

Romans #13 - Good Gifts New Life

- Well, howdy, y'all. I am really excited to see you. We're in Romans chapter six. I know it's Christmas season. We should have trees on the stage. I should be wearing a red shirt. We should find some elves and give you a candy game. Instead, I'm gonna yell at you for an hour through the Book of Romans, we're in chapter six, it's been a horrible year, amen? Been a horrible year. We've lost a lot of freedom. So let's start with this little discussion, what freedoms have we lost or seen reduced this year?

- [Congregant] The right to assemble.

- The right to assemble. We apparently disagree with that, but yeah, some people are experiencing that. If you're watching on the internet, there are people in a room, it's crazy, crazy, next level crazy. As well, what are some of the freedoms you've seen eliminated or reduced this year?

- [Congregant] Free speech.

- Freedom of speech, I'm gonna fix that. No music, no worshipping. We're gonna bring the band up, Sister. It's gonna get loud and we're gonna get proud. It's gonna be fun. What else have you lost for freedom this year, or seen reduced? The freedom to breathe in public. There is now, and just literally, as we were singing, there was a new edict sent forth, you're not allowed to breathe outside of your home. When you leave your house, you have to hold your breath until you come back. That's just a new rule. Okay? Any other freedoms you've seen reduced or eliminated?

- [Congregant] Privacy.

- Privacy. We've lost it. They have a tracking app on your phone. They follow you everywhere you're going. If that doesn't scare you, you're not paying attention. Right? For those of us who are libertarians, you're like, I'm throwing my phone away, okay? We have lost some freedoms this year. And what a lot of people are struggling with is this reduction or elimination in freedom, amen? And so what we need to know is this that we can't control all of the freedoms out there, but God wants to increase the freedoms in here. And so that's what we're gonna talk about today, that I can't control what's out there, but the Spirit of God can control the freedom that we enjoy internally in here. And so he's gonna juxtapose for us, the apostle Paul will, in Roman six, we're gonna write through a book of the Bible. It's awesome. He's gonna talk about free, four times, versus slave. This is his comparison, contrast and juxtaposition. You're either a slave to someone or something or you're set free in Jesus Christ. Would you like to study the Bible with me? We got nothing else to do. If you've got a Bible, go to Roman six, and if not, I've got it on the screen. Romans 6:15, freedom. We're gonna talk a lot about freedom. What it is, what it is not, what we're free from, what we're free to, who we're free from, who we're free to. Romans 6:15, what then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but grace? By no means. What

he's saying is freedom is not freedom to sin, but freedom from sin. If you're under 25, write this down. Most of us think that freedom is freedom to sin, right? So if we just got rid of dads and parents, then we'd be free. And if we could just decriminalize drugs and get high, then we'd be free. And then if we could just vote for socialists to pay for it all, then we'd really be free. And the truth is that ultimately we live in a world where freedom is just another path to slavery. And you choose sin and that's not freedom. We're not free to sin, we're free from sin. That's exactly where Paul the apostle is taking us. And what he's saying is this, that ultimately you're either under law, that's what he's saying, or you are under grace. This is gonna be a very complicated concept for some of you. For others of you, it'll be very offensive. But if you're offended, just wait, it's gonna get worse. So this is only the beginning. Ultimately, we tend to think of ourselves, particularly as Americans, as radically independent, fully autonomous, captain of my fate, master of my destiny. I make my own decisions. And what he says is, "No, we're all under someone or something." Under law is you minus Jesus in judgment. And then he says, "Under grace, that's you plus Jesus, under blessing." Think of it in this way, there is someone or something that rules over you. We'll call it your master to use the language. That master controls your emotional wellbeing, your spending, your behaviors and your decision-making. It's your master. You are loyal to it, you are the slave of it. I'll prove it to you. We tend not to think in these terms, if you can't stop working, and your master is your work, you are a what? A workaholic. The workaholic has work as their master. They have to keep working. They can't be healthy, because they need to work. They can't go home and love their wife because they have to work. They can't enjoy their kids because they have to work. They can't be in God's presence in church because they have to work. Work becomes the master that beats you like a slave and robs you of joy in life. Let's do another example. Let's say that your master is money, wealth, finances. That, ultimately, your God is, as Jesus says, Mammon, which is money. And you are a lover of money, and all your decisions are based upon the profits. So ultimately you can't be generous because you want money. You can't love people by giving them money, you use people to make more money. Because at the end of the day, we either love people and use money to love them, or we love money and we use people to make money. And this is why some people are very greedy and they're very stingy and they're not generous, because for them, the master is the dollar. And it literally says on our dollars, "In God we trust." It should say, "In this god we trust." For some people, it is someone, not a something, but a someone that is in that position of master for you. Let's say, for example, there is someone that you fear. You're like, "I don't wanna make them angry. I don't wanna disappoint them. I need to keep them happy." You're not looking above them to the Lord, you're looking at them as the lord and all of your decision-making is to please them and not endure their wrath. We also have codependent relationships. I need you to need me. And if you need to be needed, and if being needed is your master, you're gonna pick up broken people, hurting people, needy people. And the assumption will be I am a good savior, you need me and I need to be needed. Many of the decisions that we make are in regards to the master that we have. And what happens is they become a master over us, we become a slave to them. So the alcoholic is not free. They're a slave to the bottle. The drug addict is not free, they are a slave to the high. The sexual person who struggles with their perversion, they're addicted to the lust of the flesh. They're not free. Because we're not free to our sin, we're free from our sin. And what he's saying is this, "If anyone or anything but Jesus

