

# Being Human, Being Free

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Father, we confess before you that we think we understand, we think we know what it means to be human, we think we have all that stuff figured out, and we confess before you that then when we read your word, your word doesn't seem to make sense.

So Father, we ask that you would grant us some self-knowledge, that you would help us to understand that we're still really confused about what it means to be human and what it means to be free.

And we acknowledge before you, Father, that your word, that you as the creator of all things, that your word speaks true and deep wisdom to us as to what it means to be human and what it means to be free.

So Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would make us receptive to what you say, that you would bring your word to bear to our heart, that you would reveal our heart to us.

In the presence of you, the living God, that your Holy Spirit would just speak to our heart so that we might know ourselves as we know you. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior.

[ 1 : 14 ]     Amen. And I almost said be seated because I'm sort of trained like Pavlov's dog. So some of you might be, you know, it's always a little bit funny when you're doing a long series because the book of Romans is going to take us about 24 weeks to go through.

But here's the thing. On this the other day at one of the Starbucks that I go to, one of the people that I talk to all the time who's sort of a, he would describe himself as a spiritual agnostic.

I think that would be a fair description. And he asked me, he said, what are you going to preach about on Sunday? And I said, I think that sort of, you know, I sort of hemmed and hawed because I was still trying to get straight in my mind.

And I said, I think we're going to talk about the inadequacy and the powerlessness of moral and spiritual rules. And then he said, George, you can't talk about that.

That undermines 3,000 years of Christian and Jewish teaching. All the Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam would say that you're wrong.

[ 2 : 25 ]     That's sort of an interesting thing for a spiritual agnostic because I'm a Christian. And so anyway, he's telling me that that's not what Christianity says, that moral and spiritual rules are at the end of the day inadequate and powerless.

And so I said to him, well, yeah, that's actually what the book of Romans says. You should try reading it sometime. But anyway, then the conversation went off to some other type of thing. But that's what we're going to talk about a little bit this morning.

So just to try to set the stage, if you have your Bibles, turn in them to Romans chapter 6, verse 15. And we'll look at how the Bible tries to bring home to our hearts that moral and spiritual rules have an inadequacy and a powerlessness to them.

That means that human beings both function in a different way and we need something different. In Romans 6, 15, it begins like this.

What then are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? That's the question. The Bible asks us a question. Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

[ 3 : 34 ] So for some of us, that's just sort of like it's in the middle of a conversation. It's in the middle of a sort of an argument. So we sort of need to set a little bit of a context for it to see why that's actually a very, on the face of it, especially from a human perspective, a religious or a spiritual perspective.

It's a very reasonable question. So we have to do a couple of things. First, Andrew, if you could put Romans 1, 16 to 17 up there. If you've just a guest this morning, the way the book of Romans is written as a book is that after there's a little bit of an introduction, you know, how are you?

I'm going to go. I'm going to come and visit you. You know, blah, blah, woof, woof. That after that, Paul sort of writes in two sentences the basic message of the entire, what he's going to spend the next 15 and a half chapters talking about.

And everything in the book of Romans sort of fits into this. So could you just say this text out loud with me? For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. And it's a very, very powerful message.

[ 4 : 54 ] Paul's saying he's not ashamed of the gospel, even though in the Roman world he's going to talk about things which, you know, normal people would be embarrassed about or ashamed about. You know, there's not many sexual things and other things nowadays that people are ashamed about.

But I think a lot of people are still ashamed if they have a family member who's doing hard time in a maximum security prison. When I was in my previous church, I was there for seven years before people would start to trust me with the fact that they were lying to all of their friends and family and neighbors about where some of their, where their sons were.

They would say that they're up working in the oil rigs or they're off in California or they're in Australia. And finally, they revealed to me that they were actually in Kingston Pen doing a long time in jail for armed robbery.

And they were deeply ashamed of it. And it took them seven years of knowing me before they would trust me with it. And they would, in a sense, swear me to secrecy that I couldn't tell others about it.

And, you know, at the heart of the gospel is the story that Jesus dies as a convicted criminal and dies a death which is so shameful that Roman citizens were not allowed to be put to death that way, no matter how bad they, what they'd done.

[ 6 : 16 ] And so it was very easy for Christians to be ashamed of this, that their founder died the death of a convicted slave, in a sense. But Paul says he's not ashamed of the gospel.

He's not ashamed of the message. That the message talks of that what he's, the gospel is a message. And the message is that God's power can come to bear and be at work in ordinary human beings like you and me.

And that God's power is received not by our accomplishments, not by our merit, not by how successful we are, not by how religious or spiritual we are, but that God's power will come to bear upon us purely and utterly by putting our hands out and saying, we have no merits, we have no accomplishments that matter to you.

All we can do is trust you to make us right with yourself. And that's what Paul is continuing to say, that this is to everybody, to pagans and to people who were growing up Jewish.

And in the gospel, the righteousness of God, which means that God will act in the right way to make us right with himself. And that God, the power that comes from God for him to act in the right way to make us right with himself, that that is revealed.

[ 7 : 35 ] And we receive it from faith to faith. And that's what the whole book of Romans is about. That's, if you read the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that's what they're all about.

That's the story of the coming to earth of the one who is ultimately, it's ultimately God doing something to make human beings right with himself.

