. And freedom from absolute righteousness simply means that a person is an abject slave of the sin nature. He has to be a slave of one of the other. Paul has already told us up in verse 16: "Don't you know that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are, whom you obey, whether of the sin nature on the one hand unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (unto eternal life) implied there.

So, you have to be a slave of one or the other: the sin nature; or, of absolute righteousness. And freedom from absolute righteousness is also in terms of freedom from human good production. If you have freedom from absolute righteousness, then it means that you are guilty of human good production. And people admire that. People commend human good production, but God says, "That's still filthy." Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses (are our human good) are as filthy rags."

So, that Paul says, "Whatever you do as a slave of the sin nature is characterized as filthiness and lawlessness." But we think that if we do nice things (good things), like giving presents to poor children, and bringing food to poor folks at Christmas time, and all the other kinds of human good that's gushing out from mankind at this season of the year. God up in heaven looks at it. People admire one another for it. People commend each other for it. And even we as Christians find it a little hard to accept that. We sort of recoil from the idea that God says, "That's a filthy thing you do. It's a lawless and a filthy thing you do now."

Now, either Isaiah, and Isaiah 64:6, spoke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or he didn't, because I'll tell you that it makes it very clear that that sort of thing, God says, is a filthy rag in His sight, even though people admire and people commended.

**Ethical Conduct vs. Born-Again Christianity**

There's a very great difference between ethical religion (morality) and born-again Christianity. There's a very great difference between ethical conduct and born-again Christianity. The greatest enemies of biblical truth and of salvation are the world's good, moral, religious people who have never been saved by grace. They are the real enemies of the Christians. It is not the poor slob who's lying in his own vomit down on Skid Row. He is not the great enemy of Christianity. The great enemies of Christianity are the people you admire who are not believers – the people that you recommend and commend for their actions that are not believers. Those are the real enemies of Christianity.

**The Mormons**

The Mormons, for example, are such a people. They are precisely such a people. They are a good people who are enslaved to the sin nature, but they are not enslaved absolute righteousness. How do we know that? Look at the five sets of Mormon salvation. You won't have to go very far before those of you that are instructed in biblical salvation will say, "Wait a minute. This step and this step – these are completely out of line with biblical salvation by grace. You couldn't be saved if you followed these steps. If you follow these five steps of Mormon salvation, you'll end up in the lake of fire. There's no place else you could go. But you tell me somebody who is not as moral, and as effective, and is devoted to biblical morality as are the Mormons.

One famous financial adviser that many people listen to, who happens to be a Mormon, is now in the process of writing a book about how to rear your children – how to rear your children for a life of morality. He's going to write a book in order to help people send their children into the lake of fire. That's in effect what he's doing. There's a very great difference between fine people who are not born again, and who are slaves of the sin nature, but who function on good conduct and on good principles.

**The Muslims**

The Muslims are certainly such a people. They are enslaved to good, but they are not enslaved to absolute righteousness. If you've been watching the television cameras, you've had a chance to see the women of Iran walking around in their (veils). They're covered from head to foot. All you can see is a little white face here (if it's been washed), and a nose, and some eyes, and maybe a chin. You don't see any hair. That's it. It's pulled right down. And I don't care whether it's little girls in a classroom in school. And there they are with all their skin covered, and covered from head to foot to the bottom. And why is this? So as to remove the female form from being a temptation to evil thoughts and evil actions.

Morality is at the heart of everything that the Ayatollah Khamenei does. He considers himself a spokesman for divine morality, and he levels the finger at the United States and says, "You are an immoral nation. And that's why what I do to you is right before God, and that's why God is going to make me victorious in my attack upon the United States. That's why I will win out, because God is on my side. I am morally right, and you are morally wrong.

The Ayatollah Khomeini follows Muhammad's five pillars to salvation. These are pillars such that if you read through them, you would immediately say, "Hey, there's no way you could go to heaven on this basis. This step here; this step here; this pillar; and, this pillar – they contradict the biblical salvation plan. There is no way a Muslim will ever go to heaven if he follows that plan of salvation. But does he have morality? Oh, you bet he has morality. It is the epitome of morality. And everything in that society is the indignation against Western Christianization that they consider has brought immorality into their society. That is why the United States is so hated in Iran today, because it is viewed as the source, with its Christian viewpoint, which has contaminated the morality of the Iranians. So, the Muslims are such an enslaved people. They're a great enemy of biblical truth.

