

**Slaves of Righteousness
Romans 6:15-19**

Intro

In March of 2015 in Spokane Washington, a pilot named Michael Clements tragically crashed his single-engine plane - a Piper Malibu Mirage - near the Spokane River and died

An investigation into the crash appeared to reveal the cause of the tragedy. An attendant at the airport refueled the plane with 52 gallons of jet fuel. Just one problem. Planes like Mr. Clements don't run on jet fuel - they run on something different called "aviation gas."

An article on spokesman.com reports:

Pure jet fuel is clear or straw-colored, while aviation gas is blue. But a mixture of the two is usually still blue, Pierce said, which can fool pilots.

"A piston pilot who believes he's getting regular aviation fuel might be fooled into thinking it's pure when in fact it's contaminated with jet fuel," Pierce said.

Wrong fuel leads to disaster - wrong fuel for the Christian life can lead to disaster as well

We have been exploring the gospel of grace in our study of Romans - the salvation of the risen Christ of the cross for helpless and undeserving sinners - received with empty hands of faith - and in chapter 6 the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, has been teaching us how the gospel functions in the life of the Christian.

We have been exhorted that living under the reign of grace involves a new relationship with sin and a war against sin - but we note that Paul does not move on from the grace of the gospel as he teaches us how to live our lives but shows us how it is the gospel of our grace that fuels our war against sin and our obedience to God.

The Gospel - the grace of God - is the fuel in our tiny airplanes as we fly towards eternity and we must ensure that it is always God's grace which is fueling our efforts if we want to avoid wrecking upon the shoals of sin.

If my obedience to God is fueled by an anxious desire to get God to accept me and love me then I will crash upon anxiety, fear, doubt of God's love for me when I fail

Or conversely or we will shatter our lives upon spiritual pride when we obey God and associate our performance with God's acceptance and in the process dumbing down the requirements of righteousness so we can meet the standard

If my obedience to God is fueled by desires to impress others or have them think highly of me then I will crash upon the bluffs of hypocrisy

If I don't get, understand, apply the theology of grace presented in Romans - anxiety and pride instead of joy and energy

Paul continues to unfold what a life of obedience to God looks like under the reign of grace - in our text he points us in the right direction and provides proper fuel for our journey. Prepare our minds and hearts to hear the Word of God

READ TEXT

How we live our lives in a way that pleases God - how we pursue sanctification - growth in godliness

1. Presents us with two Masters to serve; 2. Informs us that we are both set free and bound by God; 3. Exhorts us to actively pursue obedience to God

I. Two Masters (v. 15-16)

- A. in the first half of chapter 6, Paul begins to unfold what God aims to accomplish in us through the Gospel - for by his grace we are
 - 1. Baptized into the death of Christ and raised to newness of life in him (v. 3-4)
 - 2. United with him in his death to the power and penalty of sin AND united with him in a resurrection like his - our old way of life crucified - set free from enslavement to sin and made alive in the risen Christ - called and empowered to walk in a manner pleasing to God (v. 5-11)
 - 3. We live this way by keeping the gospel in view, putting off sin, putting on righteousness and living in the good of grace (v. 12-14)
 - a) v. 14 - sin will have no dominion over you because you are not under law but under grace - not under the old covenant law-keeping but the grace - unmerited kindness of Christ supplied through his gospel
- B. v. 1 "what shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" v. 15 "what then? Are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace?"
 - 1. Paul's is a wise pastor - he addresses those who are looking for loopholes (all inclined to) - those who are stress testing this gospel doctrine
 - 2. Same answer as v. 1 "By no means" - absolutely not
- C. Here's why "by no means" - v. 16 - Do you not know? You should know. You need to know - in effect that you are slave of what or whom you serve. The principle:
 - 1. If you present yourselves to something or someone - if you commit yourself to obeying something or someone - then it is your master - only 2 options - sin or God
 - a) Present yourself to obey sin then it is your master and death is your end - eternal death - judgment

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. (John 8:34)

- b) Present yourself to obedience (to God) - LOOK V. 22 - and God is your master and righteousness is your end - righteousness that reigns in life - 2 options - 2 masters - the way we live reveals who we serve

Illustration: At the Fall Fest - CHILI - ELLEN - I love my wife dearly - if I spent my time gathering food for another woman, looking after her needs and her children's needs while ignoring Kate and the kids as they sat by themselves on the other side of the room - you would rightly question my allegiance

- 2. The way we live our lives reveals our hearts - whatever we profess to believe

- D. Application
 - 1. Paul is getting at how Christianity functions when it comes to grace and the way we live our lives.
 - a) If we say we have trusted Christ and received his grace but live perpetually in sin without a desire to obey God - then we are deceived - we have not become God's possession for we are not serving him - JESUS said if you love me you will keep my commandments

Illustration: Staying up till 4 AM arguing that my friend should ask Jesus into his heart while high on cocaine - said a prayer when I was 5

Illustration: Celebrate Recovery - sneaking out with small children and sleeping with wife. INDIGNANT!