is over your life as your master, has you in the position of servant or slave, above it or them is God's law to judge it or them and ultimately to judge you." The option is Jesus. Over your life, you could have Jesus. And if Jesus is over your life as your new Master, now, some of you think, "No, no, I wanna be my own master." Let me tell you this, Jesus has a better plan for your life than you have for your life. Jesus is a better leader of your life than you are of your life. That Jesus has better intentions for you, than you have for yourself. If you really believe in Jesus, if you know Jesus, if you trust Jesus, if you've experienced Jesus, you know that it is much better to have Him in charge of your life, than to have you in charge of your life, amen? Any Christians agree with me and testify? And what happens then is we still make money, we still go to work, we still have relationships, we still have sexuality in our marriage covenant, we still have a life, but that life is under whom? It's under Jesus. So Jesus, what do You want me to do with Your money? Jesus, You said to take a day off, so I'm gonna do that. Jesus said, You said to enjoy marriage, but don't do anything outside of marriage, so that's what I'm gonna do. Jesus, You said that the fear of man is a trapper's snare in Proverbs 29:25, so I'm not gonna live in fear of people, I'm gonna live in fear of God. And all of a sudden, having Jesus as Lord over all of your life, as the Master who rules over all of your decision-making, all of a sudden now you are free financially, you are free sexually, you are free morally, you are free relationally, because Jesus is a God of grace. And He loves you and He forgives you and He blesses you and He helps you. And part of the problem that we often have is we believe that if we just got what we wanted, our life would be good. The truth is when we do get it, our life is still bad because even a decent person is still a bad master. He then continues, "Freedom is not doing what you want, but doing what God wants. Do you not know that if you present, this is the language of worship, this is showing up to serve, yourselves as anyone." So let me just hit this point. Let's just pull the car over, get out and talk about one word. Can I just? One word, obedient slaves to anyone. What this means is oftentimes the master we choose is not just our success, it's not just our beauty, it's not just our pleasure, it's not just our convenience, it's not just our comfort, it's someone that we put in God's place. We live for their approval, we fear their rejection and punishment. And as long as they are pleased with us, then we believe that we are blessed. A good person still makes a bad master. Some of you are, you're still trying to live as if your boss was your master. You're still trying to live as if your spouse was your master. You're still trying to live as if the approval of others was your master. Some of you are still living as if your parents were your master. And what he's saying is that we tend to pick someone, and we tend to present ourself as obedient slaves. Just you tell me what you want and I will do that, and then you will bless me. It's a counterfeit of the relationship with Jesus. He goes on, "Either of sin, which leads to what? Death, or of obedience which leads to righteousness, but thanks be to God that you were once slaves of sin, you picked the master who would destroy you, but Jesus is a Master who has chosen you. You've become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin." Really good news right there. Set free from sin and become slaves of righteousness. So we are set free from sin to righteousness. And what many of us have done, let's just be totally honest, we've been set free from one sin and then we pick another one. I used to drink, and now I'm just angry. And I was angry and now I'm sleeping with my girlfriend. And it's just trading one master for another. It's not freedom unless you're free to be righteous. So some of you will say, "Pastor Mark, I disagree, I'm free." He says,

