

## GET HOOKED ON RIGHTEOUSNESS!

**Today's Text: Romans 6: 1 - 23**

### **Extracts:**

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that *our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...* Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts ... but *present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ... And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness... so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord [Rom. 6: 5-6, 12-13, 19, 22-23]*

*The Happy Hooker (1975) is a movie based on Xaviera Hollander's best seller of the same name that chronicles the sexual escapades of a young woman who used her love of sex without moral or social inhibitions to make money.<sup>1</sup> It contributed significantly to the revolution now flowering as same-sex marriage in Europe and the Americas. Somebody is now copying her techniques to run a legitimate and clean business called, "A Happy Hooker," that is building a one-stop website for daily deals in fishing, boating and camping.<sup>2</sup>*

*It is interesting how committed the children of the world can be when it comes to what they love or choose to do. We often come across different people who are hooked on one thing or the other, such as drugs, alcohol or sex, work or sports. When such people then turn to Christ, why does their commitment to their new life seem to slack? Can we not learn some principles from their past lives that the Holy Spirit can help us to use to get them hooked on righteousness? In this week's Bible verses, Paul enjoins believers to stop being slaves of sin and become slaves of righteousness for holiness. In other words, rather than be hooked on sin, they should get hooked on righteousness. Can we borrow principles from our sinful past to help build our new lives in righteousness? That is what we will try to do in this week's very challenging study.*

<sup>1</sup> "The Happy Hooker (film)-1975" From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Happy\\_Hooker\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Happy_Hooker_(film))

<sup>2</sup> "A Happy Hooker- Get hooked on our Daily Deals!" <http://ahappyhooker.com/> [2012]

## 1. Background: From slaves of sin to slaves of God

In the *Parable of the Unjust Steward*, Jesus tells the story of a rich man's steward who was accused of wasting his master's resources. His employer told him to account for his stewardship because he could no longer work for him. In retirement, the outgoing steward feared that he would be too old to work or too ashamed to beg. So, he went about cooking debtors' records to cover up his corrupt intention of awarding himself an undeserved pension fund! When the rich man uncovered his unjust steward's scheme, he commended him "because he had dealt shrewdly." An important conclusion that Jesus drew our attention to from that story is that "the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" [Lk 16: 1-8].

Indeed, it is remarkable how dedicated the sons (and daughters) of this world are to what they are hooked on. Why can believers not demonstrate a similar fervour when it comes to upholding holy living? *Why do we vacillate between obedience and backsliding so often? Is it not helpful to dissect the practices of hookers to reveal principles that the sons of light can emulate?* After all, Matthew's skills as a tax collector (a group scorned by the Jewish religious leaders as sinners) stood him well in chronicling the life of Jesus that we now know as the Gospel according to Matthew [Lk 5: 27-30]. When Jesus wanted fishers of men, He tapped into the fishing skills of Peter and his colleagues [vv. 8-11]. Does God not choose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise [1 Cor. 1: 27]?

In this week's Bible verses, *Paul used the expression "slaves of sin" to describe those who are hooked on sin and "slaves of righteousness" or "slaves of God" to describe the children of light who are now hooked on righteous living.* The trans-Atlantic trade in humans, especially Africans some centuries ago, has made most of us quite sensitive to the use of the term, "slaves." But *in our study, we shall use "slave" to refer to a person who is owned by somebody else by own choice, not by chance.*

Let us pay attention to the following critical points that Paul has drawn to our attention in this week's study:

### a) *You are a slave to whom you obey*

Paul wrote, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slave, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" [Rom. 6: 16]. Here, Paul is saying that *it is your free choice whom you choose to obey.* Even under the Law of Moses, the LORD enjoined the children of Israel to set free after six years a Hebrew servant that they have bought "but if the servant says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go free,' then his master shall bring him to the judges [who] shall bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he

*shall serve him forever*” [Ex. 21: 1-6]. So, such a person became a slave no longer by chance but by choice. So it is today with ANYONE that willingly chooses whom s(he) will obey.

You may have your heroes, idols or role models who are directly or indirectly influencing your lives. You may be looking at some Joneses in your family, school, church or place of work that you are patterning your lives after. You may have completed school and are looking for work. Those television operas that you get hooked on when your parents or guardians are away from home are ALL your own choices. Nobody is teleguiding you. So, the responsibility is yours. That was why Joshua challenged the children of Israel to choose whom they would serve: the gods of their ancestors on the other side of the Nile or the idols in the new land of Canaan or whomever. But, as for him and his family, they would serve the living God [Josh. 24: 15]. Therefore, *it is your choice to be a slave of sin (and be hooked on sin) or a slave of God (and be hooked on righteousness).*

b) *Behaviour of slaves of sin*

According to sociologists, the definition of a situation is real in its consequences. How you behave defines the one that you obey. So, how do slaves of sin behave? They are “slaves of *uncleanness*, and of *lawlessness leading to more lawlessness*” [Rom. 6: 19]. Such uncleanness or lawlessness manifests as works of the flesh which are “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like... those who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” [Gal 5: 19-21].

Clearly, it is an obsession, an addiction. Take the example of the adulterous woman in the Book of Proverbs [Prov. 7: 6-23]. She was married to a rich man [vv. 19-20]. Therefore, she was not driven into adultery for any economic reasons. Yet, each night when her husband was away on a business trip, she would put on “the attire of a harlot” and lurk around in the open square and at every corner [vv. 10-12], looking for young men “devoid of understanding” [v. 7]. In fact, she brought her lovers to her heavily perfumed marital bed to take their “fill of love until morning” [vv. 17-18]. That is not the behaviour of a normal person. She was hooked on what she did as if demon-possessed!