- b) Take to heart - that as Christians we don't presume on God's grace - when temptation comes - I know it's not right but God will forgive me - you know...grace

Christians, who have been set free from sin by their union with Christ, must recognize that, were they constantly to yield to the voice of temptation, they would effectively become slaves of sin again. (Doug Moo, *NICNT: Romans*, p. 398)

E. I'm no-one's slave - I'm my own person thank you very much

There is no such thing as human "autonomy," a freedom from all outside powers and influences. Either people are under the power of sin, or they are under the power of God. The question is not, then, whether one will have a master, but which master one will serve. (Doug Moo, *NICNT: Romans*, p. 397)

1. Doctrine of biblical free-will - we are free to do as we desire - enslaved to sin

F. Two choices - sin or obedience - sin or God - the Christian is slave of the one whom we obey - the Lord Christ

1. And he must be Lord or we have imagined a Jesus more to our liking who is impotent to save -
SAVIOR NOT LORD - NO CATEGORY

II. Set Free by God (17-18)

A. v. 17 - BREAKS OUT IN GRATEFULNESS - thanks be to God! Thanks be to God that you are no longer a slave to sin but have become obedient from the heart - v. 18 - you have been set free from sin's cruel enslavement

1. Each human being since the day of Adam is born in sin and enslaved to sin but God by his sovereign grace in and through the proclamation of the gospel - BREAKS the Shackles of sin through the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners and his resurrection from the dead

a) sin nature in Adam - bent away from God and towards sin - a servant of in - enslaved to sin and death - THANKS BE TO GOD - Christian you once were - no longer - now obedience FROM THE HEART

b) By God's grace he has set us free from enslavement to sin and worked in us a vital heart change - born again in the power of the Holy Spirit - regeneration - newness of life - his grace is responsible - not our performance - not our obedience

B. v. 17 - obedience from the heart to the "standard of teaching to which you were committed." - hmmm - interesting

1. The standard of teaching is the Gospel and it's entailments captured for us in Scripture - the word of Christ which his disciples are taught to obey

[13] Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [14] By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:13-14)

2. Something different - Not - we have committed ourselves to the teaching (we do) - we have been committed...who has committed us? What can explain what has happened to us. Look again at v. 17 "Thanks be to God" - God in his sovereign grace is the one responsible for all of this

a) He has set us free

b) He has given us hearts that desire to obey him

c) He has committed us to the Word of his grace

(1) The heart change, the fuel, the energy, the impetus to obey God - it is the mighty grace of God!

(a) You did not exert your will to break the chains of sin - you did not exert your will to change the trajectory of your eternity from hell to a glorious heaven of life and love

i) NO - THANKS BE TO GOD!

(1) He has set us free from sin so that we have become "slaves of righteousness" - it is the righteous king of grace that we have been set free to serve

(2) Set us free and and has bound us to himself - he is our new master and we REJOICE and THANK GOD!

C. Application

1. Every Christian in this room is a walking miracle of God's sovereign grace
2. THINK ABOUT YOU AND CONSIDER THE GRACE IN YOUR LIVES MY HEART BEATS WITH PAUL - THANKS BE TO GOD FOR YOU!
 - a) Grateful for every inclination in ourselves to obey God - every desire to please him - grace
 - b) Express our gratefulness through encouragement when we see his grace in others - seek to obey God - THANKS BE TO GOD!
 - (1) In our CG as a friend shares of perseverance in suffering, growth in grace however small, quiet seemingly ordinary acts of faithfulness - THANKS BE TO GOD
 - c) 2 Masters - Set Free by and Bound by God - slaves of righteousness

III. Exhortation to actively pursue obedience to God (19)

- A. v. 19 Ok we are slaves of righteousness - slaves of God because he has set us free. You may have noticed and felt a problem with the analogy of slavery:
 1. We understand slavery as cruel, harsh, tyrannical - America we think of the wickedness of the enslavement of the people of Africa with deep sadness and shame - that's our human experience of slavery
 2. God knows our frame - our weakness - our human limitations to understand infinitely great realities - God though his servant Paul - addresses the insufficiency of the slavery metaphor - v. 19 "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations" - not a rebuke - a pastor seeking to shepherd his readers
 - a) SIDE BAR It is no mark of maturity to be so high-minded in our theology that others have trouble understanding us and fail to take limitations and weakness into account - Ex-American slave Charles Octavius Booth entitled his systematic theology - *Plain Theology for Plain People*

