

“Advantage: You”

Scripture: Romans 6:12-23

Graphic: death vs. life, sin, body parts

Key Verses: 22 But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life.

Theme: Because of Jesus, we can now choose between allowing the power of sin to be our death, or the power of grace and holiness in Christ to be our eternal life. The choice is easy (or is it?). The advantage of choosing to obey God is sanctification, holiness, and eternal life.

1) Introduction

- a) As we begin this morning, let me pose this question: What advantage is there to being a follower of Jesus Christ?
- b) I’m telling you, there better be some advantage, right?
- c) Because it would be a lot easier to listen to my own desires...it would be a lot easier to not feel guilty or have to apologize when I say something wrong. Asking for forgiveness is not pleasant.
- d) It would be a lot easier to be that guy who I encountered this week who didn’t appreciate the fact that I put on my turning signal a little late and let me know it with the singular universal sign of displeasure.
- e) It would be easier to say and present one thing about my life and actually live another in secret.
- f) What advantage is there to following Jesus? To fearing God? To giving up what I want to do, and doing what God is asking me to do?
- g) If you’re a tennis player, you know that when you get to Advantage as a score, you’re like ONE POINT away from winning the game. Is our advantage in the Christian life just the hope that we are close to winning the game of life?
- h) Dictionary.com defines advantage as: *any state, circumstance, opportunity, or means specially favorable to success, interest, or any desired end*
- i) OK, but who gets to define what is favorable to success? Who gets to define even what is success? Who gets to say what the desired end is?
- j) Is it the world around us? Or is it God?

- k) For the next couple months, we will be camped out in the Book of Romans...and I'll warn you now, we'll be hitting pretty close to home when it comes to sin and the struggles we have...Paul doesn't hold back when it comes to living one way and saying something else.
- l) The Book of Romans is in some ways, Paul working out his own salvation, but it's also a call for us to stop sitting on whatever fence we find ourselves as followers of Jesus and keep pressing on to let go of the sin in our lives and obey God...
- m) Let's open to Romans chapter 6, starting in verse 12...
- n) Let's pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 12-14

- i) I don't think we can even begin to think about what Paul is asking us to DO before we have an accurate understanding of sin. Sin is one of those Christianese words that we either NEVER TALK ABOUT, or we talk about ALL THE TIME, and it gets so overused and watered down that we have no concept of what SIN is.
- ii) Are you ready for some more Greek? Good!
- iii) Sin is *a, marti, a* (ha-mar-tia).
- iv) *a, marti, a* (ha-mar-tia) is a departure from doing what is right. It's purposely or ignorantly veering off the path that one KNOWS is what God wants. I've heard some people say that sin is missing the bulls-eye on the target.
- v) *a, marti, a* (ha-mar-tia) is a rejection of God by self-assertive human beings. It's choosing to reject what God is telling us to do.
- vi) For the apostle Paul, sin is an abstract moral principle or force personified as evil in character. It's this guy who can have influence over us.
- vii) So we put those together and here's our definition of sin – Sin is anything that works against God, either in us or in the world around us,

- including those actions in which we choose to engage, that allow evil to increase in any form.
- viii) So Paul says, don't let the things that work against God, including your willful desire to engage in that which is evil, REIGN (have control, exercise dominion) in your mortal bodies (your flesh, your life here on earth) so that you obey their passions.
 - ix) Here's where this personification of evil comes in...Paul is treating sin as if it were a person standing next to you telling you to do things that, if you did them, would prove that SIN had control over you.
 - x) Paul says, "Don't let SIN have control over you so that you give in to the desires it offers to satisfy."
 - xi) Don't offer an eye, or an ear, or a mouth, or any part of your body to doing things that are sinful. Don't let pornography control you...don't gossip about other people...don't engage in ANY forms of sexual sin...
 - xii) Instead, take the whole package – take your whole body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, organs: the WHOLE THING – your LIFE) – and give it to God. God wants us to formally stand and say, "God, I don't want to be used by the forces of evil to reject you, so take my life!"
 - xiii) It's not a promise to be perfect and never sin again. It's not a pious prayer to impress other people. It's simply and profoundly an acknowledgement that there are two paths to take. And I'm choosing the one that leads to something greater than being controlled by sin in my life.
 - xiv) When I went before the Board of Ordained ministry, I had to physically present myself to them for approval. I had to present papers about my theology, about my personal characteristics, about my gifts and abilities...and I PRESENTED those to the Board.
 - xv) When we are sick, we PRESENT ourselves to the doctor, with our symptoms and medical histories...
 - xvi) When we go to court because we got a speeding ticket or something, we have to present ourselves.

xvii) Present yourselves to God as those being brought from death (from sin) to life...AND present all the parts of your body for use in God's kingdom growth plan for the world.

xviii) And if you do that, Paul makes this statement in verse 14: Sin WILL HAVE NO DOMINION OVER YOU. It's not about the LAW, which was only concerned about what to do and what NOT to. It's about the freedom of choose God's way without the control of sin in your life.

xix) Verse 15...

b) Read verse 15-16

i) Paul says, "Hey, OK, so if God's grace frees us to choose what to do, should we just go ahead and sin because we can?" It'd be more fun! It'd be easier to just do what we want knowing that God gave us the choice.

ii) And his answer is No!

iii) The freedom we are given to choose is to be used to choose what is right ACCORDING TO GOD.

iv) Why? Look at verse 16...

v) Whatever we present ourselves to as slaves becomes our master. Even though we have the choice to sin, Paul is warning us that when we choose to sin, we're in danger of becoming slaves to that sin.

