

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 6: 15 - 23
PREACHED ON MARCH 8, 2026, BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 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? 17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. 19 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 lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- We have looked at the first 14 verses of chapter 6, where Paul asked a question in verse 1: “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” He responded, “No, we cannot do that.” In Greek, it is a much stronger word, “God forbid”, “By no means.” He then argued that, once we understand the spiritual transformation that occurs once and for all at our conversion by God, sin is not an option for the believer. Believers have died to sin, their old self has been crucified with Christ, they have been raised to a newness of life, and are united with Christ. That was his first reason against believers who still engage in sinful activities.
- In the verses before us today, Paul responded to another question, and it is the question of occasional sinning. Does it matter to God when I only sin occasionally? Believers are now under grace, so is it a big deal to God when I sin occasionally? Here again, Paul responds with a strong word, “God forbid.” By no means. He said you should never do that as a believer because that would be a wrong conclusion about being under grace. Every sin matters to God, and we cannot take sin lightly, whether habitual or occasional. He then gave his second argument against believers sinning, including occasional sinning.
- What is Paul’s second argument? Paul argues that at conversion, believers have made a commitment to God: to serve Him and obey Him. The moment you repent of your sins and believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal savior,

you have made a commitment to God to serve and obey Him for the rest of your life. Therefore, to sin against God, whose nature is righteousness, is a breach of the commitment you have made at conversion.

- In the text, Paul repeats the phrase “you have been set free” in verses 18 and 22. Set free from what? What is freedom? What does freedom look like? The apostle says believers have been set free from sin. What then does it mean to be free from sin? Does it mean that I am now free to ignore the Ten Commandments and live as I want? Does it mean that I am free to break the Law? He answers by saying, “No, you can’t do that if you are a true believer.” Freedom is at the heart of the Christian gospel, and it is what redemption is. In the Bible, when someone is redeemed, it means they have been set free, but not free to live however they want.
- The Christian life, if it is genuine, is a commitment to God and the beginning of a consecration. The justified is also sanctified, and the justified is also consecrated. Justification and sanctification cannot be separated. Sanctification begins from the moment we are justified. The true believer has not only received freedom from sin, but has also been set free for something. We are not set free from sin and then left in a vacuum or a neutral place, but we are set free for something. We will look at the details of this doctrine under three points. First, Paul tells us that there are only two possible masters in the world; second, there are only two possible lifestyles in the world; and third, there are only two possible destinies for mankind in this world.

➤ **TWO POSSIBLE MASTERS**

- The apostle says there are only two possible masters in the world. No human being is autonomous; no human being is independent; everyone serves a master. Who are the two masters everyone in this world belongs to? Paul described them in verses 16, 17, 18, and 22.
 1. In verse 16, Paul calls the first master Sin and the second Obedience,
 2. In verse 17, the first master is Sin and the second is the Word of God (the standard of teaching to which you were committed),
 3. In verse 18, the first master is Sin and the second is Righteousness, and
 4. In verse 22, the first master is Sin, and the second is God.
- In all four verses, Paul described the first master as Sin, but gave different names to the second master: God, the Word of God, Obedience, and Righteousness. Sin being a master means the world, the flesh, and the devil are what control you.
- In verse 17, Paul argues that God and His Word are inseparable. The Truth of God, His Word, becomes the master of the believer. You can’t be a slave of Jesus Christ and rebel against the Truth. Being a slave of Jesus means you have carried His yoke and no longer the yoke of sin. Slaves who carry a yoke follow the direction of their master. They do what they are told.

- Jesus says in **Matthew 11:29**, “**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**” Why must we take upon ourselves the yoke of Jesus Christ? Because His yoke fits. Jesus didn’t just say, “Take my yoke,” but He also asks believers to learn from Him. We must be students of the Word, meditate on His Word, and apply it to our lives.
- In the first century, not all slaves were captured and forced into slavery; many people went into slavery voluntarily. It was common for people struggling to survive to go to a wealthy person and say to them, “I want to be your servant, your slave. I want to serve and obey you.” This was a way they got an occupation. Teachers commonly did that in the first century. In verse 16, Paul used this practice in the first century to illustrate what has happened to the believer at conversion. **“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?”**
- Paul is saying that you are a slave to the one you obey – whether to sin or to God. True freedom from sin means you have been liberated from sin in all of its forms, and you are now liberated for God, for obedience to the Word of God, and for righteousness. George Matheson, the hymn writer, wrote: “Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.” True freedom is not liberation from sin and then set free to live the way you like, but to live as a slave of Christ and to live for holiness because **“without holiness no one will see the Lord.”** Hebrews 12:14. There can’t be any true Christian conversion without a consecration. You can’t have Jesus Christ as your personal Savior without also having Him as your Lord.
- All of us here, every human being, offer ourselves to someone or something to meet our needs. We trust someone or something to meet our needs, and that someone or something directs, governs, rules, and motivates us. There are only two masters, no neutral position, and no third. Everybody in this world is a slave to sin or a slave to God. Which master do you serve? If you are a slave to sin, you are ruled, governed, and controlled by sin. If you are a slave to God, then you are ruled, governed, and controlled by God.
- While we were in Adam, sin was our master. We were controlled by sin. At conversion, what the believer says is this, “God, I want to be Your servant, I want to be Your slave to serve You and obey You. God, I want You to be my master, and I trust You to meet my needs.” Paul wrote in verses 17 and 18: **“17 But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.”**
- Paul says the believer now has a new master, and we have committed ourselves to obey Him and serve Him. How do you describe the true believer? The true believer is the man, woman and child who is a servant of righteousness, a servant of God, a servant of obedience to Christ and His Word. How can such a person continue to sin even if it is done occasionally? To sin is a denial of your

