

## Set Free to Serve

### Romans 6:15-19 (NRSVue)



PAUL USES A TWO-DOLLAR WORD in his letter to the Romans: *sanctification*. What on earth does the five-syllable word, sanctification, mean? If you're like me, you need to break the two-dollar word into twenty-five cent words. What simple words tell us what sanctification is? These: *God is making you holy*.

People today want to be better than they are. The answer is holiness, but they don't understand what it is. They can't sniff its delightful fragrance. To be holy means to be set apart for God.

Yet it's something we can't do. We can say we set ourselves apart for God, but soon, we live for ourselves again. Our deeds have the stench of selfishness or cruelty. We want, do and become everything except set apart for God. Nobody smells our mercy or love.

We need God's help to be holy, set apart, people. And the apostle Paul teaches this in Romans.

Jesus Christ sets you free from sin to serve him in holiness. He sets you apart to please and serve God.

### **Choice: Service over Sin**

Paul wrote, "What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that, if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (Romans 6:15-16).

I make a choice every morning. Do I serve God or sin? Whose servant will I be?

Don't waffle on this. You can't. If you don't choose to serve God, to be set apart for him, then you serve sin. No third choice.

Need a haircut? Go to a barber. As you can't see the back of your head, you can't see your sin. You need someone else—the Master—to shape you. And until he does, your good intentions are like uncut hair. They're just words until you act. Kindness only shows when you do it.

So God or sin? That's your question every day when you look in the mirror. As you get ready, talk to Jesus. Say, "Help me resist sin today. Guide me in your service."

Holiness begins with a decision, but it doesn't end there. God also changes us.

### **Change: Sin to Righteousness**

The apostle wrote, "But thanks be to God that you who were slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted and that you, having been set free from sin, have become enslaved to righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

You and I are changed by the heavenly Father. Before I knew Christ, I lived for myself, chased every chance to do me good and forgot everyone else. But "me first" living left me empty and alone. Then Jesus entered my life as Lord. I was no longer sin's property—I belonged to God. And in his mercy, he freed me from loneliness and welcomed me into the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When my granddaughter drops the reins onto her horse's saddle, she gives herself to wherever the horse wants to go.

Let go of your sins, and God's free to lead you where he wants to take you.

If you call Jesus your Savior, you're set free and set apart. You belong to God. His Spirit teaches you to live for him and for other people. You do good for those around you. God changed you from a selfish person into a kind one. Tough as it is, you lift righteousness. You bear its weight. You live for God, and goodness is easier.

### **Call: Serve in Holiness**

Paul wrote, “I am speaking in human terms because of your limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness, leading to even more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification” (Romans 6:19).

You once lived with abandon. You presented your body to impure behavior, even to lawless living. But you were changed through Jesus Christ. You’re set free to serve God in holiness. You’ve heard your call from the Lord. You’re called to be set apart for God.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? It means you live in a sanctified way. To put it in twenty-five cent words: *Jesus sets you free from sin to serve him in holiness. He sets you apart to please and serve God.*

Tomorrow morning, as you drink your coffee, remember: You don’t belong to yourself. Christ set you apart for God, pouring out his life to free you. With every sip, remember you aren’t enslaved to sin but entrusted to serve the Father.

Christ set you free not to wander back into chains but to walk in holiness with him. That’s who you are. You belong to God.

**Amen**

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