vi) We see it over and over in our lives. Those who choose to view pornography, become addicted to pornography and find themselves rejecting real intimacy and relationships because of the images and endorphins. If you are messed up in pornography, I'm calling you out right now. Get someone to help you stop. It will control you.

vii) If you find yourself caught up in talking ABOUT people and not TO them, check yourself! Gossip is the bane of the church from mostly well-meaning folks who find themselves connected to lots of people. Gossip can be addicting. It can become the only way we communicate with others. And it doesn't take long for someone who is spiritually aware to hear, "Well, so-and-so is like this." "Or she did this-and-such" for the red flags to go up. I want people to hold me accountable on this and if you ever hear me gossiping, I want to call me on it.

viii) Paul tells us to present ourselves to God, not sin which leads to death....to present ourselves to obedience, which leads to righteousness.

c) Read verses 17-19

- i) I'll be honest with you: this is every pastor's greatest vision and desire for the church of Jesus Christ!
- ii) Would it be that everyone who hears the Word of God entrusted to the church would be transformed by it, and become obedient to God!
- iii) To be obedient FROM THE HEART – this isn't just shallow surface obedience when we come here on Sunday morning...or when we meet for our TLC Small Groups...
- iv) This isn't just some tidying up when the pastor comes over...
- v) This is DEEP, FERVENT, UNWAVERING obedience to the Word of God and the teaching of the church that weathers the storms of life. This kind of obedience is what proves that you have chosen, are choosing, will choose, and have the capacity to faithfully choose to obey Christ and BE righteous.
- vi) And this is in spite of the fact that you once were dominated by sin, before you trusted Christ as Lord and Savior.
- vii) Anyone who does not know Christ, by default and definition, is dominated by sin. There's no choice with these people. They can only choose deeper and deeper levels of sin...because they are slaves to sin.
- viii) Anyone who KNOWS Christ as Lord and Savior, can still choose to sin – and still may be dominated by sin as they grow as Christians – but are able to choose righteousness because of Jesus.
- ix) If I only want to go to the convenient store that has only junk food, then all I'll ever be able to purchase is junk food.
- x) But if someone tells me that there is another store, another way, and I go to Wegman's, which has junk food and healthier food, I can choose the healthier food, even though the junk food is there too.
- xi) The first store doesn't give me a choice...the second one does.

- xii) Life without Christ has one choice – spiritual junk food!
- xiii) Life with Christ may still have junk food, but the Holy Spirit IN ME wants me to choose the healthier food, which is righteousness.
- xiv) And when we choose healthier food, it leads to healthier bodies. When we choose to be obedient to righteousness, it leads to our advantage...sanctification.
- xv) Let's talk about that advantage...verse 20

d) Read verses 20-22

- i) There's no choice when we are slaves to sin. Even though we somehow might want to make the righteous choice, we can't – at least not in God's economy.
- ii) So much of our morality in this country is legislated by the government that I think we confuse righteous choices with civil law. We don't we speed? Because we might get pulled over? NO! Because speeding leads to accidents that injure people.
- iii) You see? We legislate our morality and think that we're good Christians because we don't break the law.
- iv) Here's the problem...if we legislate our morality, when we break the law, we bow before the civil authorities. We take whatever punishment is handed down.
- v) God's plan is for Him to legislate our morality by calling us to obedience to Him and the Word of God only.
- vi) And in God's economy, when we sin, we have to bow before Almighty God. And when sin is reigning in our lives, when we are dominated by sin, then that can only lead to death.
- vii) BUT...BUT (underline that) when you are freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification.
- viii) Here's the whole point! There is an advantage to being a full-fledged follower of Jesus Christ. And that advantage is sanctification.

ix) Simply put, sanctification is the process by which we are transformed into the image of Christ. It's the process of become more holy, more able to keep from sinning, and more ready to obey God in your life.

x) The end result of that, is eternal life, Paul tells us in verse 22.

e) Read verse 23

i) And then he sums it up like this: The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3) Application

i) Here's how this applies to our lives:

ii) If you believe that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God who was sent to earth to live a fully human, yet fully divine life...and you believe that Jesus died on the cross as the Messiah with the power to save you from your sin and the death it leads to. And if you have put your trust in Jesus for eternal salvation...then you have one task:

iii) Follow Him! Don't do anything else, ever, in your life!

iv) Be obedient to what he said. Be obedient to His Holy Spirit in your life. Get rid of all the sin and anger and lack of contentment and searching after the next big things that will make your life perfect, everything that is holding you back from fully walking as a disciple of Christ. Go out into the world and tell people about Him and invite them to follow Him too.

v) Jesus asks us to give him EVERYTHING we have because he gave everything HE had to save us from death...to give us eternal life.

vi) And even though it would seem like taking eternal life over eternal death is an easy choice, the fact is, it's probably going to cost you a lot! So much so that there may even be times when you wonder why you decided to give your life to Christ!

4) Conclusion

a) So, what's the advantage of being a follower of Jesus Christ?

- b) The advantage that we have is that the more we allow Christ to guide us, the more we get to be like Christ, and the more we can respond to His salvation...
- c) Without Him, we are choosing sin...death...hell.
- d) Paul makes it clear that we can't choose to live life as a slave to sin while at the same time living life as a slave to God.
- e) This is not some birthday party where they ask you if you want cake or pie and you say BOTH!
- f) One way leads to hell.
- g) One way leads to eternal life – that's the advantage you get when you choose Christ.
- h) So it's an easy choice after all – to be obedient to God. Just present your WHOLE BODY to Him and be transformed by your advantage.
- i) Yes. Yet, why is it so hard to choose not to sin in our lives...to do the very things that we know God does not want us to do...
- j) We'll talk about that next week, as we dive into Romans 7.
- k) Let's pray...