BASIC TRAINING

Boot Camp: Sanctification

Romans 6:15-23

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,[c] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 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, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 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****.*

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 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. 22 But 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. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Introduction:

Imagine with me for a moment that you are sitting in a very large concert hall listening to a very famous concert pianist play a magnificent classical work of art. Imagine suddenly the piano comes unglued and all the notes are out of tune. You would suddenly feel this uneasiness in your stomach. You might even feel bad for the pianist. But you would not expect the pianist to continue playing such an awful racket. Now imagine a room full of un-tuned instruments being played by the greatest master. As you endure the torture for a few moments you begin to realize the master is tuning his instrument. They are all playing the same masterpiece which at first is unrecognizable. As the instruments are finely tuned by the master they begin to play in harmony and the concert hall fills with beautiful music. If even one instrument is out of tune then the masterpiece will be ordinary. Sanctification is the Master's work in the believer's life to tune us to play in harmony. God takes a multitude of varying gifted servants and refines them to form the church which moves in unison to accomplish His will. There is something incredibly beautiful about a church that moves in unison to accomplish God's mission and vision. I believe that God is tuning this church to be just such a masterpiece in the world. But it only takes one person or group of people who are out of tune with the mission and vision of God for His church to cause discord or disunity in the body. That is one of the reasons our sanctification is so vitally important. Sanctification brings unity and harmony to the body.

This message is a part of a 6 part series entitled **Basic Training: Establishing the Essentials of Following Jesus.** Here is a short review of some important aspects of this Basic Training.

One of the words we have to define when we talk about following Jesus is **Salvation.** To understand Salvation, we must establish a few points:

- **We are sinners & enemies of a Holy & Righteous God** (Rom 5:10)
- **The Holy/Righteous God will judge sin w/ His wrath** (Rom 2:5)
- **Jesus was our representative, substitute & sacrifice.** (1 Thess 5:9)
- **We unite with Christ by Repentance & Belief in Him.** (Acts 20:21)
- **As a result of being In Christ, we**
    - **Have Been Saved –** *"Justification is the act of God by which He credits the righteousness of Christ to the believer and declares him just."* That's our position in Christ!
    - **Are Being Saved –** *"Sanctification is God's claiming and subsequent purifying of the believer as His possession."* This is our experience coming into conformity with our position.
    - **Will Be Saved –** *"Glorification is God's final transformation of our lowly bodies into a sinless, perfect transformed body."* Our experience being completely conformed to our position.

Text and Proposition: In Romans 6:15-23 we are given a choice to serve one of two masters. One master will lead to death and destruction the other will lead to sanctification and eternal life.

Stand with me as we read Romans 6:15-23.

Paul is speaking here to Followers of Jesus, those not under law but under grace (vs. 15). He begins with a rhetorical question, "What then? Are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" His answer, "Absolutely not!" Sin should not be our normal mode of operation. Sin is any thought or action that violates God's law. Disobeying God's commands is sin. Paul says in Galatians that the Law of Moses was given as a schoolmaster to teach us what sin is. The Law was never intended to save. Only to reveal how sinful we already are.

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In verse 16 Paul begins to clarify why we should not go on sinning if we are under grace? He makes a Yogi Berra like comment, "if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey…" Well duh. If it is so simple then why do we have such a hard time grasping it? We have two masters we can serve? One master will lead to death and destruction the other will lead to sanctification and eternal life.

I. Our First Master is Sin: Serving Sin leads to death.

It has been said that

> *"Sin will take you farther than you want to go, Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay, Sin will cost you more than you want to pay."* – Dr. R.G. Lee

Sin is a very cruel master. It takes many forms. Here are a few examples:
Pride & selfishness– when you are faced with a difficult decision that involves others around you, who do you think about first? Do your decision reflect service and sacrifice or are they selfish and self-serving?
Lust – What is your view of the opposite sex? Do you see them as objects to be possessed and used? Or do you see them as God's children deserving of respect and honor. We should love and cherish our own spouse.
Covetousness – have you ever seen a toy that you did not like? Do you secretly desire what your neighbors have? Do you envy someone else's fame or looks?
Idolatry – Is there anything in your life that consumes more of your time and energy than God? Is there some place you would rather be than here in God's presence today? What excuse do you use for not getting up early to study God's Word? Turn off the TV! Get out of bed! Say no to the ball game!
Adultery – maybe you are angry with your spouse. You think they don't listen to you. You deserve their respect. If they won't give it to me then someone else will. Last time I checked two sinners sinning together does not equal a holy union. You're headed for disaster. Wake up!
Fornication – maybe you're not married and you think it is ok to sleep with someone who is not your wife. God forbid!
Homosexuality – is no different than any other sexual sin. God created man and woman to be one flesh in marriage, one man with one woman for life. You may not be able to stop the desire but you can certainly control what you do with it. The same is true with lust, adultery, and other types of fornication including pornography. You don't have to be a slave to sin!
Anger – Have you ever led someone to Christ that you were angry at? No!
Murder – Jesus said that if you are angry with your brother it is just like committing murder. It is hard to be angry with someone when you love them as Christ loves them.
Stealing – have you ever "borrowed" something and not returned it? It doesn't belong to you! Stop stealing!
Lying – all of these often lead to lying. We know what sin is, we just don't want anyone else to know that we know. We lie so that people with think better of us or because we believe it's better if they don't know the truth. Stop lying to yourself!

