

Text: Romans 6: 12-14

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And 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. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Pray.

Title: Serve your Real Master

Introduction (1000)

This passage makes use of some **dramatic word pictures**.

It is a drama of two masters and one slave.

The cruel slave master

One master is **cruel and deceptive**. He has no care for those who work for him. He works his slaves to the ground and makes empty promises of false pleasures and his slaves live in these dark concrete bunkers which stink and are filthy. This master is called Sin.

The good slave master

Then there is a second master. This one is **kind and good**. He looks after his people. He values them for who they are not just what they do. He treats his slaves more **like his own children** than simple workers. This master is called God.

The slave

And then there is the slave. **And this slave is you in the drama.**

And the plot goes something like this:

Slave to sin

For as long as you remember you have been a slave to Sin. This has been your reality. The **burdens have been heavy**, the labor tiresome. There was always promise of pleasure which you hold on so dearly and sometimes you even tasted something good, but it **quickly turned bitter** in your stomach and you resented yourself for ever forming a taste for it.

And the burdens get bigger and the **loads heavier**. And what more you are **addicted to these fake pleasures**. You want more even though you know how it is consuming you. Sometimes you wish there was a way out, but that just seems impossible. Sin keeps a close watch on its slaves and there is no escaping.

Bought by God

Then one day, as you are about to pick up your burden and trudge through another day of the same old depressing life, you are told that the slave master **God has bought you from Sin**. The master Sin no longer owns you.

You do not need to carry his loads and do his work.

God has purchased you and you are **free to go**.

Rejoice to serve God

And so you rejoice. You run from the dreary bunkers and go to the palace of God to thank him and desire to serve him wholeheartedly.

Turn back to sin's work

But every now and then you **remember the promises of pleasure** that Sin made. You forget the way they consumed you and how they really made you feel. And for the sake of this fake pleasure you go back to the bunkers and taste what Sin has to offer. You pick up some of the loads of Sin and you find yourself doing **Sin's work once again**.

Sad picture

It is a sad picture. A slave of God, **bought into freedom** and welcomed as a child seen going back to his or her old master and picking up the old burdens and **serving the old master**.

In this passage, Paul is saying **Don't do that!**

Outline

To help us work through this passage we look at two parts.

The first part is titled **“Know your Master”** where we will see how Sin and God are both laying claims on our lives and **wanting us to serve them**.

And the second part is titled **“Know your Duty”** . We will see what our duty is as slaves of God.

But we will also see how Sin is trying to take our resources, take our energy and our time for advancing the kingdom of sin and death.

Two parts:

A. Know Your Master

B. Know Your Duty

A. Know Your Master

So first let us **look closely at verse 12** as we strive to know who our real master is.

Exposit (1000) – Verse 12

¹² *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ...*

What is the Therefore there for?

The “*Therefore*” at the start of verse 12 is linking back to what Paul has just been talking about. It links to our regeneration and our union with Christ.

We share **in the resurrection** of Christ and have been given a **new nature and a new heart**. The old self is dead. The old man has been crucified. We are dead to sin and now alive to God. The authority of sin has been broken and we are now able to serve and love God.

These truths are the basis for the commands that Paul is about to give.

Take responsibility because you are united with Christ

So Paul says “*Therefore, do not let sin reign*” Notice the explicit command here. “Do not”. **This is our responsibility**. This is for us to take part in an active struggle. **The fuel is our union with Christ, and the directive is “Do not let sin reign”**.

He is saying take responsibility, take action. You are one with Christ therefore do not let sin reign!

What does it mean to let sin reign?

And what does it mean to let sin reign?

For Sin to reign is for Sin have control of your life, to have a real **driving force in your life**. To be a major factor when you make decisions. To be an influence in what you do.

For sin to reign is for sin to **be your compass** or for sin to be your google maps as you navigate through life. Don't do that Paul is saying. Don't let sin reign.

How does sin reign in your body?

