

10/29/26

I'm so thankful to say that my husband has turned a corner. He's getting better, even though his body is still weak. I guess the season for sickness has begun. Praying you stay healthy.

Blessings,
Jonna

Romans 6:12-23
I'm on the theme of pursuing holiness… Holy Pursuit. That is God's goal for my life, to share His holiness. That is what sanctification and transformation are centered on… making me holy like Jesus. Is that MY goal? Do I push against God's plan or do I cooperate with Him?

As I look back on even these last 6 months, I realize that the way I view God is deeply impacted by whether or not I'm on His plan for my holiness. The Lord has shown me how deeply rooted my pursuit was in being comfortable and wanting things to be easy. If that's my goal, then when God allows things to come into my life that help train me for holiness, I will think He's trying to hurt me. Instead of seeing my training as His loving and gentle means of making me holy, I'll see my training as punishment. But when my purpose aligns with His, I'll see the training as an opportunity. I'll allow Him not only to train me, but also to comfort me when I feel the heaviness of the training. He is all encompassing, everything I need.

I'm learning that comfortable and easy aren't all they're cracked up to be. Comfortable and easy are nice reprieves, but expecting them to be the norm will leave me dissatisfied with life. Living for comfortable and easy is trying to make my life a vacation. No one's life is a vacation. And the more someone is able to make their life like a vacation, the less focused they are on loving Jesus and loving His people… the less likely they are to join with the Lord in His training for the pursuit of holiness. This is a hard lesson to learn, but I'm slowly finding that pursuing holiness in the Lord offers more peace and joy than comfortable and easy ever could.

What does that have to with Romans 6:12-23? The call is for me to present myself to the Lord and serve Him rather than serving sin. Sin corrupts holiness. Any pursuit of sin necessarily requires me to reject God's plan. And sin, as the Lord told Cain in Genesis 4:7, is "always crouching at my door. Its desire is to have me, but I must rule over it."

I'm gonna see the word "sin" in this passage 10 times, along with 2 words like it, "impurity" and "lawlessness". What exactly is sin? Sin is any choice that takes God off the throne of my heart. Even good things can be sin if I'm doing them for the wrong reasons. How do I know if a desire I have is leading me to sin?

- *It leads to sin when not having it makes me angry, anxious, or depressed.*
- *It leads to sin when I'm willing to manipulate or control circumstances in order to get it.*
- *It leads to sin when I'm willing to lie or spin the truth to have it.*
- *It has definitely led to sin when I avoid God because of it.*

Before I start vs. 12, let me remember the call of vs. 11. I "must consider myself dead to sin, and alive to God." What does that look like? Vs. 12-23 will tell me.

Vs. 12-14 ~ "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions." Sin wants to rule me. Romans 7 talks all about that. I may think that I rule over my passions when I choose to sin, but ultimately sin will rule over me. God isn't telling me not to let sin reign in me because He wants to withhold good from me. This is the lie of sin that started in the Garden of Eden. The truth is, God wants me to keep sin from reigning in me because He loves me, and He knows the destructive nature of sin. He wants to give me what my sinful passions never could… sweet relationship with Him, love, joy, peace, hope, and so much more. Holiness is what leads me to those things. Without holiness, I will pursue a happiness I can never attain. God wants to protect me from empty pursuits.

So, if I decide I want to be on His plan, how do I NOT let sin reign in my body? It's all about who I "present" myself to. "Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."

I will offer myself to someone. No matter how I want to define it, I will offer myself either to sin or to the Lord. No matter how I define it, when I offer myself to sin, I become an instrument… a tool… a weapon… of unrighteousness. I become a tool for everything that stands against God. I may rationalize and say that it's just in this tiny little area of my life, no biggie. It doesn't hurt anyone. But James 2:10 says, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." That's sobering.

Well, why offer myself to the Lord? He has brought me from death to life. Sin's goal is my death. God saves me from sin and leads me to life! Everlasting, pure, joy filled, content, peaceful life with Him. So I offer myself to God because of all that He's done for me, and I offer my "members" to God as instruments… tools… weapons… for righteousness, for everything that pleases God. When God is most glorified, I am most satisfied. That's the promise He makes.

I won't grasp that unless I'm allowing the Holy Spirit to transform me by the renewing of my mind. Sin has so corrupted my mind that I can't even comprehend how beautiful it really is to offer myself to Jesus in every aspect of my life. He is so patient and gracious!!! He helps me grasp it little by little as I slowly open my fingers and let Him purify my heart and mind one degree of glory to the next.

As a follower of Jesus Christ, He will help me to release the sin as I cooperate with Him, and He promises that sin no longer has the enslaving power to rule me. If I were "under the law" sin would have that power. I would be trying to earn my way to God, often making up my own rules that never actually get there… or trying to follow His, but for all the wrong reasons. But I'm not under the law. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I'm saved by His grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). I'm saved because of the generosity of His love that led Him to the cross to take my payment, and to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law in perfection… something I could never do.