The cultured, refined, well-mannered, good-looking, pleasant, informed, well-spoken person without Jesus Christ that you associate with is a slave of evil, but he's not a slave of absolute righteousness. And this is what you must remember. You and I are always associated in various relationships in life with people who are culture; who are refined; who are well-mannered; who are good-looking; who are pleasant; who are fun to be with; and, who are informed, but they are not the spokesmen of God. They are spokesmen of evil.

Many a woman has found to her grief that she became associated with a man that was on the human level, a very personable and attractive individual, only to discover that, as a slave of the sin nature, he was a person on a course of destruction, and was a person who was going to lead her completely away from what God had in her life. And you have to be careful about the fact that the people who impress you are also people who are born-again believers, and therefore have a frame of reference for talking for God.

I cannot believe how people in our society, and how Christians are enamored with popular individuals. They're carried away with them. We love to use this word "charismatic:" "This is a very "charismatic" personality, and politicians love to be described as charismatic. Yet these people are outside of the family of God. They're slaves of the sin nature, and we think that they are not what God says that they really are.

The Lord Jesus Christ, for this very reason, denounced the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel. He not only denounced him severely, nut He warned the people of God against them, and He warned them that they were religious slaves of the sin nature. In Romans 10, a few chapters up the road here, we're going to read the first three verses that say, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." Here are the Jewish people who have a great devotion to morality: "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge."

The Moslems have a zeal for God, certainly, but not according to knowledge. The Mormons have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge: "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness (absolute righteousness), and going about to establish their own (relative human) righteousness have not submitted themselves onto the righteousness of God." And there's the clue: "have not submitted." And that's what Paul is talking about. He is trying to warn us about people who have not submitted to the standard of God's absolute righteousness. The non-Christian, no matter who he is, and no matter how attractive a person he is, has no relationship to absolute righteousness at all. That person, as kind as he may be, and as pleasant as he may be, in his human relationships, is still centered on himself. He operates from his own ideas; his own values; his own goals; and, his own rules. He operates entirely apart from God. He's ultimately controlled by Satan who manipulates that man's soul.

You try to make this real for yourself by thinking of some popular figure, or somebody that you're impressed with, or somebody you know as an entertainer that you see on television, or somebody that you know in politics that you hear about on the national scene, or somebody that you know in some phase even of past history, who is not a believer, and who is not a slave of absolute righteousness, and that is the kind of person that Paul is describing here. He is a terrific person on the surface, but one who is very, very dangerous in terms of his influence upon you. He's controlled by Satan. He has a religious zeal originating entirely in the sin nature, but entirely apart from divine reality. They have not submitted to God's viewpoint.

These people are a constant hazard that you and I, even as Christians, face. So, why are you calling them fine people? How many times is this type of person separated from God's divine viewpoint, who is not a slave of absolute righteousness, being described as a fine person? Paul says, "He's filthy and lawless," but you call him a fine person. And if you're really impressed with him, you double it, and say, "He's a fine, fine person." But he's filthy and he's lawless.

Do you remember what Paul said about himself? This is one of the Scriptures that, when the King James translators came to it, they had a terrific time because it was such a shock of what they read on the words of Scripture that God the Holy Spirit had inspired the apostle Paul to write, because Paul was looking at this very thing we're talking about – people who were slaves of the old sin nature, but who were cultured; attractive; personable; fine; and well-spoken. They can verbalize and they're impressive to deal with. And people want to listen to these people. They want to follow their advice. And Paul describes himself as at one time that kind of a person.

In Philippians 3:7-8, after having described himself in terms of that attractive past and that attractive heritage, Paul says, "But what things were getting to me? Those I counted lost for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Your New Scofield Bible uses the word "refuse" to try to convey a little more, but the Greek says, "human excrement." And Paul says, "Now, I'll tell you what my culture; my refinement; my education; my fine ways; my lifestyle; my ability to stand up to speak; my charismatic quality; the impressiveness that I convey; and, the fact that all my religious associates consider themselves inferior to me – I was superior to all of my peers in my age bracket. And the people who were in authority were impressed with me, and they placed great responsibility upon me. I was a man of fame; of fortune; and, of influence. And it was with me human excrement – that's all. I'll tell you what I think of it. I'll tell you what God thinks of it, and that's what He thinks of it." But people called Paul a fine man.

So, you can see what the apostle Paul is up against here. In verse 20, he's trying to say to us that when you were servants of sin, you were free from all the qualities of absolute righteousness. You had no connection with it whatsoever, no matter how attractive your personality may have been. What you were was not free like you say you were. You were only free in terms of righteousness, but you were a slave of everything that is gross and that is evil.