And Paul goes on. “*do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it's lusts*”. Sin **works out it's reign** through the lusts of the body.

Lust are simply **natural desires** and wants which are **abused** or used **out of context**.

Lusts here is not just sexual sin. It includes that, but also encompasses any human desire or passion of the flesh. Any cravings that are **outside the will of God**.

Galatians 5: 19-21 gives us a summary of what the works of the flesh are:

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: ^[d]adultery, ^[e]fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions (disagreement to disorder), heresies, ²¹ envy, ^[f]murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Lusts of the flesh are enticing

These are all things which we are **familiar** with. Things we may know well from our life before Christ or from current temptations. These are things that our flesh wants, things which **appeal to our flesh**, to the desires of our desires.

These are the **works the old Master Sin** would have us do. And they all have some **promise of pleasure**, some **enticing element** that draws us in. That tempts us. That asks us to indulge in it, that asks us to remember how good it was. That asks us to obey Sin.

Loyalty Issue – Obey Sin or God

And so Paul here explains to us what is happening when we are being **tempted**. He is saying when we are tempted, we are

basically given an opportunity to obey Sin or Obey God. That is the significance of the last portion of verse 12 “That you should obey in its lusts.”

Temptation to sin **is a loyalty issue**. Whenever you are tempted you are in fact presented with a choice. The choice is very simple: Will you obey God or will you obey Sin? It is not a matter of circumstance. It is a matter of loyalty.

To obey your lusts is to let Sin reign.

Exposition - Verse 14

But sin is the old master, the master you no longer belong to. Now, if we look to verse 14 we will see our New Master. We will see how God is our new master.

Please read with me verse 14 again:

....¹⁴ *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

Truth: Sin has no dominion over you

Notice the first phrase “*For sin shall not have dominion over you*”. This is not a command but **an affirming statement**. This is a promise. “*For sin shall not have dominion over you*”.

This is a major reality you need to understand.

Sin does not have dominion over you.

Paul is stressing the reality that we have been bought by a new slave master. The old slave master Sin has no right to you, **no legal standing over** you. God has bought you with a fair price and you are his.

What does “under law” and under grace mean?

What about the second phrase of verse 14. *“for you are not under law, but under grace.”* What is this saying?

The phrases “under law” and “under grace” are loaded with meaning linking back to what Paul has been explaining leading to this point

Romans 3-5 condemnation and Justification

Paul spent two chapters explaining that humans stand condemned before God. And then in chapters 2-5 he has been explaining how humans can be justified before God. How they can be declared righteous by a holy God. And this righteousness is of course based on the work of Jesus at the cross.

So the phrase **Under Law** here is synonymous with “dead in sin” or “condemned” or “under the rule of sin”

While **Under Grace** is synonymous with “alive in Christ” or “the reign of grace” or “being justified”.

Not to live lawlessly

He is not saying that we can **live lawlessly** or that we are to act immorally. In fact, he will explain in great detail what our interaction with the Law is in Chapter 7.

He is just using “Under the Law” as a **short hand** for the condemned state where sin ruled in our life.

Summarize verse 12 and 14

So do we see the drama played out in these verses? The two masters, Sin and God **seeking your loyalty**? Sin is a cruel tyrant, but God has bought you and you belong to Him. You are part of His family.

Yet the **pleasures of sin are enticing**, despite the heavy burdens and deadly consequences of indulging in the lusts of the flesh. So the **slave has to make a choice**. To let sin reign or to let God reign.

The command is strong: Do not let sin reign.

And the promise is empowering: Sin does not have dominion over you.

Apply (1300)

The drama is real

You need to be keenly aware of this struggle because this drama is being played out in your life right now. Do not be deceived, there is a **continual spiritual struggle happening**. You are the slave in the drama and lusts of the flesh await you at every turn. The old slave master is real and he will continually try to **entice you back into his service**.