"Freedom is freedom from sin to righteousness." So I would say prove me wrong. Demonstrate your freedom, never sin again. Only the truly free are free from sin. And what he wants us to do is to ask ourselves, am I living as a slave to someone or something, or have I been set free by my new Master, Jesus, who gives me grace? And he's talking here about righteousness. So let's talk about that. Righteousness in our day, it gets a real negative rap, because we put a word before it. What is it? Self, right? I don't wanna be self-righteous. Oh, congratulations, you're not. Okay, so, and you're not righteous, so the goal is not to be unrighteous or self-righteous, but righteous. See, so what is righteousness? Thank you for asking. It is, first of all, God puts holiness in you. That's a condition. Takes out your old heart, gives you a new heart. Takes out your old nature, gives you a new nature. Takes out your flesh, gives you the Holy Spirit. So this is what he's been driving at, chapter one through five in Romans. Now, righteousness is you making decisions out of your holiness. So God changes you in here, and then your decisions change out there. It is your nature, and then your actions. Jesus says, "A good tree bears good fruit." God makes you a new tree, and then you bear new fruit. And what he's saying is, righteousness is in those very practical moments. So my question to you, friend, would be, what's your struggle, what's your thing? Is it pride, is it anger, is it beauty, is it sex, is it money, is it power, is it people pleasing? Is it comfort, convenience? Is it anger? What is your thing? In those moments where you have a decision to make, the question is, will you pick unrighteousness or righteousness? Will you do what the old master tells you to do or the false master tells you to do? Or will you do what Jesus, the new Master, tells you to do? And in those moments, in those very practical decisions, what you do with your mouth, what you eat, what you drink, what you say, what you spend, what you click on, what you look at, what you think of, what you feel and where you go, and who you touch, in those moments, the decisions you make can be unrighteous or righteous. They can be going back to an old master or going forward to the new Master. And he's talking about decision-making very practically. And oftentimes what happens is we like to make excuses, rather than decisions. We like to excuse the bad decision we made, than make the decision to decide differently. And when you make those decisions, that is an act of righteousness. And it is how we overcome sin. So he's talking about righteous decisions that overcome sin. So we'll talk about sin, sin is the human problem. It's the problem under all the problems. It's the God-sized problem. You can't fix it with a doctor's prescription. You can't order it on Amazon. You can't elect someone to remedy it. That ultimately the sin problem is the problem under all of the problems. And what he's saying is that we've been delivered from sin to righteousness. And let me say this, that you need to figure out where your sins are, so you can be set free from them into the new life that Jesus has for you. And there are two categories of sin. So we're gonna talk about these. There are the rebellious sins and the religious sins. Which one do you wanna talk about first? I don't care, I got nothing to do.

- [Congregant] Religious.

- Religious first, okay, let's talk about the religious sins first. First of all, how many of you, your sins would be more rebellious, more rebellious? Not religious, rebellious? Raise your hand, okay? Do you notice, they didn't raise their hand? Did you notice that? A couple of them did but, because if they were rebellious, you were like, "Nah, I'm not doing what I'm told." That's your

problem, okay? Just to point it out, that's your problem. You don't do what you're told. Now you religious people, I'm gonna ask you, and now you're gonna raise your hand, 'cause you're like, "Well, we're supposed to do what we're told." So, if you're religious, how many of you, your sins would be more religious? Look at all those hands go up. Some, and the really religious people did this, both hands. So, they voted twice, right? Welcome to Georgia. So anyways, so anyways, so... Oh, just seeing if you're still with me. What good is it to preach about grace without using a little. Okay, so for those, for those religious sins, what are more common religious sins? Self-righteousness. I'm better than you. I was reading the Bible, I found all the things that you're not doing. And I highlighted it for you. You'll notice, it's pretty much all yellow. You're welcome, happy to help. Okay, what other things are religious sins?

- [Congregant] Meddling.

- Meddling. Oh, there's something happening, well somebody should be involved. I'm sure God would want me to do it. So, Lord, I have this, You're welcome. I'm here, I have the gift, I have the spiritual gift of meddling. So I get myself in other people's business and tell them what to do. And I tell the Holy Spirit to stay home because I got this. Okay, that's you. Other religious sins?

- [Congregant] Pride.

- Gossip? Okay, now gossip, you mean prayer request. And that's what you mean. Sister, I know, you're like, "Pray for Tony. He's just a mean, nasty drunk. And his kids are midget demons. They're just terrible. Pray for him." I shouldn't have said that at all. Well, you're gossiping. No, no, no, pray for them. It's a prayer request. Religious people, they pack gossip into prayer requests. It's their Trojan horse for the delivery. What other, what other religious sins are there? Judgment? You're like, I was reading the Bible. It says that God judges people. Well, I could do that too. Pride? I'm better than you. I'm smarter than you, I'm holier than you. If you were like me, I would like you. Okay, one of the reasons I yell, say crazy things, and wear jean jackets, is to find the religious people, okay? This always works. It always works. They're like, "He doesn't seem like he's the holy man of God, and he yells and he's wearing denim. And I think he said a bad word." Yes. It's like, I just wanna see the gophers come out of the hole, that's all I'm doing. I'm looking. And I'm like, okay, so, so let's talk about the rebellious people, okay? Rebellious sins, what are they? Give me some examples. Sex outside of marriage. I'm gonna do it my way. You can't tell me what to do. Some of you, I just explained your teenager. Other rebellious sins, what's common? Come on guys, we're between Old Town and a casino, think about it. You've got options all over the place. Gambling.