> *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23

All of us, myself included have served sin as our master. We know the cruelty and deceitfulness with which it reigned over us. But thanks be to God that we are no longer under its control. In Christ Jesus we are set free from the bondage of sin and death!

> *"Sin is the transgression of the law, the death of Christ is the satisfaction of the law, justification is the verdict of the law, and sanctification is the believer's fulfillment of the law."* — Ernest F. Kevan,

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Sin leads to death. (Vs. 20-21) The fruit of sin is death. In Genesis God told Adam and Eve on the day that you sin, disobey my one command by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall surely die. They did eat but they did not immediately die a physical death, but they did immediately die spiritually. Sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). They were separated from God by their own selfish decision. We are separated from God by our own selfish desires (James 1:12-15). Our sin leads to death, spiritual and eventually physically. We can't control our physical death, but we do have a choice when it comes to spiritual death.

Sin is a cruel master. It will take you as far into the darkness as you want to go. A follower of Christ cannot live in the darkness. If you are happy and comfortable in the darkness in your sin, you need to ask yourself "who is my master?" Sin is not the only master available.

II. Our Second Master is God: Jesus wants us to serve Him. His righteousness in us leads to our sanctification which ends in eternal life. (Vs. 22)

We can choose to serve another Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

> *"…if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."* –Romans 10:9-10

> *"…God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* –John 3:16

If we choose to serve Him as Master we will reap an eternal reward. When we serve the Lord by doing what is right before God (righteousness) (vs. 19) we are led to sanctification (other translations – holiness). What is sanctification and why is it so important?

It is God's will for us!

> *"Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.* ***For this is the will of God, your sanctification:*** *that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to* ***control his own body in holiness and honor****, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity,* ***but in holiness****. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you."* –1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Sanctification literally means to be set apart. The Greek word used here and in Romans 6 can be translated holiness or sanctification. This is the process by which God refines us and sets us apart for His work. Remember the illustration at the beginning of the musical instruments playing in tune, we all need constant tuning. Sanctification is God's tuning fork for our lives.

> *"Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship."* — A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God

There are three stages of sanctification:

Stage 1 – Positional Sanctification (Acts 20:32 & 1 Cor. 6:11)

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This stage begins at salvation. It is also called Justification. The moment we decide to follow Jesus and make Him Lord of our lives we are sanctified, set apart from the world. We experience new birth. We are alive to God in Christ Jesus (vs. 12). We are no longer dead in our trespasses and sin.

> *"God never grants justification without also giving sanctification at the same time ... Sanctification in us begins as an instantaneous act of the Holy Spirit and is carried forward by His continued action in our lives."* — Jerry Bridges, Holiness Day by Day: Transformational Thoughts for Your Spiritual Journey

Stage 2 – Progressive Sanctification

God's work of setting us apart does not end there. We must live on in this physical body until it is replaced with a new incorruptible body. This is God's work in us to keep us in tune with His will and plan. This sanctification requires work on our part. Not to keep our salvation but to maintain a healthy relationship with our master, Jesus Christ.

> *"Justification is the new creation of the new man, and sanctification his preservation until the day of Jesus Christ."* — Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

Stage 3 – Complete Sanctification (Philippians 3:20-21)

Then finally we will one day experience complete Sanctification or Glorification. One day this physical body will perish and the corruptible will give way to the incorruptible.

> *"…in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory.""* –1 Corinthians 15:52-54

It is at this point we will be complete in Christ Jesus.

> *"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."* –Philippians 3:20-21

O what a glorious day! But for now we must remain vigilant to allow God's work of sanctification to take place in us.

> *"Sanctification is more about the direction than the distance we have traveled."* — Ed Welch

We are to strive for holiness. Someone has said that we need to find where God is at work and go there and serve Him. God is at work here at Crosslink. We see the evidence all around us. Dig in and go to work!

Sanctification and spiritual growth go hand in hand. If you want to know where you are in the sanctification process then you need to examine your spiritual maturity.

- Are you more like Christ today than you were a month ago?
- Are you making disciples or just building your network?
- Are you spending more time in the Bible than you do watching TV?
- Do you look forward to Sunday or is it just another chore on the list?
- Would your family call you the spiritual leader of your home?
- Does your spouse think you are growing in Christ?
- Are you serving at Crosslink out of obligation or love?
- Are you actively participating in a Life Group and growing?
- Are you willing to serve as a Deacon or a Life Group Host?
- Do you spend more time talking to your buddies than to the Lord?
- When was the last time you shared the Gospel with someone?

Sanctification is not a static event that happens to us. It is an active process that we must be intimately involved in. God saved us to do good works not by our good works.

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> *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* –Ephesians 2:8-10

In verse 22 of Romans 6 Paul tells us that our sanctification ends in eternal life and then in verse 23 Paul gives us a concise summary of his previous remarks.

> "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Which master are you serving? Sin which results in death or the Lord Jesus Christ which ends in eternal life. If you have never made Jesus Master of your life then today is the day for you to take that step. You already have one master, sin who will leave you with nothing but heartbreak and hopelessness. Surrender your life to Jesus today and you will serve a kind and gentle Master Who is leading you to walk in His path through sanctification which ends in eternal life. Jesus says to you,

> *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* –Matthew 11:28-30

Come be a part of God's symphony today. Maybe you are a follower of Christ but you haven't been growing in Christ. You have been serving another master. Don't waste another day. Turn from your sin and follow Jesus once again. Let the Master tune you to His masterpiece.