commitment at conversion. It is a denial of who you are as a slave of righteousness.

- Do you consider yourself a slave of God? If yes, it means you completely belong to God as His purchased possession. You have no right to live to yourself. You have no right to please yourself. You have no right to sin. Like Jesus, who said, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him who hath sent Me," Christians are to be utterly and absolutely at God's disposal. You are not your own. You are bought with a price.

➤ TWO POSSIBLE LIFESTYLES

- Each master makes demands consistent with his own nature. If you work for a dishonest and evil employer, he or she will make evil demands on you. Likewise, if you work for an honest and righteous employer, he or she will make righteous demands on you. Sin will not demand that you keep God's Law, go to a true church, pray, or study God's Word. Paul is telling us to choose our master carefully because if our master is sin, sin will direct us to do certain things. It will lead us in a certain direction.
- In your old self, you yielded to sin; you said to sin, "Here I am, use me." Sin controlled you. Now that you are in Jesus Christ, you say to Him, "Here I am, use me." You have been brought from the slavery of sin to the slavery of Jesus Christ. True freedom is to use every part of your body to do what God wants. Righteousness is not to live anyhow, but to live according to God's will,
- In verse 19b, Paul then asked the believers to reflect on their lives – the former and now. "For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification," Paul says. Think back to the time when you were not a believer, when you presented your members as slaves to unrighteousness and lawlessness. Don't each of us have memories of who we used to be if you are a true believer? What does your past life tell you compared to who you are now?
- In verse 21, Paul tells the believers to think about their past: what fruits were they getting when they lived in lawlessness and when sin was their master? The apostle is asking believers to perform a spiritual audit of their lives, comparing their pre-Christian existence with their current state, to demonstrate that the sinful life is a total loss and completely worthless both then and now. "21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Was it great being an unbeliever? Was it beautiful? Do you look back and say, "Life was better then when I lived a lawless life?" Paul says, the answer is definitely no, for every true believer is ashamed of the things they did in the past.
- Personally, I don't like thinking about my past because I feel ashamed of it, and I believe every true believer feels the same way. How do you feel when you

remember all the people you have hurt in the past? How do you feel about all the people you have damaged their reputation with your dishonest words and jealousy? How do you feel about your sexual sins? What fruit did you get from doing all that? Do you want to go back to that lifestyle? Paul says that is what happens when you choose sin, even when you sin occasionally. The sinful life always leads to shame. It's inevitable. It follows as the morning after inevitably follows the night before. Have you noticed that sin itself is ashamed of itself? How do we commit most of our sins? Do we not mostly sin in darkness and secrecy? We do that because sin brings shame.

- Paul says, your new master is so different – “so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.” Your new master is a kind master, a good master, and there are no regrets and shame in serving Him. There are no bitter memories. “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.” Romans 6:22. Paul asked the Roman Christians and all believers to think about their lives now. How do you feel about yourself now? How do you use your time, gifts, and resources now? What kinds of friends do you keep now? The apostle questions why anyone would want to return to the old life.
- Also, in verse 19, the apostle says both lifestyles increase with time; they are both progressive. You start with, let's say, one, and then it keeps increasing in severity and abundance. He writes that living a lawless lifestyle leads to more lawlessness. Sin is progressive. The Devil will make you worse off in sin; you will begin to commit more sins, love your sins, and boast about your evil deeds.
- And if you are a slave to righteousness, it leads to sanctification. Sanctification is also progressive. Holiness is progressive. Holiness is something that should increase in us. God will make you hate your sin as you mature in Him, repent of it, and confess it.
- Two possible masters, two possible lifestyles, and two possible destinies.

