

# Faith At Home

## Wednesday, June 24th Bible Study



Romans 6:15-23

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? But thanks be to God that you, having once been 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 slaves of righteousness. 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 greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Theologically Loaded Words and Phrases

When you want to explain what it means to be Christian to someone who is not a Christian, you need words they understand—words that connect with who they are. Paul used words which would have been familiar to ancient Romans because of their sense of philosophy and dedication to other religions.

But many of these words have become church-exclusive words today, and there is difficulty connecting with others with these words. Imagine explaining Christianity without using words like: Sin, law, grace, slaves, righteousness, sanctification, even eternal life.

So many of these words have popular definitions that have strayed away from the church word. So many of these words do not even have clear meaning. How do you explain faith in Jesus then, conveying the concepts expressed in churchy words but said in a way as Paul writes, meets others “natural limitations.”

It is a lot harder than you think.

### St. Paul

Paul becomes one of early Christianity’s biggest evangelists. He travels throughout the Mediterranean World and leads many Jews and Gentiles alike into following the Way of Jesus. His many letters make up most of the New Testament. And his notorious theological arguments with the Christian leaders in Jerusalem become the basis of most of his writings. At the heart of Paul’s understanding of Jesus is grace—a free gift from God, not of our doing, but of Jesus’ doing. This gift changes our entire being, how we should think, and how we should act toward others.

### Rome

The capital of the empire, a city built on the backs of slaves, where games in the Coliseum are really death sentences, where depravity among the wealthy knows no boundary. There was probably a small group of Jews living in Rome, but Paul’s letter to Rome, sent ahead of his arrival there, was not to the Jews. It was to people who never heard of Yahweh, Israel, or anything the Jews would have taught or believed. Paul had to find a way to explain to people who had no basis of understanding why Jesus matters even to them.

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Martin Luther developed an understanding that people are “simultaneously saint and sinner.” In Latin, the phrase is “simul Justus et peccador.” (I include that in case you have heard it somewhere and wondered what it meant).

How does Paul’s understanding of sin in chapter 6 of the letter to the Romans support this idea that at the exact same time we can be sinner and be saint, that is be saved?

Following the understanding of the both/and principle of Luther’s teaching, how are we supposed to approach our sinful nature?

If we understand ourselves through the lens of both sinner and saint, how does this teach us to judge others?

We teach that God is amazing, loving, full of compassion, all-knowing even. Why would God create knowing brokenness (sin) would be a part of the creation?

## Check-In Time

Our diaspora is nearly over. What has been the biggest learning about yourself you gained over this time?

What is one thing you miss most about the way life was before the diaspora started?

What is something you are looking forward to resuming as our state and nation move into the next phases of recovery from the pandemic?

What is something you have started during the diaspora that you want to continue?

What lessons do you wish you had learned during the diaspora?

How do you credit God for helping you with endurance during this time?

## A time of blessing

God be with you till we meet again ...

St. Paul writes: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, + Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love.

**Amen.**