Be alert, be proactive be ready

So be alert and be ready. You need to take responsibility for this and prepare for this. **You have control of your desires**. To let sin reign is to let those desires have control over you. You will be tempted to give control to sin. But you need to **make a choice to obey God and not those desires**.

That point of decision is where the temptation is lost or won.

Keep driving in the direction God would have you go. Use the bible as the navigation tool, not the desires of your flesh. **Do not let** sin plot the course for you but follow the compass of the Word.

Sin plays the long game

And Sin loves to play the long game. It will entice you with a small sin or a **respectable sin** that the people around us do not really condemn. Once you are comfortable with that it will

entice you a bit further down the path until you don't know how, but sin is plotting the course and is reigning in you life once again.

Lustful thoughts will lead to adultery.

Anger will lead to murder.

Gossip will lead to Divisions.

Do not toy with sin

So do not toy with sin! If you, or others identify areas where you are following the desires of your flesh, today is the day to repent of that. Today is the day to deal with that and stop letting sin reign in your life, **even in a supposedly “small way”**. Turn away from that desire before Sin is back in absolute control of your life. Our old master sin has plenty of time to entice us back. We have **no time to waste in his service**.

Frog in the hot water

When you toy with sin you are like the frog sitting in the pot of water. You know the story. The frog is able to jump out but is not aware of the danger. The heat is slowly turned up until it is too late and the frog is finally **boiled to death**. Do not kid yourselves. The wages of the old master is death. Get out of that water as soon as you realize you are in it. **It is not a spa**. It is a **death trap**. Repent and serve your real master.

Appeal to those who are still under the dominion of Sin

But maybe you are here this morning and you are thinking to yourself: Sin does have dominion over me. The lusts of my flesh do control me.

Do you want to escape from that control?

Are you tired of **obeying the lusts of the flesh** and seeing it's destructive consequence?

Are you tired of being afraid and anxious?

Are you fed up of your **desires always leading you to disappointment** and broken relationships?

Are you all too aware that this sinful lifestyle will just lead to death?

Death in this life and then **eternal death in Hell**?

Are you like the slave in the drama, but you are still carrying the burdens of sin in a perpetual depressing life?

Hope to the slave

If that is you, than let me be the one to tell you that God has paid the price to **rescue you from Sin**. This drama is no fiction but reality. God paid the price for you by **sending his son to die on the cross**. The debt of sin can be erased. All you need to do is simply **trust in the work of Jesus on the Cross**.

Work of Jesus

You see, when Jesus died, he **took the penalty for your sins**. Simply believe that Jesus died for your sins and **God promises to rescue you**. That burden of guilt and shame does not have to be a reality any more. **You can be freed** from the cruel slave master. **Simply believe in the work of Christ on the Cross and you will be welcomed into his kingdom**.

The choice of master is ours

We all have a choice as to who our master is. **By default we have sin** as our master. As Christians we have God as our master. If sin is your master, I plead with you and **encourage you to come and join us** with God as our master. He is kind and good and loving and He wants you to join him.

B. Know Your Duty

With those **two masters** in mind, and how we relate to each let us turn our attention to the second section of our study. **Our duty** towards these Masters.

Exposition – Verse 13

Main idea of verse 13

In this second section we focus on verse 13. In this verse Paul elaborates for us what it **means to “not-obey sin”** and how the **reign of sin is defeated**.

And in a similar way to the previous verses, Paul uses word pictures which bring to mind a scenario or a drama. But now instead of slave masters and slaves, **the picture is of generals and soldiers**.

Fighting for Sin or for God

The drama goes something like this: You were in the Sin's camp, **firing arrows at God** and His people. Then all of a sudden, by a miracle, you realized you were on the wrong side and you join a rescue operation to **join the people of God**. And what a joy it is to be in God's camp! You are warmly welcomed, given new clothes and new weapons and you are filled with a **new vigor to fight the real enemy** and help with the rescue mission of others.

But you betray your new people

And so now you are **back in the trenches**, with a clear mission, and firing at the enemy with a brand-new machine gun.