When we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, He gives us an evaluation of these fine people as well. You'll find that in Luke 16:15. The next time you want to be impressed with somebody who is not a slave of absolute righteousness, you better remember what the Lord had to say about him: "Jesus said unto them, 'You are they who justify yourselves before men. But God knows your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.'" And that's the problem. That which is highly esteemed among men, that men call "fine," is an abomination in the sight of God.

So, you be careful who the people are that you listen to. You be careful who the people are that you permit to have influence in your life, and to be the guides to your decision making, because it has to be a person who meets a very strict requirement: slave of absolute righteousness. So, he has to be a Christian; he has to be a Christian who is informed on doctrine; and, and he has to be a Christian who is positive toward that information and functioning on it. Otherwise, I strongly urge you not to listen to him.

The person who possesses absolute righteousness is characterized by an acute awareness of his own helplessness in achieving righteousness. The person who really does function on righteousness, and who is really a slave of righteousness, is very much aware of his helplessness in achieving anything that is commendable and good. That's the first sign that you're in tune with God. You've got a real clear perspective on yourself that you're not all that hot. You're aware of your desperate need that goes beyond your human abilities to meet.

Those who lack absolute righteousness, in contrast, are well pleased with themselves. Going back again to the gospel of Luke, here's a passage you know well that very aptly describes those who are slaves of the sin nature who pretend to be slaves of absolute righteousness. Luke 18:9: "And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others." They trusted in themselves that they were righteous; that they had absolute righteousness; and, that they spoke for God, and they despised others that they thought could not speak for God: "Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one, a Pharisee; the other, a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: 'God, I thank You I'm not as other men are: extortioners; unjust; adulterers; or, even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner' (that is, God be propitiated to me, a sinner). I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalts himself should be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

That is perfect description of the person who thinks that he is in tune with God, and who is far from being in tune with God. The Pharisee who was out of tune thought he knew what God's mind was, and he was far from it.

The person who is a slave of absolute righteousness is a person that the Bible says will hunger and thirst for righteousness. That's strange, isn't it? The person who is not a slave of absolute righteousness doesn't care about it. But the one who is really a slave of absolute righteousness, he hungers and he thirsts for that righteousness. He's aware of his limitations. The slaves of the sin nature are indifferent to righteousness. They're not storming the local church for divine viewpoint information.

Let's get a little touchy now. The Christian who is not sensitive to his position as a slave of absolute righteousness, who is out of touch, who is in carnality – he's not storming the local church for information. He's not running and grabbing tapes to study the Word of God, I'll guarantee you. And it is not for you to look around and say, "Well, who pops in, and who pops out?" It is for you to look around at yourself only and say, "How regular, and how faithful, and how systematic am I being in the church services when the instruction of the Word is being extended?" The person who is tied into the sin nature has no taste for righteousness. He does not hunger and thirst after it. He uses with self-righteousness. He is smugly living up to some code that he thinks that God will accept. Yet the Bible says that he is living a life of abomination before God, but he's making an awfully big impression on people.

There's nothing more terrible in life than to be free from God's standard of absolute righteousness – nothing. There is nothing more terrible than that. That is the human problem. If you are a believer, you have been fortunate, because of divine election, to have been brought into the family of God and made a slave of absolute righteousness. And again I remind you that here in Romans 6, the apostle Paul is not exhorting you to become anything. He is telling you what you are. He is telling you that you are a slave of absolute righteousness. What he is saying, here at the end of verse 19, is that that being the case, then you should look forward to functioning on that basis in a lifestyle of holiness. And he's now going to expand why that is.

He says that you remember that when you were slaves of sin, the only thing you had in the way of freedom was freedom from absolute righteousness. Then in the next verse, he's going to tell us the consequences of those things. He's going to talk about the things that we were ashamed of, and the consequences of those things that we were ashamed of.

What he is telling us is that there is nothing more terrible in life than for a person to have been left out of the status of being a slave of absolute righteousness. As a Christian, this is your position.

We're going to look further, as we get into the book of Romans, on how to make that part of our experience, so that we live this kind of godliness. But this is where you are. And this is what you must accept to begin with. God has preserved you from this horror and from this nightmare. You are absolute righteousness because you are in Christ. That is the greatest things that a person possesses. Whatever else you may have in life is secondary. The finest thing you have is absolute righteousness in Jesus Christ. Be proud of that slavery because that is real freedom. Everything else is a delusion.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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