

Saved By Grace Lutheran Church  
Sermon by Pastor Tim Bartels

Trinity 7, 2013  
Romans 6:19-23<sup>i</sup>

### Part I

We live in a time in which someone said, “Everything is permitted, nothing is forgiven.” It is felt that there is no need to forgive because sin has been deleted from our vocabulary by many. Since it has been, every kind of behavior is condoned.

You just have to live in the world to see it. Sins that used to be taboo are now accepted. Sins that used to get you in trouble are now considered bragging rights. Sins that used to bring embarrassment are now celebrated. It’s where we have come as a culture.

There is a word that describes today’s culture. It’s the word, antinomian. Antinomian is made up of two words. “Anti” means against and “nomian” means law. An antinomian, then, is someone who believes that we are free *from* God’s law. Man can live however he wants. He can do so without any consequences.

This misguided belief is what our text is dealing with; to see that we have to back a bit. Just before our text, God speaks of *law* and *gospel*. The law finds all guilty of sin before him; and sin damns. Yet, God’s grace is bigger; God’s grace in Christ forgives even the worst of sinners. To be sure, “where sin abounded, grace did

much more abound.<sup>ii</sup>” Since that is the case, you are “no longer under law, but under grace.<sup>iii</sup>”

Now, when our old Adam hears that, it draws a conclusion. “If that is true, why not go on sinning? Grace will increase all the more! If there are no restrictions, why not keep sinning. Grace will cover all!” It’s what our old Adam *logically* concludes.

## Part II

The purpose of our text is to deal with this wrong headed logic. It does so by setting up a comparison. It is the comparison of two slaves.

A slave at the time of our text was like a common worker today. When you are at work you are not free to do whatever you want. Your boss defines the project, gives you orders, and sets the wages. In that sense, the worker does the bidding of the boss.

Just like every worker has a boss, our text makes the case that everyone has a Lord. One either has Sin as Lord or God as Lord. You can deny it, but you can’t get around it. It is one Lord or the other. So, let’s see how and, in doing so, compare the alternatives.

## Part III

The first alternative describes Sin as Lord. “You presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness.” That’s to say if

Sin is your Lord, sin feeds off of sin. Sin has a snowball effect.

It is like a man named, Martin.<sup>iv</sup> Martin is from Columbia and grew up in poverty. As a young man he wanted to get out of poverty and get rich. One ticket to his dream was the forbidden world of drug trafficking. So, Martin took the forbidden fruit. He began by getting a job in a drug lab. Soon, he was delivering drugs in a two prop plane. Then he found himself participating in bloody cartel wars and bribing his government to stay in operation. One criminal activity led to another working for the drug lord, Pablo Escobar.

You know how that works on a different level from your own life. You see some forbidden fruit. You know it is wrong, yet your old Adam wants it; and the old Adam is not to be denied. So, the old Adam dwells on it; and sin begets sin. The forbidden fruit you want, you take. When you do you feel a rush. The rush feels good; and if you get caught, you lie. Then, you go back for more. Each time you do that you find you need more to satisfy your fix. Sin has your old Adam addicted like a junkie on drugs.

Just in case your conscience feels guilt, your old Adam has the answer. It knows how to justify its sin. The argument goes this way, “when you were slaves of sin, you were *free* in regard to righteousness.” That is the old Adam *argues* that he can break free from God’s law.

It's like how Martin thought. He knew that drug trafficking was wrong. He knew that to get caught meant to face the consequences. Even so, he saw that the riches from the forbidden fruit were desirable. They would make him wealthy and happy. His fix on getting rich, in his mind, justified breaking free from the law. The law was too repressive. It kept him from enjoying life; from being satisfied. No law would keep him from that.

Sound familiar? It is the same argument our old Adam makes. God's law is too repressive and controlling. It hinders me from being the person I am. Then I can't be happy. If I am happy, that is what matters. So, our old Adam seeks to find happiness in forbidden fruit. He does so by attempting to break free from God. By doing that our old Adam thinks he has what he needs. Like Martin, the drug dealer, our old Adam justifies his fix. He does so he can keep his habit going.

And where does that habit lead? Our text asks it this way, "What fruit did you have in the things of which are now ashamed?"