➤ TWO POSSIBLE DESTINIES

- Your master determines your lifestyle, which also determines your destiny. You start on one road, and you are bound to arrive at a given destination. What is the end result when your master is sin, and what is the end result when you serve God? Sin brings pleasures to people, but these pleasures are only for a season, and they turn bitter after the season. All sin leads to death, but it progresses gradually, and most of the time, the sinner doesn't realize it until it is too late. The prodigal son didn't know how his life would end when he left his father's house; he didn't know it would be that terrible until much later. Sin is not something we play with and drop off when we wish. In fact, sin is a tyrant, not a plaything. Sin is a fierce slave master that will allow people to play with it for a certain time, but then it begins to wind its chain around the person. It is like a python. The python

might flatter you by winding itself around you and after it has gotten a full grasp around you, it crushes you into pieces.

- Drug addicts started with a little drug, and gradually they increased the quantity or frequency of usage until a time comes when it is too late to stop. They might probably not start using it if they knew they would end up as addicts. Sins' goal is to make you worse and worse and finally take you to hell to be with the Devil and his angels. God's goal is to make you better and better and finally take you to heaven to dwell with Him eternally. God makes you more and more like Christ. In Philippians 1: 6, Paul wrote: **"being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."** God's goal is **"to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."** Ephesians 5:27.
- Thus, playing with sin leads only to self-ruin. By contrast, being set free from sin and becoming God's servant results in sanctification and ends in eternal life. As scripture says, the wages of sin is death, but God's gift is eternal life.
- Why didn't Paul say that the gift of sin is death, rather than the wages of sin? Wages are paid for what we have done. We would expect that the masters we work for will pay us our wages at the end of the day, week, bi-weekly, or even monthly. In some nations, employers are not faithful in paying their employees' wages. Some also only give them a portion, not the full amount. However, sin is the most diligent master in the world; the wages of sin are always paid. The wages of sin, which is eternal death, is a life of endless shame, a life of endless remorse, and a life of endless suffering. It is a place **"where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched,"** and it is eternal according to Jesus Christ in Mark 9:48.
- While sin pays wages, which is what we have earned and deserve, eternal life comes as a gift, which is what we cannot earn but receive freely. This distinction underscores that no one can make themselves a Christian through their own efforts. Salvation comes freely through Christ, who has taken our debts upon Himself and canceled the bill. This gift is available to anyone, regardless of their past, who believes the message of the gospel.
- Paul then contrasts what sin, as a master, offers with what God, as a master, offers in verse 23. He wrote, **"the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** God's free gift comes wrapped in Jesus Christ. The gift is all in and through Jesus Christ our Lord - never separating the gift from the giver. God does not give you the free gift of eternal life in any other way, but the gift He gives is His own Son. **"Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."** 1 John 5:12. The eternal life promised is in Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ who gives us life. Eternal life is not merely an everlasting existence, but an intimate, relational knowledge of God and Jesus. John 17:3.
- Our God is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere at the same time. I have a question for all of us here today: where is Jesus Christ in this world right now?

The biblical answer is this: Jesus Christ is in the believer. He lives in you, and He lives in me. Paul says, **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” Galatians 2:20.** Can you imagine that the beloved Son of God lives in you if you are a true believer?

➤ CONCLUSION

- Do you consider yourself a free man, woman, or child? How do you know if you are free? The bird has freedom when it can fly, because it was created for that, and the moment someone captures it and puts it in a cage at home, it loses its freedom. The fish is free when it can swim in the river or ocean, but it loses its freedom when someone takes it out of the water with a net. Just as the bird was made for the air and the fish was made for the water, we are also made for the will of God, and you will never be free anywhere until you do the will of God. Only true believers are free people, even when they are in jail.
- This freedom we now enjoy as God's beloved people occurs at the moment of regeneration, when believers are delivered from sin's reign and authority over their lives. To be born again means that a principle of new life is put into us, and that principle of new life is a principle of righteousness. Righteousness means living to please God, including in your motives and desires. It means being perfect like God. God has revealed His will for us in His Word, and when we keep sinning as believers, we do a great disservice to ourselves.
- Are you still an unbeliever? What do you gain from that? You have everything to lose as an unbeliever. We learn from our text that the non-Christian life has three devastating characteristics: it is fruitless. It yields no true profit or value, giving only temporary pleasures with no lasting satisfaction. Secondly, it is a life of shame. The activities themselves are shameful and eventually produce a sense of shame, though many have sunk so low that they have lost their ability to feel shame. Finally, it leads to eternal death. It leads to a separation from the life of God, spiritual death, and ultimately eternal separation from God in hell.
- Is God speaking to you this morning? The great apostle has told us about two masters everyone in the world at this minute serves – one or the other. He has told us about two lifestyles consistent with the desires of our master. He also told us about two results of the lifestyle we choose. What is the end result when your master is sin, and what is the end result when you serve God?
 - Which master do you serve – sin or God?
 - Which destiny is yours – eternal death in hell or eternal life in heaven, and by which means do you receive your destiny – by wages or by a free gift?
 - God is against sin because He wants us to live with Him eternally and not die. Don't give yourself to the wrong master, don't take the wages of sin, and reject God's free gift.