

March 25, 2017

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Scripture

Romans 6:12-23

¹²Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. ¹³No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶Do 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? ¹⁷But 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, ¹⁸and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹I 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. ²⁰When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. ²²But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Devotional

In a culture that admires self-made people who pull themselves up by their bootstraps, Lent's time of introspection can easily become another one of these times in which we try to get ourselves in shape. "Striving for holiness" and "living in obedience" are seductive temptations for those who have "accepted Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior."

Careful reading of Paul suggests that the gift we have received in Christ Jesus goes much deeper than that. "Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life," he says (Rom 6:13). In Christ we, who were dead, have been united with him in his resurrection, we read yesterday. That's way bigger than "choosing for Jesus." To be resurrected from the dead is not something we do ourselves. It needs to be done to us.

And yes, because of this, we live differently. An imperative follows the indicative. But our living differently is exactly a resting in the fact that we no longer have to shape our own lives. That we no longer have to be the masters of our own destiny, but that we have become slaves of the righteous One—of Jesus. That's the gift of Lent.

Prayer

Lord our God, Thank you for bringing us to life. Will you help us today to live as the ones you already have given us to be. Amen.