

Shawn's article in The Family November 28, 2006

### **BY WHAT ARE YOU MASTERED?**

In Romans 6:16-22, Paul writes, "*Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone {as} slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members {as} slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in {further} lawlessness, so now present your members {as} slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*" (NAS)

When we talk about our commitment to Christ and our personal walk with Him, we do not always reflect the most biblical view. Due to our American context, we are ingrained with concepts like democracy, volunteerism, and personal freedom. Please don't hear me wrong – as an American, I know these are incredible blessings from God that have come at great cost, and I am deeply thankful. However, such concepts should not color how we view our life of faith.

Let me explain myself more clearly. We do not get to vote on what rules and commands we want to obey. It is not permissible to use our freedom to indulge our sinful wants and desires. When it comes to serving the glory of God, we are not simply volunteers, serving according to our own whims.

As the Scripture above reminds us, we are slaves. The Greek word here is the word ***doulos*** which means a bond-slave or bond-servant. Prior to Christ, we are bond-slaves to sin and death. After our conversion, we are redeemed instruments of God and bond-slaves to righteousness. That means that we are to be mastered by righteousness in every dynamic of our lives.

So what does being mastered by righteousness look like in practical terms? It looks like humble and joyful submission, willing and complete obedience, and faithful commitment to honor Christ supremely in our personal lives and in His church. Such levels of attitude and commitment are not foreign concepts to us, but when it comes to our spiritual life, they are often foreign practices. Sanctification is a process initiated at salvation, and our part in that process is to constantly strive to be mastered by righteousness; to faithfully fulfill God's commands; indeed, to experience our greatest joy and pleasure by living for His pleasure.

To that end, I ask us all, how committed are we to our master? What are the attitudes of our hearts toward the commands and demands of God upon our lives? How faithfully are we at making God's priorities our priorities? Does the fruit of our lives reflect the name and nature of the One who has bought us with a price? Once again, Romans 6:22 says, "*But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*"