- [Congregant] Drug addiction.

- Drugs. What's that?

- [Congregant] Lying.

- Lying.

- [Congregant] Stealing.

- Stealing.

- [Congregant] Drunkard.

- Drunkenness. There's rebellious sins, there's religious sins. Here's what always happens, if you're in the church and the pastor preaches against rebellion, what do you get? A bunch of religious people. They're super fun by the way. Oh, so fun. So fun. If all you do is preach against religion, what do you get? A bunch of rebellious people. How many of you, this explains your life? How many of you grew up in a religious home and you're like, "I'm not doing that. And I'm not wearing pants." And how many of you, you were very rebellious, you wrecked your life, so you became really religious? We do this. Righteousness is not being rebellious, it's not being religious, it's having a relationship with Jesus. And he says it here, this is what he says, it's obedient from the heart. So there's a story of sin in the Bible. It's one of the most legendary. It's a story of the prodigal son. It's about a dad who's got two boys. One is rebellious. He takes all of his dad's money. He runs away from home, he's at the casino. He's at the strip club, he's smoking pot, he's voting for Bernie Sanders, he's a situation. It's in the Greek, trust me, I'm a professional. Right now there's some 22-year old kid down on the internet, going, "That's offensive." All right, just so you know. So, there's this other brother. There's this other brother, he's very religious. He's up at 8:00 a.m., he tithes, he memorizes verses in the King James Bible. He's trying to make Israel great again. He's right down the fairway. Shots fired both ways, friends, that's how we're gonna do this. And then the rebellious brother wrecks his life, because sin leads to death. So he comes home, and what does the father give him? Grace. Love, grace, forgiveness, mercy, embrace, generosity. The religious brother sees this, what's his emotional response? He's offended, because religious people are offended by grace. Religious people are. They don't deserve it. Yeah, that's why it's grace. Well, they did the wrong thing. That's why it's grace. Well, they should get punished and they're not. That's why it's grace. The brothers, one outwardly looked righteous, the other looked unrighteous. The point is they were both unrighteous. And the problem was not so much with the older brother, what was in his life, it was what was in his heart. He didn't love the father and he didn't love his brother. And he didn't love grace. The answer to sinful rebellion and the answer to sinful religion is a relationship with the Savior named Jesus, who delivers us from rebellion and religion. And some of you are here and you know your thing ain't working, but you don't wanna be religious. I have good news, we're not here to convert you to religion, we're here to introduce you to Jesus.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- And that relationship with Him, He loves you, He gives you grace, He forgives you, He embraces you, He blesses you. He loves you so much, He'll take you as you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay as you are. And what he does, then, and how many Christians

would agree with me on this, He changes your heart? All of a sudden, you're like, "I don't wanna do that anymore, I wanna be closer to Jesus. You know what? I don't, I don't like my old masters, I like my new Master. I don't wanna be in charge of my life, I want Jesus to tell me what to do. 'Cause he knows more than I do and He's better than I am." And what he's talking about here, Paul says, is righteousness is overcoming sin by obedience from the heart. So let me say, if you're here right now and there's even something happening in your heart, you're like, "Huh, I'm interested in Jesus. Hmm, I wonder if maybe, I wonder if maybe my problem is sin. I wonder if maybe life would be better if Jesus was the Lord and not someone or something, including myself." Then what God is doing right now, friend, is a supernatural miracle, He's starting to change your heart. And let me say, when you have obedience from the heart, when God changes your heart, this is the great truth of the Christian faith that the non-Christian doesn't understand. I say this all the time, the Christian life is not what we have to do, it's what we get to do. Because once God changes our heart, we want to obey. You know why you're here? You wanna learn the Bible. Is it true? You want to. You know what, God changed your heart. You wanna learn about Jesus. That's why we're running over 200%, it's crazy. People are like, "Tell me about Jesus." Okay. That means that God has been doing something in your heart. People are coming in, saying, "I wanna make a life change, how does Jesus change lives?" God's doing something in your heart. And lemme tell you this, that ultimately we're not wanting you to be rebellious or religious, we want you to have a relationship with Jesus where He gives you grace and His heart changes your heart and your heart wants to obey Him, so that the relationship can be sweeter and deeper, because that Master is a loving, gracious, forgiving, and good Master, amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- And one other thing I wanna just hit here as well, I hit a couple of things, God doesn't need you to obey, but your neighbor does. God's gonna be fine whether or not you obey. Your neighbor is implicated in your decisions. If you're married, the decisions you make, they involve your spouse. If you're a parent, the decisions you make, they involve your children. If you're a grandparent, it involves your extended family. If you're a friend or a relative or a coworker or a neighbor, we're not islands unto ourselves. Part of the obedience from the heart is out of love for neighbor. Because some people would say, "I'm an adult, I do whatever I want." It's like, yeah, but other people are being implicated in your decision-making. People are being broken and burdened by the devastation that you cause from the decisions you make. Number two, you don't need to obey to be saved, but you do need to obey to be free. As soon as I preached this message, some people are like, "We read earlier in Romans, saved by grace, not by works. It's all Jesus, not me, I don't need to do anything." You don't need to do anything to be saved, Jesus did everything. He said on the cross, "It is finished." He did all the work, He died in your place for your sins. All you gotta do is just receive the gift that Jesus gives. But if you wanna be free, you need to obey. You could be saved by doing nothing, but to be free, you got to obey. And some of you are saved, but you're not free, because Jesus has done what only He can do, but you have not done what He has told you to do. You're living in disobedience, which is why you don't live in freedom. And ultimately he says that people are the product of their teaching. He

