



## INTRODUCTION

[I used this story of Simeon the Stylite, but you can insert a story from your past or another story from history.]

I want to tell you a story about a crazy man. He is known to history as St. Simeon the Stylite. Simeon was born in 390 A.D. and died in 459. At the age of 13, he heard a sermon on the Beatitudes of Jesus from Matthew 5. He threw himself down at the door of a monastery, begging to be granted entry. He lay there several days and refused to eat or drink. He regularly denied himself food, except on Sundays.

He would punish his body by lacing it tightly with cords. He was so extreme that he was kicked out of the monastery.

When he left the monastery, he spent time on a mountain, living as a hermit. Countless people would make the arduous trek up the mountain to see this strange man and marvel at his dedication. But this did not bring peace or satisfaction to his soul. So, Simeon traveled to an isolated area about 40 miles east of Antioch and spent the next 36 years on the top of a pillar. The Greek word for pillar is *stylus*, hence Simeon the Stylite.

The first pillar he constructed, on which he lived for four years, was some 9 ft. high. He eventually moved to a pillar 18 ft. high, then to one that was 33 ft. high. The last pillar on which he perched himself and lived for twenty years was 60 ft. tall. There was a small platform on the top of the pillar, 3 ft. in diameter. It was surrounded by a railing against which Simeon could lean if he got tired, and of course, against which he would rest his body to sleep. The ever-increasing height of the pillar was supposedly an indication of how much closer to God Simeon was rising. His followers and admirers would carry food up to him by a ladder.

While on top of the pillar, from which he never departed, he could never lie down or sit, but only stand, or lean against the railing. He would often spend the entire day bowing down, so that his head almost touched his feet. One observer counted no fewer than 1,244 such bows in one day. He wore a covering of the animal skins and had a chain around his neck.

There he stood, exposed to the scorching heat of the desert, sometimes drenching rain, and even excessively cold weather. All the while he remained atop that pillar, he groaned and moaned over his sin, striving after holiness but never achieving the peace and joy he so desperately desired.

## TRANSITION

I hear stories like this, and it makes me ask, Why? Why would anyone choose to live on top a pillar, cut off from everything? Obviously, this dude was crazy but, he believed that if he removed comforts and pleasures he could defeat the power of sin in his life. If he withdrew from the world, he wouldn't be tempted.

In Romans 6, Paul is also concerned with the presence and power of sin in his life and in the lives of other Christians, but his approach to solving the problem was altogether different from the path chosen by Simeon.

So, let's dive into Romans 6 to see what Paul's approach tells us about this.

Romans 6:15-23

*<sup>15</sup> What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not! <sup>16</sup> Don't you know that if you offer yourselves to someone<sup>[a]</sup> as obedient slaves, you are slaves of that one you obey—either of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thank God that, although you used to be slaves of sin, you obeyed from the heart that pattern of teaching to which you were handed<sup>[b]</sup> over, <sup>18</sup> and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I am using a human analogy because of the weakness of your flesh.<sup>[c]</sup> For just as you offered the parts of yourselves as slaves to impurity, and to greater and greater lawlessness, so now offer them as slaves to righteousness, which results in sanctification. <sup>20</sup> For when you were slaves of sin, you were free with regard to righteousness.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>21</sup> So what fruit was produced<sup>[e]</sup> then from the things you are now ashamed of? The outcome of those things is death. <sup>22</sup> But now, since you have been set free from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in*

*sanctification—and the outcome is eternal life! <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Well, in this passage, Paul was trying to make sure that he had all his bases covered when it came to understanding the relationship between living in God's grace and fleeing a lifestyle of sin.

Paul spent quite a lot of effort in the last passage, Romans 6:1-14, describing how we are dead to sin so we should no longer live in it.

Look, we are dead to it, so we are no longer going to live for it, but we are alive in Christ. He made it clear that we shouldn't sin more so that we can experience more grace. No, we are dead to that way of living because of Jesus. Now, Paul was going to make a shift.

HE USED THE IMAGE OF BEING HELD CAPTIVE AS SLAVES TO HELP US UNDERSTAND HIS POINT.

Instead of talking about being dead to sin and alive to Christ, he pivoted to talking about the difference between being a slave to sin and being a slave to righteousness.

But in verse 15, Paul dealt with the question of whether or not it's okay to sin, since we aren't under the law anymore but under grace. And I really think that's where a lot of people are today. "I don't have to obey the law, because I am saved by grace."

What was the law Paul is talking about? The law Paul was talking about is the old way of living, the standards that were set in place for God's people way back in the Old Testament. The law was put in place to show God's standard of holiness and righteousness.

But Jesus came and there is a better way because of Him and that is Grace. What is grace? Grace is the free gift of unearned favor and love of God we receive, and it is only because of Jesus.

Paul was saying, well, it's not the law that saves you. You are saved because of Jesus and what He did on the cross. But freedom in Jesus doesn't mean that you have no master, but that you have a new master.

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