Consider our example of Martin one last time. To be sure, his fix on riches paid off. He became a rich man. He did it by keeping his wife in the dark. When she finally learned the truth, she gave him an ultimatum. It was drug trafficking or her. Not wanting to lose his wife, he finally tried to get out of the drug business, but the tentacles were too long. While he thought he had broken

free from the law, he was not free from the drug lord. The drug lord wanted his life so that he would not snitch.

That's what you get when working for the Lord Sin. The payoff he gives you for feeding sin's habit *looks* glamorous. No doubt about it! The reality, though, is that the payoff is *robbed* of any value. It is, because the habit robs you of life. To be sure, "The end of those things is death. The wages of sin is death." Like the drug lord seeking Martin's life, Lord Sin comes looking to knock you off and take you down to hell.

What kind of Lord is that? He may look sweet and tantalizing at the beginning. In the end, though, he is a terribly cruel Lord. That's one alternative.

#### Part IV

There's another. "Now *having been set free* from sin, and *having become slaves* of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." "Been set free" and "become slaves" are actions done *to you*. They mean that you have *no part* in setting yourself free. You couldn't free yourself from the tentacles of sin. Its habit had too deeply coursed in your veins.

God saw it. He saw what it was doing to you; how the old Adam is more than happy to let sin take control; that he is addicted to sin; that sin pays off with hell. He saw it and he had compassion on you.

So, God *intervened*. He did so at the cross. At the cross he took your habit to sin; the old Adam feeding sin

with sin. He took it all, and the payoff for taking your sin was the death you deserved. He did it for you; and by doing that he broke sin's hold on you. He set you free from the cruel Lord, Sin.

What Jesus did for you at the cross, he applied *to you* at the font. We were reminded of that this morning when Ezra's parents and sponsors brought him to be baptized. When those waters were poured over his head, God set him free from sin. The Small Catechism puts it this way, "Baptism effects the forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this." Sin's deadly payoff can no longer do its ultimate damage. Ezra's sins were washed away in Jesus' blood. What a happy day, then, *this* is for Ezra!

The date you were brought to the font was also a happy day *for you*. It was because until then, you were powerless under the Lord Sin. So, *God* had to set you free from sin in those waters. He had to deliver you from death and the devil. Not only did God do that, but he also broke the old Adam's fix. Now you know that his lord, Sin, has a deadly payoff. You no longer want anything to do with that. You want to stay in Jesus, whose blood washed you clean. He's the gift God gave you in your baptism.

God doesn't stop giving this gift in baptism; he keeps on giving it in word and sacrament. Today's gospel is a good picture of how that is the case. Picture that crowd out in the wilderness. It is far from any Kwik

Trips; any Fred Meyers. The crowd's food supply has run out. The people are hungry, feeling faint, and have a long way to walk home. Jesus sees they are in a real bind. So, he takes a few loaves of bread and fish. He breaks them, again and again, as much as needed. He gives and he gives and he gives. The people eat and are filled. Filled, they are satisfied with bread from heaven.

That's the thing, the Bread from Heaven, Jesus, not sin satisfies. We deceive ourselves when we think that sin can. To be sure, removing sin from our vocabulary is a sham. Antinomianism is like an ostrich with his head in the sand. It just *ignores* the disastrous results of sin. Sin does pay off with death. It is what the service to the Lord Sin, gets. It is anything but truly satisfying.

Only Jesus satisfies. He does by giving us bread of another kind - his body. He gives it from heaven. He puts it in earthly bread and wine. As he does he gives and he gives and he gives. He gives to as many kneel at his altar to eat and drink. Eat and drink, then. His body and blood, they satisfy. They take away sin. They give life, eternal life. They give you eternal life as a free gift. They do in order that you "may serve him in everlasting righteousness innocence and blessedness."

## Part V

So, God gives you what you need. Unlike the Lord Sin, that *robs* you of life, the Lord Jesus freely *gives* life. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Now, which is the better alternative; which is the better Lord? You know the answer! The Lord Jesus! He frees you from sin and its damning habits. Amen

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<sup>i</sup> Citations of the text (NKJV) will not be cited in the sermon

<sup>ii</sup> Romans 5

<sup>iii</sup> Romans 6.15

<sup>iv</sup> References to Martin and Pablo Escobar are from *The Cartel of the Sapos*. Martin’s name was changed from his real name in the telling of the story.