But then all of a sudden, in the middle of fire fight, as if in a trance, but fully conscious and aware, you **turn your weapon on your brothers** and sisters fighting alongside you and you fire on them, wounding some and fatally striking others.

A tragic and angering story, but this verse is warning us and commanding us: **Do not to do that!**

Read again vs 13

Let us look closely at verse 13 and see this drama unfold.

Verse 13 says:

¹³ *And 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.*

Picture of war – instrument = weapon

The word which brings out the **seriousness** of this command and conveys the **military illustration** is the word we have translated as “instrument”. This word talks of a weapon, of something used for an offensive in war.

It is **assumed there is a war on**, and it is assumed that each Christian has a weapon in his hand. So when you read this word “instrument” think of a weapon which is **destructive and effective**.

Two figures in authority – Sin and God

And again we have **two figures in authority**, two generals as it were: Sin and God. You can present your weapons of war to God and take part in the **effort to defeat sin** and rescue others from it's captivity, or you can present you weapons of war to Sin. These are the **same two masters** we have been talking about before but they are seen with a different role now.

What is the weapons?

So what are our weapons? We know the battle is not against flesh and blood, but we know **the battle rages every day**. So what are our weapons? **What is it that we are presenting to God or to Sin?**

Simply put it is you! **You are this lethal weapon** which you can bring to the service of God or of Sin.

What are your weapons?

Your **words** have power to build up or tear down.

Your **hands** can do actions of kindness or selfishness.

Your **mind** can craft loving plans or destructive plans.

Your **Resources** : Be it your time, your finances, your energy can be used for God or to satisfy self

So when Paul says “ And do not **present your members** as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but **present yourselves** to God” he is picturing **you bringing your natural capabilities**, you giftings and resources to the service of a General.

Who is your General?

And it is very clear **who you are presenting your services** to by the actions you do. Paul says they are either for unrighteousness or for righteousness. This is a contrast of good actions verse bad actions. **Moral or immoral behavior.**

Not position before God (condemned vs Justified)

Just to be clear, this is not a contrast of our position before God. This is **not a contrast of condemned and justified**. Here Paul is saying “Because you are justified do actions which please God”. And actions which please God are righteous actions. These are your **own actions and your own acts of obedience.**

Command based on truth

Before we explore further how presenting ourselves to God as weapons of righteousness looks like, let me draw your attention **to a key phrase of verse 13.**

Look again at verse 13 and notice the phrase “*as being alive from the dead*”.

As you hear this command from God to present yourselves to God for acts of righteousness keep in the forefront of your mind that **God brought you from death to life.**

You were dead in sin and now you are alive in Christ and that is the only reason we can do acts of righteousness. That is the reality we cling to when we present ourselves to God.

Summarize verse 13

So overall this verse 13 is saying: Remember how you were **dead and God brought you to life. Serve God now.**

Put your strength, your thoughts and resources to serve His war efforts. Don't sabotage the work of the kingdom.

Do good. Do things which please God and serve him. Be weapons of righteousness. Present yourself to God as a weapon of righteousness.

Apply verse 13

How do you present yourself to God?

So what does this look like in your life?

You have resources and abilities at your disposal. All of us do. The question is: **Do you present** these resources and abilities **to God** or **to please your flesh? To obey God or to obey sin?**

Time as an example of a resource

Let us think about this by using an example.

One resource that we all have is time. Have you even thought about your time as a resource **that you have to use wisely**? Or do you just go with the flow and do things as they pop up? Do you do the things **you feel like** doing in the moment? Or are you intentional with the use of your time?

The use of your time is a very real way you can preset yourself as a weapon of righteousness to God.

What does your normal week look like?

When you think of your normal day and week, where do you spend your time? Especially the time outside of your paid work. How do you spend that **time you have total control over**? What do you prioritize? What do you **say no to**? Do you make sure things which are important to God actually happen. Do you spend **your best time** on the things God says are important:

On your personal holiness, on your family and for His Church.