Paul cannot dispense with the figure of slavery, harsh and unworthy though it is. They are prone—the whole passage reflects his consciousness of the fact—to forget the obligations involved in being under grace. But in this they are only like all other believers, so that Paul's figure seems no less necessary today; for it is doubtful whether there is any other which can so clearly express the total belongingness, the total obligation, the total commitment and the total accountability, which characterize the life under grace. We shall be wise to accept it and at the same time heed Paul's warning of its unworthiness. (Charles Cranfield, *ICC: Romans*, p. 326)

3. v. 19 just as you once presented your members to impurity - sexual immorality - sex outside the bounds of one man and one woman marriage - and lawlessness - opposed to God's law - SO...NOW...present your members - all that you are to righteousness leading to sanctification - growth in godliness - imperfectly but incrementally growing to be more like Christ
 - a) lawlessness leading to more lawlessness
 - (1) The way sin works - THAT SMALL COMPROMISE EXPRESSES ITSELF IN GREATER SIN - conscience seared - greater sin rationalized - allowing bitterness to take root under the guise of righteous anger - I have seen a small bitterness blossom into soul-killing, all-consuming bloom - I have seen the porn addict turn into the prostitutes john
 - (a) The pleasure of sin is a death spiral
4. SO NOW - RIGHT NOW - present yourselves as slaves of righteousness
 - a) IOW because you have been justified - declared righteous in Christ, set free from sin, coming under the reign of the Master - the Lord Christ - LIVE LIKE IT

Illustration: Not like the Israelites gloriously set free from slavery and wanting to go back to Egypt - manna - garlic and leeks - nothing there but shackles and death

- (1) Imputed righteousness always leads to a life of the pursuit of existential righteousness - righteous living

- (2) Objective truth of the gospel must lead to the experiential living out of that gospel -and to the service of the God of the gospel - pattern through the NT
 - (a) Indicative - set free from sin
 - (b) Imperative - live that out in the pursuit of righteousness
 - i) Gospel fuel - gospel impetus - gospel direction

B. Application

- 1. Ends with an exhortation - like v. 13 - present yourselves to God - present yourselves to righteousness - doing the will of the God of our salvation under the reign of his kingdom of grace - under the gracious eye of our Master - WE ARE NOT OUR OWN BUT WE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

As Christ's purchased possession, the Christian is wholly devoted to the person of the Master. As Christ's 'moveable property', the Christian is totally available for the Master's use. This complete devotion to Christ includes three elements: 1) Humble submission to the person of Christ, 2) Unquestioning obedience to the Master's will, 3) An exclusive preoccupation with pleasing Christ. (Murray Harris, *Slave of Christ*, p. 143)

- 2. If we want to find out what it means to pursue righteousness we turn to v. 17 - the teaching to which we have been committed - the Word of God
- 3. Each day In light of God's grace and the freedom purchased for me at the cross - what is the king of righteousness calling me to do - what does faithfulness to him look like in the circumstances in front of me - PREOCCUPATION TO PLEASE THE MASTER
 - a) The tongue - for encouragement and evangelism
 - b) The eyes - to take in his Word and look with compassion on others
 - c) Engage our minds - preoccupation to dream of ways to pursue righteousness - sacrifice - generosity - caring for the marginalized, the poor, the suffering
 - d) The hands and feet to put into action in deeds of serving and blessing
 - (1) Not drudgery but joy and glory and satisfaction for it is CHRIST WHOM WE SERVE

Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. (John 4:34)

- (2) Hunger and thirst for righteousness - it is food and drink
- 4. Day by day choice - temptation comes - whom will I serve - 2 options - sin or God
 - a) Mom with small children - parents of teens - you will be tempted to respond harshly, angrily - whom will I serve? Sin or Christ?
 - b) At work - whom will I serve? Will I participate in criticism, corrupting talk, gossip - or will I step into righteousness and serve Christ and bless
 - c) My neighbors - whom will I serve? Comfort and safety
 - d) When I am disappointed by others - will I serve sin and allow bitterness to take root or will I serve the Lord Christ and forgive

Those who are raised from spiritual death and made partakers of spiritual life, should not spend any moments of that new life in asking useless questions, but rather busy themselves with devout thanks for the gift, and in earnest efforts to make the most of their life for the glory of the gracious Giver. (Charles Octavius Boothe, *Plain Theology for Plain People*)

- e) Let us be those who - BECAUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD - LIVE WITH DEVOUT THANKS AND EARNEST EFFORTS TO MAKE THE MOST OF OUR LIVES FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Close

We are called to obey God - energized by the grace of God - made possible only by his grace - the gospel of grace is the fuel - we will not wreck the little planes of our souls when he directing our way and energizing us by his grace. Oh the privilege of being slaves or righteousness living to please the Lord of love and light

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