

**Romans 6:15-23**  
**“You’re Going to have to Serve Somebody”**

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**I. Intro**

On October 3, 2003, during a live show at The Mirage, Roy Horn of Siegfried and Roy fame tripped over his pet seven-year-old male tiger “Montecore” and suffered a near fatal bite on the neck. Horn had trained the tiger since he was a cub and had performed with him in the act for six years. As Roy Horn was being driven in critical condition to the hospital he was insisting that they “*Don't shoot the cat!*” The Mirage suffered financially the loss of \$50 million in annual ticket sales and untold millions in sales of food, beverages, hotel rooms and the casino's gambling winnings. A spokesman said that even a greater loss was losing Siegfried and Roy who were “the faces” and brand name of the Mirage hotel.

What does this story have to do with Romans 6:15-23? Only this: **You can't keep playing with your “Flesh”; you won't be able to tame it by saying nice kitty!** “*Can't I just take it out every now and then to perform? If I cage it this may cost me financially, I'll lose my identity!*” Saint's, like Siegfried and Roy you can get your flesh to “*disappear*” for a while even “*jump through hoops*” but sooner or later it will **trip you up and bite you**, just like it did Roy. Though I can appreciate Roy's love for his trained Big Cat but sooner or later my friend you are going to have to “*shoot the cat*” or reckon the flesh to be dead in Christ! Far too many Christians' look at sin like Roy looked at his tiger, a pet. “*After all I don't tell dirty jokes all the*

*time. I don't get drunk every week!" Remember your "pet flesh" hasn't improved he is still wild and sooner or later it's going to bite you if you don't shot it.*

## **II. Vs. 15 Shall we sin because grace abounds?**

Vs. 15 Having convinced us that a lifestyle of habitual sin is not compatible with one whose life is changed by grace, Paul asks about an occasional sin here and there. The phrase "*Shall we sin*" in the Greek indicates this as it means dabbling in sin, not a continual habitual sin. The question in verse 1 was "*Shall we continue IN sin*" and the question here is "*Shall we continue TO sin*" and both have the same answer "*God forbid*". **The first deals with a permanent state the other with an isolated act.**

There is a subtle lie that enters the heart of even the most dedicated Christian that would never ask, "*Shall we sin that grace might abound*". Instead, they ask, "*Shall we sin because grace abounds!*" "*What if we sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure involved?*" "*If we are under grace, not law, should we be concerned about a little sin here and there?*" Every one of us faces temptations that beg us to react, that seem to shout at us "*Go on give in this once!*" "*You're not going to hell because of this one thing, after all if God didn't want you to do this he wouldn't have placed it in front of you.*" "*You're not under the law, you're under love; you can repent later!*" **Friend's it's not what God will do to you if you sin; it's what sin will do to your relationship with God that should trouble our heart.**

## **III. Vs. 16-19a Designed to be mastered**

In verses 16-23 Paul offers us **three reasons why we shouldn't** "*sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure*".

A. Vs. 16-19a **Sin makes you a slave again**: There is profound truth that no person wants to admit; **“Humans were designed to be mastered” the only question is by whom?** We would like to think that we are the masters of our own fate, the captains of our own ships but far too often our so called “freedoms” are the very things that have enslaved us. Saint’s, the option to live our life **without serving** either **sin or obedience isn't open to us**. There is no “**neutrality**” in the flesh as Bob Dylan said, *“But you’re going to have to serve somebody, yes indeed You’re going to have to serve somebody Well, it may be the devil, or it may be the Lord But you’re going to have to serve somebody.”* In verse 17 Paul says that **we “were”** slaves of sin **but now in Christ we have been set free** from its power that it once had over us as we *“obeyed from the heart”*. Saints listen up, **we can be legally free positionally, yet still choose to live like a prisoner**. Also, in verse 17 we read the phrase *“that **form** of doctrine”* which is a word used to **describe a mold used to shape molten metal**. As a goldsmith we often practiced the *“lost wax”* technique as we would carve out our pattern in wax then place it in plaster heat it up for many hours until the wax had melted, place the flask on a centrifuge, melt the gold in a crucible and let the spring-loaded centrifuge go throwing the gold into the mold. Folks, **when God wants to shape us He first melts us by the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Then he lets us go into the mold of Jesus**. Sin not only takes you further than you intended to go **it often takes others with you**. There is a little poem that illustrates this that goes: *“I said a naughty word the other day, a word I hadn’t meant to say. But when it went out my mouth it was not lost when it flew, as someone else heard it and now they say it TOO!”* In verse 18 Paul answers the question: *“Why not occasionally sin?”* another way. We are

free from sin and now slaves of righteousness. We serve Mr. Righteousness as our boss not Mr. Sin as we don't work for him anymore. The Greek idea of being a slave was:

- *One whose will is swallowed up in the will of another*
- *One who serves his master to the disregard of his own interest*

The thought here is that since we “*have been set free from sin*”, we never have to sin again. Now sin is inevitable until our flesh is resurrected in glory, *but it isn't because God has designed a system by which we MUST sin*.