talks about the standard of teaching. That's what the apostle Paul here is saying. So your mom used to tell you physically, you are what you eat. What's true physically is also true spiritually. I would tell you that this is a season where you need more protein in your diet and healthier nutrition, okay? What they tell us is that the average person consumes 1,500 to 3,000 calories a day. An athlete consumes more. An Olympic-level athlete consumes considerably more. I remember watching the Olympics a while ago, Michael Phelps, the swimmer, he was burning 12,000 calories a day. He's eating in a day what we eat in a week, and he's skinny. You know then he's exercising, amen? This is the kind of year for your soul, you need healthier nutrition, and you need more nutrition. You need more teaching, not less, more Bible, not less, more worship, not less, more prayer, not less, more Jesus, not less, more Holy Spirit, not less, amen? It's the standard of teaching. Okay, then he continues, "Freedom is not choosing to go down, but God choosing to pull you up." We choose our master and it drags us down, Jesus is the master who overrides our decision and pulls us up. Romans 6:19, he says it this way, I'm speaking in human terms. He's gonna use an analogy from their culture that was familiar to them. "Because of your natural limitations, for just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity." It's amazing how so much impurity in our day parades as freedom. And we should be proud. No, it's slavery, and we need to be set free. "Just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, leading to more lawlessness, it goes from bad to worse, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, leading to sanctification." Now, when he's talking here about slavery, you and I will immediately think in terms of our American history, and the original sin of slave trading. It's sinful, it's wrong, it's ungodly, it's evil, it's demonic. The Bible lists slave trading, as was practiced in America, among the most heinous sins in the list of sins in the New Testament. If we go beyond America, back a few thousand years to the Roman empire, which was the recipient of this letter, the Roman empire was about 120 million people. And they would grow through conquering other nations. It was military expansion. At some point in their life, upwards of 50% of the citizens of the Roman empire would be in the legal category of servant or slave. You would find yourself in that category in two ways, it was imposed upon you, or it was invited by you. Let's say, for example, the Roman army marched in, your army lost, they take you as a POW, now you're a slave. It's imposed on you. The second category was one that was not imposed on you, but invited by you, it was servitude. And so what you would decide is, I'll work for you if you'll house me and feed me and provide for me. So you're giving up your freedom in exchange for provision. This could be for a short period of time or a long period time. It oftentimes wasn't a lifelong category. Now we tend to think of this as a bad thing, but let's just be honest, we still have some form of this. How many of you were in the military? Okay, thank you for your service, we love you and appreciate you. You were fighting for freedom, but you didn't really have any.

- [Congregant] Amen.

