

# Mastering Sin that has Mastered Us

## *The Gospel's Power to Break Habitual Sin*

Romans Series  
PBC 2026

### **Text: Romans 6:15-23**

Last week, we listened to Paul address a question from someone who, while thankful for grace, was struggling with the Gospel's demand that they make a radical, clean break with their past life, given what it would require or cost to fully leave that old life behind.

Their question for Paul in 6:1 is this: "Why can't the grace that covered all my past sins continue to cover *the sinful state* I feel I need to stay in now that I am a Christian? Since grace abounds where sin exists, can I keep on sinning without needing to make such a radical break from my old life?" Paul's answer was kind, gracious, gentle, and definite – "Absolutely not!"

***But now in 6:15, a second question arises for Paul:*** "Now that I have made a clean break with my old life, what in the world am I supposed to do about the sins that I just can't seem to overcome? Can I *continue to sin* because I am not under law but under grace?"

### **I. The Question/Issue Paul Addresses (6:15)**

*What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!*

- Put simply, their question can be broken down into two parts: "*What do I do about the habitual sins that have such a grip on me that no matter how hard I try, how much I read my Bible, or how fervently I pray, I eventually find myself right back in bondage to them.*"
- And secondly, "*Since I can't overcome them, is it OK to just do them and move on to fight other battles – after all, grace covered their guilt and removed the Law's condemnation– so why go through the trouble of fighting a battle that I can't see any hope of winning?*"

- Paul's answer – God forbid! Just like you had to make a clean break with your old life, you must engage in an ongoing, relentless, daily fight against the sins that beset you. ***And in verse 16, he provides a powerful explanation for why this must be so for every believer!***

## II. The Explanation Paul Provides (6:16)

*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?*

- Paul accompanies his answer with an important point he expects his reader to understand (“do you not know”): ***who you choose to follow and obey is who you are truly serving.***
- You made a significant and public declaration at your baptism that Jesus is your Lord and Savior. ***Paul's point is that what you willingly choose to do with your body will affirm both the truthfulness of that claim and the depth of that commitment.***
- ***When you “present your body” to your old master for disobedience, it always leads to death – something dies.***
- ***When you “present your body” to your new master for obedience, it always produces righteousness – something lives and grows.***

## III. The Assurance Paul Gives (6:17-18)

*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,<sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*

- A. ***Someone has delivered you from something*** – “Thanks be to God!”
- B. ***Someone has delivered you over to something*** – “to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.”
- C. ***You have obeyed that teaching with a new heart*** – “having become obedient from the heart.”
- D. ***And because you obeyed from the heart, you have been set free from sin and have become willing bondservants of righteousness*** – “and, having been set free from sin, have become the slaves of righteousness.”

#### IV. The Illustration Paul Uses (6:19)

*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.*

- In order to help them understand the contrast he is making between their past service to their old Lord (master) and their present service to their new Lord (master), Paul uses an illustration that would be very familiar to them but easily misunderstood by us and then he develops that illustration along three lines:

##### **A. Think about the nature of Roman slavery/bond-service:**

*I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.*

##### **B. Obedience to something leads to more of that thing!**

*For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness*

##### **C. Presenting your bodies as servants of righteousness will produce more righteousness in your life!**

*so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

#### V. The Motivation Paul Gives (6:20-22)

*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.*

##### **A. The fruit that grew out of your obedience to sin produced two horrific things: Shame and Death**

##### **B. The fruit that grows out of your obedience to God also produces two things: Sanctification and Abundant, Eternal Life**

- What produces this kind of fruit in me when all of my human effort has failed? **Answer: This fruit is grown in me through the power and beauty of the Gospel!**
- The gospel has **power** to bring dead things to life (to revive life).
- The gospel has **ability** to cleanse defiled things and repair broken things (to restore life).

- And only the **beauty** of the Gospel is compelling enough to draw me away from the lusts of the world that grab my eyes and bring me back to the beauty of Jesus!

## **VI. The Power God Supplies (6:23; 7:6)**

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . . But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

### **A. The gift of God through the gospel gives us Life and Hope!**

*but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

### **B. The Scriptures give us Guidance and Training whereas the Old Code inevitably led to the legalism and bondage of law-keeping as a means of obtaining or maintaining righteousness before God!**

*But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive,*

### **C. The Spirit gives us enlightenment and enablement!**

*so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.*

## **Conclusion: How does this help me overcome sin?**

*My question for Paul: I don't know how to do this. How does the gospel bring this about? What does the gospel contain that teaches me and trains me to live this way? Paul's answer to me: Have you not been listening and learning for the entire time I have been speaking to you? I wrote five chapters of gospel truth – that goes way beyond just praying a prayer and getting your ticket for heaven. Did any of it sink in?*

*I gave you five chapters of deep, beautiful, life-changing truth, and the only thing I asked was that you know and understand that truth. I didn't issue a single command or imperative until 6:11! But you were so focused on finding a task to do or a practical application to execute that I suspect you listened politely and then just moved on in your mind.*

*And now, when you most need what the gospel contains*

- *that will fuel unquenchable hope that banishes depression and despair,*

- *that is so stunningly beautiful, it draws your eyes away from those images on the screen that capture and enslave you,*
- *that is so astonishingly large it gives meaning to your pain and suffering so you don't have to resort to behaviors that destroy you or substances that addict you in an effort to numb that pain,*
- *that so powerfully displays the wisdom and sovereignty of God that you don't have to resort to compulsive behavior patterns to control your life and bring order to the chaos around you,*
- *that is so bountifully merciful it banishes your guilt and shame, it isn't there to draw on because you never learned it, or you never took the time to really understand what God gave you in the gospel!*

This is why Paul wrote the book of Romans the way he did! He poured all of that hope, beauty, wisdom, power, and meaning into five powerful chapters! Read them repeatedly. Savor them deeply. Treasure them fiercely. Reflect on them intensely – until the truths in these chapters are so deeply embedded in your soul that they change how you think and feel about life and shape your perspective and approach to life.

God took you by the hand and delivered you over to (committed you to the care of) a new and powerful standard of teaching – the gospel! And that Gospel has the power to help you conquer sin in your life!

- Do you know it truly?
- Do you believe it deeply?
- Are you treasuring it joyfully?
- Are you being shaped by it personally?