#### IV. Vs. 19b-21 Free to or free from?

The 2<sup>nd</sup> of three reasons why we shouldn't “sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure”.

- B. Vs. 19b-21 Sin will make you ashamed: Shame is the awareness of actions that have caused damage to others and sin in our life has left its irreparable scare on folks. Sin leaves a stain that not even tide or bleach can completely remove. It's always easier to make a good impression than it is to repair a bad one! We have all had words and actions we wished we could repair but when we see that person out and about we avoid because we are uncomfortable. You can't drop the seeds of sin into the soil of your heart without one day reaping the fruit of what you have sown.

#### V. Vs. 22-23 You get what you pay for

The final of three reasons why we shouldn't “sin occasionally because of the momentary pleasure”.

- C. Vs. 22-23 Sin will spread death in your life: When Paul talks about death in these verses he isn't talking about physical death he is talking about the absence of life. The end of the things that constitute life like joy, peace, light and laughter. Fear creeps in

followed by depression and anger; soon we are walking around bitter and shriveled up people. If we continue in sin we will inevitably look back over our lives at thousands of miles in the desert of wasted opportunities! Oh, how much more we could have enjoyed the gift of this life had we not dabbled in this sin or that. ***Sin hides in the empty container of promised freedom, then places us in the box and closes the lid.*** We don't have to experience this kind of death; the sad truth is often we choose it! ***What good is it to be free from sin by Jesus Christ and have the opportunity and possibility to walk in His wholeness, sense of worth and security of His constant love for you, if your choice is to ignore these things and go right back to being a slave?*** Jesus has made us free to be living as His ambassadors having a life of wholeness and self-worth not bound up with conflicting kingdoms.

Let me conclude by giving you **three ways we can keep from enslaving ourselves to Mr. Sin.**

1. Vs. 19b **Don't show up to work for your old boss:** You start working at a new job with an amazing boss who pays you better than you ever imagined, incredible benefits. But at lunch you check out and go to your old crummy job with the tyrant of a boss and say what do you want me to do today I'm yours. That's crazy, why would anyone do that? I don't know but it's repeated in our lives daily!

2. Vs. 20-22 **It's easier to stop an immobile object**: "*Lawlessness just leads to more lawlessness*"; Paul says but so does "*Righteousness lead to holiness*". *There is dynamic power in our habits and once momentum gets going it's difficult to change the direction we are pointed in, so you better make sure you are heading the right way.* If you've got going the wrong direction the first thing you are going to have to do is stop going that way and the 2<sup>nd</sup> equally important step is to start going the right way! To help in this determination Paul gives us a **twofold test to determine the direction** our action or attitude will be taking us:

A. Vs. 20 **If you aren't sure what direction you are going ask yourself, "Are you free TO or free FROM"?**: When we are slaves of sin, we were free from doing what is right. Saint's we are either at any given moment "*free to sin*" or "*free from sin*" but **you will never be both at the same time** and the only true freedom is freedom from sin's power.

B. Vs. 21-22 **Ask yourself what the outcome of the action or attitude is**: The tree you plant will produce fruit either "*death*" or "*life*" and the tree that produces "*death*" always seems to taste good at first, but it always makes you sick in the end. Whereas the fruit of life tastes good and continues to be sweet all the way through. **Consider these three things**:

a. *How little satisfaction your former sins afforded at the time you committed them.*

b. *How nothing but shame and sorrow followed you upon the completion of them.*

c. *How the lasting fruit would have caused eternal death if it wasn't for God's grace and mercy.*

3. Vs. 23 **You get what you pay for:** When you work for sin, your wages are death. When we serve God we get the best benefit package imaginable. “*Every sinner earns by their long, sore, and painful service, hell!*” The author of Hebrews describes Moses’ choice to either be identified with the Egyptians, to whom he was regarded as royalty, or to be identified as a Hebrew slave and in 11:25 we are told that “*He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.*” **Make sure you read the “fine print” of the offer your old boss Mr. Sin is offering as it only offers temporary pleasure with a price tag that will cause you years of heartache.** We ought to want to be a better Christian than we were at being the best sinner!