- True? Did you just, you're like, "That explains the military." You're not free because what you've said is I'm signing up and you will now be my master and I will do what you tell me to do, in exchange for food and medical care and housing, and maybe college help." How many of you in the military, you realized you didn't have a lot of freedom? You had a master, he was called a

sergeant. You're like, "Yeah, I prayed about it. I don't do jogging, I don't do that." He's like, "I don't care. I don't care." Pushups? Yeah, not my thing. Naps, my thing. What does your master say? You do what you're told. Oh, I don't believe in authority. Oh, you will. You will, you will. Then we still have these similar categories, but here's the big idea, some of the problems in your life, they were imposed on you. Many of the problems in your life, they were invited by you. Oftentimes the masters who rule over us enslave us, force us to serve them, are not bad things that defeated us, they were good things that we invited. And let me say this, a good thing in God's place becomes a bad thing. Sex is good, but it's a bad god. Money is good, but it's a bad god. Relationships are good, but they're bad gods. Success is good, but it's a bad god. Let me ask you this, and just be very honest with me, the biggest problems in your life, is it because of decisions you made? Okay, one honest person chuckled. It's true, right? 'Cause we like to blame everyone and everything. So what are some of the excuses we make? My parents. It's always good. Rock, paper, scissors, mom and dad. You know? We've all got fallen parents who made mistakes, and if you wanna blame them, you can. It's easy. You're like, "They were not perfect." Neither were you. That was the right family, what a fit? What other excuses do we make?

- [Congregant] They did it.

- They did it, they did it. I'm a victim. We're all a victim. You know what? We're not only a victim of their choices, we're also a victim of our choices. What other excuses do we make?

- [Congregant] It's too hard.

- It's too hard, no one understands.

- [Congregant] Too busy.

- Too busy, I don't have time. I know I should do it, but that's, I just, I can't. It's the government. It's the government, man, it's the government. My favorite is always my personality. That's our new one. I took a test, I'm not nice, that's just the way I am. I came out as a really profound J-E-R-K. That's just my personality. And what he's saying is this, that oftentimes the master that we choose is not one that brings life, it brings death, but we have no one to blame but ourselves, because that's the master we chose. Now the good news is this, there is another master named Jesus, and He comes in and He defeats the old master. He lives without sin, He conquers Satan's sin, death, held the wrath of God, the old master, and then what He does, He liberates you and frees you to live under His grace so you can have life. And what he's saying is this, that ultimately, things get better or they get worse. You go up or you go down. He says that lawlessness leads to what? Lawlessness. And he says that righteousness leads to sanctification, which means growth and change. Now, when you meet Jesus, you're not perfect, but you are new. And now in a change process, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, called sanctification, where God is working to make you more and more and more and more like Jesus, your new Master. And let me just say this, I wanna encourage you, because

you're not who you will be when Jesus is done with you, but you're not who you were when Jesus started with you. I know many of you personally, I love you very dearly, it's an honor to be your pastor. Thanks for putting up with a hot mess minus the hot, okay? But at the end of the day, I'm seeing progress in people's lives. I'm seeing them learn, I'm seeing them grow, I'm seeing them change, I'm seeing them mature, I'm seeing more of Jesus and less of the old master. And what he's saying is this, that the great lie of sin is this, here's the great lie, are you ready? Sin lies and says that it's willing to be your slave. Is sin ever willing to be your slave and let you be the master? No, sin always demands to be the master. Who's the slave? You are. So when he says that lawlessness leads to lawlessness, what he's saying is once you choose sin to be your master, the illusion is you can control it. You can't, it controls you. The illusion is you can manage it. You can't manage it, it manages you. The illusion is you can hide it. You can't, eventually it exposes you. How many of you, when you chose sin you thought, "I'm gonna be the master. It'll be my servant or slave. I can control it." And then next thing you know, it's the master. This is the human story, not just yours. Jesus comes, defeats that master, sets you free from that master, so that instead of going from lawlessness to lawlessness, you can go from righteousness to sanctification. Things get better, or they get worse. Your spiritual life has no pause. It's forward or backwards. It's either progress or retreat. That's what he's saying. And some of you are experiencing this, and some of you, your sin choice and your sin master, it is turning on you and you need to be set free. So you need to give your sin to Jesus and you need to be in relationship with Jesus and you need your new Master to conquer your old master and set you free into your new future. And what he's saying here then is that a freedom is not falling back, but it is running forward. For when you were slaves of sin, and we all were, we all start there. You are free in regards to righteousness, but what fruit were you getting at that time from the things that you are now ashamed of? How do you know that you have been set free from your old master to your new Master? The things you used to be proud of, you're now ashamed of. Is that true? How many of you, you used to brag about things that now you repent of? Man, I got so hammered. You're like, "What was I thinking?" I slept with so many people. You're like, "Who was that?" There are, because what happens is, if you don't believe that there is a new Master and a good Master, all you do is celebrate the old master. This is where we get tolerance and diversity and pride and parades. And this is who I am. And God's like, "You should be ashamed of that." And as soon as I say that, people are offended. How do I know? I was on Facebook this week. If you wanna find wisdom, don't go to Facebook, I'm just telling you. I posted a little clip about some things that the Bible says about sexuality. Couple million people later, literally, everybody's like, "You're trying to shame us. You're trying to shame us." You should be ashamed. I had a guy come to me recently, he's like, "You make me feel bad." I was like, "You're bad." I mean, if somebody came out and said, "You know, I am not ashamed." You should be ashamed because he told us earlier in Romans, the Holy Spirit just brought this to mind, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God to anyone who believes." What it means is this, if this is what you're doing, don't be ashamed of the gospel, and eventually you'll be ashamed of what you were doing. You're either gonna be ashamed of the gospel or ashamed of your behavior, because the gospel of Jesus Christ is the new Lord and commands and demands change in the behavior. So rather than celebrate, it's better to repent. And rather than being ashamed of Jesus, it's good to be ashamed of who we are and what we