Where do you spend the best of your time

Do these things take up the best of your time? Or do you allow **entertainment**: movies, video games, TV shows, Novels and the like to eat up the majority of your free time?

Or maybe you use up all your time keeping up with your **friends on Facebook** and making sure your profile is up to date?

Or does the pursuit for **adventures or sports** get first place in your calendar?

Or does the **accumulation of assets** take up the best of your hours?

Lots of things demand your time

We live in a world where there are 101 things which demand our time . And some of these things are **morally neutral** in their own right.

Neutral can become evil

But what was once a neutral act and maybe even a good thing in it's right place can quickly become a tool of the enemy to distract you from the battle at hand.

It will quickly become a sin if you are not careful. Because remember the command is two fold: Do not present yourself to Sin and **present yourself to God**. You put off evil deeds and you put on good deeds.

If saying “**yes**” to one neutral thing means saying “**no**” to **things which build** your holiness, your family, or your church; then that thing is not morally neutral at all.

What will you neglect?

There is only so much you can do in a day. **What will you neglect** and give less attention to? Is it your personal holiness, your family or your Church? Or is it your entertainment, keeping up with pop culture, and acquiring the latest comforts.

This battle for your time happens literally every single day. Are you prepared for it? Are you proactive in it? Take charge of your time, and present it to God as a weapon of righteousness!

Other weapons

But time is just one thing where this is played out. What about money? What about your natural gifts and capabilities? What about your relationships and opportunities? These also make up part of the weapon you can present to God daily.

So when we hear the command to “*present yourselves to God as instruments of righteousness*” He is saying to present the

best of your time, of your money and of your ability to God as weapons for his kingdom. **He is saying present your whole life to Him for His service because he brought you from life to death.**

Consequences to those around us

And never forget the seriousness of your actions and their implications. Do not think that your actions do **not have an effect on those around you.**

As Christians we are at war and we expect to feel the attacks of Sin. We defend and protect against that. We face it together and **cover each other's back** and look out for each other's blind spots.

But we are most vulnerable from attack from our own brothers and sisters. We do not expect this attack. A Christian who chooses acts of unrighteousness is like a **soldier firing his weapon on the people fighting along side** him or her.

The one we trusted to be guarding our blind spot, is **stabbing us in the back!**

Do not forget your duty to your master, your duty to your general and your **duty to your brothers and sisters:**

¹³ *And 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.*

Conclusion (1000)

As we bring the study to a close let us ponder these truths and commands God is telling us.

There is a struggle happening every single day. A struggle between our old master, Sin and our new master God. A battle between our old drill Sargent, Sin and our new General, God.

God has bought us with a price. **We are legally his.** Sin no longer has any authority in our lives, but it really wants to have an influence over us.

Sin is actively at work to put you **back into it's control.** He entices our **flesh and appeals to our memories** of warped pleasure to draw us back into his control. And so as Christians we must constantly **choose to place ourselves** at the disposal of our real master and king.

If you do not actively place yourself under the disposal of our Lord, **by default you will be at the disposal of Sin.**

You have resources and abilities at your disposal. You have weapons at your disposal. **You can choose** to put those to the **service** of God or the service of Sin. Every day, every hour you will have to make that choice.

There is no "small decision here". You are choosing to obey God or Sin.

Sometimes it will be easy to choose acts of righteousness. But there will be moments when the **appeal of sin will seem irresistible.** The memory of the pleasure will be great and you **will find it hard to recall the consequence and shame.** **But the choice is always clear: Sin or God. Who are you loyal to?**

In those moments think of the state you were in before God acted.

Think of the fact that you **were dead spiritually** before God rescued you.

Think of the fact that you are **united in Christ**, that in him you are dead to sin and that **sin does not have any control over you**.

And then in that moment think of the master you want to serve and let that fuel you to choose the act of righteousness.

And so let us live with God as our Master, and God's work as our duty.

Let us pray.