So, examine yourself. When you are driven by an inordinate ambition to get rich by hook or crook or to see sexual misconduct as an adventure, something is wrong. You visit some congregations and hear stories of church leaders sexually ravaging their members and yet, nobody is squealing or complaining. That is hardly new among believers. For

example, writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul said, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles ... and you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you” [1 Cor. 5: 1-2]. Does it make sense to be called a believer and continue in sin?

c) *Behaviour of slaves of God*

Paul admonished believers, “Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” [Rom. 6: 13]. He enjoined believers to now present their “members as slaves of righteousness for holiness” [v. 19].

As slaves of God, believers have been bought with a precious price- with the blood of Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 6:20]. Their bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit [v. 19] who can now manifest in them His fruit of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control.” *They are now Christ’s, having crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. They are now to live and walk in the Spirit* [Gal. 5: 22-25].

That looks hard but people less privileged than we are have done it. For example, when Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce Joseph to lie with her, he refused, saying, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” [Gen. 39: 9]. Even in his agony, Job said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?” [Job 31: 1]. Mary Magdalene was delivered from seven demons [Lk 8: 2] and for the rest of her life, she remained faithful to God and His Christ. It is hard but over the centuries, believers have behaved like true slaves of righteousness!

d) *Outcome*

Every choice has its consequences. Paul wrote, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But *now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” [Rom. 6: 20-23].

Let us summarize what Paul has told us in the foregoing. It is often said that a river is crooked because it is looking for the easiest route to the sea! Such a route avoids rocks and high hills and goes for soft sands and slopes. It is also said that

the road to success is always under construction. That is because success is a moving target! Nevertheless, *to get hooked on sin is myopic and ultimately leads to death and hell fire. But to get hooked on righteousness is hard but it ultimately leads to joyful living on earth and eternity in heaven after death. Take your choice!*

## 2. Making the transition

In order to make a successful transition from sin to righteousness, we can perhaps borrow a few techniques that enabled us to get hooked on sin and apply them in our new world of righteousness and holy living. Here are some of such techniques:

### a) *Know your new Master*

The sinner's master is self or Satan, the father of lies [Jn 8: 44]. Satan tempts people with the lust of the flesh [physical/material], the lust of the eyes [psychological] and the pride of life [spiritual] [1 Jn 2: 16]. For example, when he tempted Eve with eating the forbidden fruit, we are told, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], that it was pleasant to the eye [the lust of the eye] and a tree desirable to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of its fruit and ate it" [Gen. 3: 6]. Compare that to the temptation of Jesus. Satan told Him to turn a stone into bread [the lust of the flesh]. When that failed, he took Him to the mountain and showed Him a vision of material blessings [lust of the eyes] that he could give to Jesus if only He worshipped him. When that also failed, Satan set Jesus on the pinnacle of the temple and told Him to throw Himself down if He is the Son of God [the pride of life] [Lk 4: 1-12]. In all three cases, Satan failed because Jesus knew His master- His Father of whom He spoke thus, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner" [Jn 5: 19].

Do you know God and His Christ? Remember how dedicated you used to be to observe the rules of demonic practices before you were saved. Remember during rain or shine how you drove your expensive cars to make appointments with your sorcerers and magicians in thick forests, the same way King Saul went under night cover to meet the witch of En Dor [1 Sam. 28: 1-8]? Apply that same zeal to search for God and His Christ in the Scriptures given by inspiration of God, that is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness. That way, you will become thoroughly equipped for every good work [2 Tim. 3: 16-17].

### b) *Learn how to always please Him*

People of the world sure know how to please those they consider critical to their success. They will steal, kill or destroy for them. Now that you have been saved, you can apply such dedication but in a different way. Without faith, God says you cannot please Him and those who come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [**Heb. 11: 6**]. Jesus says that you can do NOTHING without Him. All you need to do is to be a branch living on sap from His vine [**Jn 15: 1-5**].

*As a slave of sin, you worked too hard for nothing that endures. As a slave of righteousness, you are a free rider on the back of Christ to His Father's house in heaven. All He has asked of you is to hold steady, no matter the speed or the whirls of events around you. Is that too hard to do?*

c) *Enjoy yourself!*

Satan gave you enjoyment, that is pleasurable but transient blessings. Now Jesus has come that you may have life and have it more abundantly [**Jn 10: 10**]. He no longer sees you as a servant but as a friend, especially if you do WHATEVER He commands you [**Jn 15: 14-15**]. Now you can sleep soundly, like Peter in prison [**Acts 12:6**] or sing and praise God in pain like Paul and Silas in chains [**Acts 16: 25-26**].

*From the foregoing, it appears that we are already adequately prepared for a life of righteousness, no matter the route(s) we have taken to get there. In effect, you can almost always tell Satan, "What is new in that new temptation? I have already seen it all. So, get behind me, Satan!"*

### 3. Conclusion: Get hooked on Jesus!

When Paul sent Onesimus, a runaway slave, back to his master, Philemon, he wrote, "I am sending him back... for perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave- a beloved brother ... both in the flesh and in the Lord" [**Phil. 12-16**]. Through Adam, we became slaves of sin. We tried to run away only to wind up in the hands of sorcerers, mediums and false prophets. Then, we ran into Jesus who paid all our bills with His death on the cross. Now, He has sent us back to His Father no longer as slaves but as His beloved brothers and sisters both in the flesh and in the Lord. Thank you, Jesus!

So, get hooked on righteousness. Get hooked on Jesus.