do. So, I would just ask you, if you've met Jesus, there are some things that you look back, can we just be honest? You're like, "I'm just ashamed of that. I should have never posted a picture of myself in a bikini on Instagram. I'm a grandfather." I shouldn't have done that. The key is to sneak it in, that's the key. It's the surprise element. And we just found the religious people, and we just did. I'm going on Facebook and talking about that. And what he's saying here is really quite beautiful and remarkable, let me speak to two kinds of people here. These are the two kinds of people that he is referring to. Let me read it all the way through. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regards to righteousness but what fruit were you gathering at that time from the things that you are now shamed? For the end of those things is what? Your new Master's gonna kill you. So you'd be like, "He said it'll be fun." It'll be fun on the way to hell, and then it's not fun. The conga line ends up in an incinerator. But now that you have been set free from what? Sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and in itself ends in eternal life. So let me speak to two kinds of people, these are the two people that the apostle Paul's speaking to, some of you, you're slaves but you think you're free. You're like, "Pastor Mark, I'm free. I do what I want." That's not freedom, that's slavery. And it leads to death. This death is spiritual. You're disconnected from God. It then becomes physical, you die. And then it becomes eternal, you go to hell. It's a three-fold death. You're one-third of the way through the process. What that means is you're as close to heaven as you will get, and all that awaits you is not only pain in this life, but pain in the life that never ends. See, I love you. My job is to tell the truth, your job is to make a decision. I can't pick your master, you gotta pick your master. But, ultimately, some of you think you're free, but you're slaves. You think you're free, but you're slaves. And you know what you need? You need to be set free. There's only one who can do that, that's Jesus. See, we live in a day, right now, where everybody's like, "If the election goes my way, I'm free. If the vaccine works, I'm free. If they just let us take the masks off, we're free. If the stock markets bounce back, we're free." If all those things happen, that's out here, not in here, we're still slaves. We're still slaves to sin and death. So what I would ask you is if you think that you're free, let me just tell you, you really are a slave and only Jesus set slaves free and only Jesus conquers the old master and only Jesus is the good new Master. So this is, this is where some of you, right now, you need to literally give your sin to Jesus, have him conquer your old master of sin and set you free in newness of life. And this is only something that Jesus Christ can do. So this is where, right now, friend, you need Jesus. You need to give Him your sin and you need to receive Him as your Savior and your new Master. Secondly, some of you, you're free, but you think you're a slave. Let me talk to many of you Christians. Jesus has set you free, but there are things in your life that you still believe that you are a slave to. Yeah, I know I'm a Christian, but that's not gonna change. That's an old habit. That's a deep root. That's just part of who I am. No, it's part of who you were. You don't have to work around it. You don't have to tolerate it. You don't have to control it. You don't have to minimize it. You don't need to hide it. You can kill it because Jesus died for it. And what happens, oftentimes, with God's people, they're set free but they still think and act like slaves. I'll give you an example in the Old Testament, the Book of Exodus is a book of slavery. God's people were in Egypt for more than 400 years. They were ruled over by this demonic, counterfeit king, named Pharaoh. He literally enslaved and abused God's people. And the new Master shows up, Yahweh, the God of the Bible. He conquers all of the other masters, He sets His people free, He kills the