Sadly, in my twisted, corrupt flesh, sin will try to delude me into thinking that because I'm under grace, not law, that gives me license to sin all the more! Vs. 15 says, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" I wouldn't actually say the words, "I have the right to sin because of grace." But that IS what I'm saying when I say things like, "I have the freedom to do this thing that might cause someone else to stumble." "God just wants me to be happy." "I think He understands that my intentions are good." Satan has no problem letting me think I'm worshiping God while luring me away from Him. But let me never be deceived. Satan's goal is to either destroy my faith or to render me ineffective, and to continue the lie that he told Eve in the Garden of Eden… that God is a liar and He wants to withhold good." Satan was actually talking about himself as most liars do… they accuse the other person of doing the very thing they're doing. Let me not get caught in the trap of lies!!! O Lord, please help me to see that holiness with You is where genuine, satisfying life is.

Vs. 16 ~ "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?"

Sin is perfectly happy to let me believe that I'm not a slave, but master of my destiny. Sin is a liar. I'm a slave, a servant, to something at all times. 24 hours a day, 7days a week, I'm worshiping and serving something or someone. Whoever I yield myself to, that's who I'm serving. Yielding myself to sin ALWAYS leads to death. Even as a believer, I will not lose my salvation, but sin will corrupt and destroy relationships and it will never deliver what it promises… satisfaction, happiness, comfort. Any satisfaction that comes from sin is temporary, and the results never make it worth it. If I'm not satisfied while pursuing things that God is not leading me to, it's not that I'm doing that thing wrong and need to try harder. It's that I'm doing the wrong thing, and it will never satisfy. God wants to free me from that!!!

Obedience to God is what leads me to righteousness. Sin says righteousness is boring. Sin is a liar. In reality, righteousness is something I'm always pursuing. It's just that my definition of righteousness might be wrong. Righteousness is "right-ness", it's what I seek to find approval,

to know that my life has value. Some people define their righteousness by the cultural rules of social justice. Some people define their righteousness by the rules of body image. Some people define righteousness by the social status. Unlike all other forms of "righteousness", righteousness before God is beautiful for 2 huge reasons. First, I don't have to earn it. Romans 5 tells me it's a gift He's already given me. I'm already approved by Him. He's declared it over me, and now He's helping me to grow in righteousness as one already approved and NOT having to earn it. I grow in righteousness with Him as I present myself to Him as one already fully accepted and loved by Him because Jesus already fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law FOR me.

Vs. 17-19 ~ "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." O Lord, I WAS a slave of sin. But Jesus saved me. And now, as You train me and teach me, I'm becoming more and more aligned with Your word. That's what Paul means when he says, "obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed." It's saying, "I was saved when I believed in my heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and I confessed Jesus as my Lord… He's in charge of my life now and forever." My goal in the pursuit of holiness is to commit myself to what pleases God as He lays out for me in His word. Any alignment with sin will necessarily distract me from that goal. So offer myself to God, yield to Him, pursue Him. Why? He set me free from sin and made me a servant of His righteousness.

Slave talk is hard. It goes against the grain of my flesh. My flesh can't be sanctified; God is helping me to stop listening to the voice of my flesh. He's teaching me that being HIS servant is actually freedom! And being a servant of sin is what constricts and steals.

Paul understood that slave talk was hard, so he said in vs. 19, "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification." He's saying, "I know how weak your heart may be, and I get that you understand the concept of slavery." In their culture, slavery was different than what we understand it to be in ours. People in debt would sell themselves into slavery for a period of time to pay off their debt. They were called "indentured servants." So Paul spoke to what they understood.

The point he was making was that all people once presented our members (that part of us that is neither moral or immoral, but can be used for either good or evil) to impurity… unholiness… and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness. 1 John 3:4 says, "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness."

I need to see something Paul's saying here. Sin leads to more sin. There's not a stop gap on sin. Attached to sin is a desensitization process. One sin gets easier and easier… and then the next step toward sin doesn't seem so hard.

Offering myself to God never leads to what will hurt my soul. It leads to more righteousness,

more sanctification… the holiness of God, the peace that comes in being with Him.

Vs. 20-23 ~ "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Sadly, I know this all too well. When I gave myself over to making a path toward sin, shame attached itself to me. Nothing good came from it, and learning to release that shame as I offer myself to the Lord has been a very difficult road! God has never shamed me, but I have shamed myself over and over again. I praise Him for the good He's worked in my life even through the wrong choices I've made… but I definitely don't want to go back there!!! I know He still has a lot of work to do in my life to root out all the selfishness and arrogance and shame of my heart, but I praise Him that He won't give up!!! He will gently and lovingly help me to grow through my training so that I can share His holiness and enjoy the sweetness of deep relationship with Him.

And "now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life." Let me not miss this!!! Yes, offer myself as a slave to God, an indentured servant, a voluntary servant! He has paid my debt. The reason Paul tells me to PRESENT myself or OFFER myself to the Lord as His servant is because the Lord won't force me into it. Forced service is not love. God wants me to choose to love Him. At the end of this service to God here on earth is eternal life with Him as "the Master dresses Himself for service and has the servants recline at His table, and He comes and serves them" (Luke 13:37). And as He welcomes us home, "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:3-5). That's the promise and hope of God!!!

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Sin requires payment. The indentured servant of sin gets paid for his word, but that payment is death… eternal separation from God, suffering in the domain of darkness.

There is no such thing as payment for the servant who receives eternal life. It's a free gift. The Lord says in Isaiah 55:1-2, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (because God requires no payment from me… it's a free gift!). Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."

O Lord, I am convinced! Let me present myself to You today, tomorrow, and forever. Let me see every path You take me on as the road to holiness. I trust You. Even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I trust that ALL Your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness… and You will be with me. That's all I need to know.