soldiers, He sends the plagues, He parts the Red Sea. God's people walk into freedom and choose slavery. God sets you free, but then you need to live free. All of a sudden, they start talking about the good old days when they were slaves. Oh, I miss, I miss the old days. Furthermore, they start going back to slave-like behavior. They worship demon, false gods. They build a golden calf. And Paul tells the Corinthians, they get drunk and they're all sleeping together and it's total mayhem. And the point is this, God can set you free, but you need to live free. And if you're not a slave, you could still think like a slave and act like a slave. We're gonna get there later in Romans. Instead you start to think like a son and act like a son. But those of you who are Christians, let me just say this, you're free. That behavior can stop. Those patterns can stop. Those addictions can stop. Those lifestyle choices can stop. That brokenness can be healed. That addiction can be conquered. That slavery can be ended. That there is new life in Jesus Christ and whom the Son sets free is free indeed. Lastly, he says that freedom is not freedom from God, but freedom to God. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. He's talking here about the two ways, wages and gifts. Sin pays wages. And the only wages that sin can pay is death. You need to know that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, that ultimately God knows all of our sins. This includes your thoughts, your mind, it includes your words, your deeds, it includes your motives and intentions. It includes sins of commission where you have done wrong and sins of omission, where you have failed to do right. God's standard is holiness. It is referred to here as His law. It is over all peoples, times, places and cultures. There are no excuses and there are no exceptions, that in the presence of a holy and righteous God, sinners will be silenced and sin will be judged and hell will be full and punishment will occur. Do not be deceived, God will not be mocked. We will all reap exactly what we sow. Now, I can see some of your face, some of you're like, "You're scaring me." Good, that's what I was trying to do. Pastor Mark, you're scaring the hell out of me. Bazinga, that's what I was shooting for. Bad news, goodness. Jesus doesn't give wages that you earn, He gives gifts that He's earned. Jesus went to the cross and He paid our debt to God. He paid the wage, the wage was death. And Jesus lived the life that we have not lived, the life without sin. He died the death we should have died. The death payment for sin. And here is Jesus, dead and buried, and it looks like Satan, sin, death, demons has conquered our Master. And then He comes forth in newness of life. And then He walks out of His grave. Our Master conquers sin, our Master conquers death, our Master conquers hell, our Master conquers Satan, our Master conquers demons, our Master conquers condemnation, our Master conquers everyone and everything. And He walks away from it and He says, "I choose you. And I choose you, and I choose you." And He sets free and He makes free. Here's my last verse, it's awesome. If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed. Number one, we're not free, Jesus is free. Jesus makes us free. Everyone looking for freedom is looking for Jesus, whether they know it or not.

- [Congregant] Amen.

- Here's what I'm telling you, there's freedom for you in this life. There's freedom for you through this life. There's freedom for you after this life. You are set free from sin and set free to Jesus. And who the Son sets free is free indeed. It matters not what happens in this world, we are the

children of God, we have freedom in Christ, we have power in Christ, we have new life in Christ, we don't need to stay buried, we can live lives that are resurrected, amen? Let me pray before I tell you what we're gonna do next. Jesus, our minds are blown. Our hearts are filled and our hope is lifted. God, we live in a world that has taken away or restricted a lot of freedom. And, Lord Jesus, thank You that there is a freedom within us that it cannot be taken. There is a freedom within us that cannot be restricted. There is a freedom within us that is made possible by our new Master. And, Jesus, we just say, You're a better Master than we are. You're a better Lord than we are. You have a better plan than we do. And You give gifts. Jesus, we don't deserve forgiveness, but we receive it. We don't deserve a relationship with you, but we receive it. We don't deserve eternal life, but we receive it. We don't deserve righteousness, but we receive it. We don't deserve justification, but we receive it. We don't deserve a second chance, but we receive it. We don't deserve 120 second chance, but we receive it. Jesus, just keep our eyes open to the gifts you give. And please change our hearts that we would know the love of our Master, and that we would obey Him, because He's good and He's right. And He's loving and He's kind and He's wise and He's faithful. Lord Jesus, we don't have words to say how wonderful You are, so we just say Jesus. In Jesus name, amen. All right, I'm gonna invite the band up. Here's what we're gonna do, we're gonna baptize new Christians, how's that? Okay, do that. So, if you're new, baptism's where we show Jesus died and then He came forth and He conquered Satan, sin, death, hell and all of the old masters. As He walks in freedom and life, we follow Him in freedom and life. If you've never been baptized, we would love to baptize you. So you go to the back, we've got people that would love to pray with you. And some of you are like, "I don't have the right clothes." God didn't tell you, you were gonna get saved and baptized, because He knew you wouldn't come but He told us you were coming. So He told us to get you towels and shirt and shorts. So we're ready for you. If you have questions about Jesus, you're ready to make that decision to belong to Jesus and to follow Jesus and to obey Jesus. Go meet with someone right now. This is the day of salvation. Do not delay, amen? You've been a slave long enough, time to get free, amen? Again, what you're gonna do, you're gonna stay, because there's nothing else open and there's nowhere else fun. So you may as well stay. And then we're gonna sing and celebrate. We're gonna show the baptisms on the screen, and we're gonna rejoice and we're gonna celebrate. Because many things are closed, but heaven is open. And we have decided that Jesus is essential.