And that's what the story is all about. In fact, Andrew, if you could put up the first point. Romans wants us to come, the gospel wants us to come to the point where we would say, I cannot make myself right with God.

I cannot make myself right with God. The just God makes me right with himself by his grace alone, in Christ alone, received by faith alone.

I cannot make myself right with God. It doesn't matter if I've memorized the Apostles' Creed. It doesn't matter if I live the Ten Commandments perfectly. It doesn't matter if I go to church all of the time.

[ 8 : 38 ] It doesn't matter if I've memorized the Koran in the original Arabic. Or if I've become a Buddhist monk. Or if I've become a Hindu monk. It doesn't matter if I've become as rich as the richest man or woman on the planet.

It doesn't matter if I'm as powerful as the most powerful President of the United States or the President of Russia. It doesn't matter if I'm strong or healthy or beautiful or good looking or any of these things.

And on the same time, it doesn't matter if I'm a victim. If I've been the most victimized person on the planet and therefore somehow or another the planet and the entire universe owes me because I am so victimized.

The fact is the Gospel says all of that is completely and utterly irrelevant to God. I cannot make myself right with God. The just God. God remaining completely and utterly just.

Not by cutting us slack and ignoring justice. But that the just God makes me right with himself by his grace alone. In Christ alone.

[ 9 : 36 ] By what he's done for us on the cross. And we receive it by faith alone. And so a very logical question to many people is this.

Well, if that's the case, George, does that mean I can completely ignore the Ten Commandments? George, does that mean that I can cheat on my wife or cheat on my husband? Does that mean that I can act as a slum landlord?

Does that mean I could own slaves? Does that mean I could just do whatever I bleepity bleepity bleep please? Because you're saying that Jesus says that God doesn't weigh our good things.

He doesn't weigh our merits. He just pardons us. And if that's the case, George, why on earth should anybody pay any attention to anything in the Bible and any type of moral or spiritual rule to live their lives that way?

You can see that there's a certain degree of logic to asking that question. If, in fact, it is the case that the just God makes me right with himself by his grace alone, in Christ alone, received by faith alone.

[ 10 : 46 ] Now, the Bible is going to, Paul is now going to try to deal with this. And, in fact, let's look at verse, let's read verse 15 and 16 again.

And after you've read verse 15 and 16, many of us are going to be more confused than we already are. And that's fine. Because, you know, reading the Bible isn't always like following the instructions on your bank machine.

Like, some parts of the Bible can't just be instantly grasped. They require reflection and thinking.

Let's listen to verse 15 and 16 again. What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? And Paul gives the brief answer. By no means. It could also be translated as absolutely not.

No way. You got it completely and utterly wrong. Not the answer. I mean, that's what he says. In the original language, it would be like bolded. You know, absolutely not.

[ 11 : 53 ] And then in verse 16, he gives, in a sense, the heart of the image. And I'm going to spend a bit of time just on verse 16 because once we sort of, in a sense, get the image into our heart, most of the rest of what he says starts to make a lot more sense.

But at first, it doesn't seem to make sense. It says, verse 16, Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Isn't that clear? I should just finish right now. We've all got a complete latterly in our mind. Maybe I'm just dumber than you folks. When I first read that, I think, good grief. You know, you read it in your devotions all the time, but when you actually have to explain it to somebody, you think, ah, okay, that's an interesting long sentence.

I'll read it again. Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

So let's try to unpack that. We're just going to sort of camp there for a second, try to understand it. And at the heart of all of this is Paul is going to try to say some things about what it means to be human.

[ 13 : 12 ] And if we have a bit of an understanding about what it means to be human, then we understand how it is that the cross and Jesus changes us.

So first of all, let's just be honest for a second. I'm going to just close the Bible, put it down. Let's just be honest for a second. The fact of the matter is that we're actually quite confused and ambiguous about moral and spiritual rules and other rules in general.

In fact, I think it would be fair to say that people don't need more rules. Okay, the fact of the matter is that every single person here probably knows rules to lose weight.

We all probably know enough rules to be in better shape. We probably already know enough rules to be better off financially. We all probably know enough rules to have better relationships, better dating relationships and better marriages.

And how many people here in all of those categories follow the rules 100%, 100% of the time? If you put your hand up, nobody else in the room will believe you. Without an exception.

[ 14 : 22 ] We won't believe you. And so if we're just honest for a second, we can't on one hand complain about what Paul is going to say with the gospel because we understand perfectly how rule working works in moral and spiritual and practical things.

And we understand how that works. Human beings, we understand how human beings work. We understand how to do it perfectly. And so therefore, Paul, what you're saying in the Bible doesn't make any sense. Right off the bat, we have to do a little bit of a time out and say, okay, one second, folks, whatever the gospel is going to have to say about rule keeping, let's just be honest that we don't really understand how human beings work with rule keeping.

That there's a fundamental bit of a cluelessness and inconsistency about us. And in fact, one of the things which often mobilizes human beings is that, you know, there's certain, maybe certain areas, maybe we're spectacular rule keepers with money or with diet or with exercise or with relationships, but we're not spectacular across the board.

But we often can be very judgmental with people who are weak in rule keeping areas that we're strong in. And we're just very confused. And Paul would say, if you just sort of bear with me for a second, and you think about this analogy, and what I'm saying, you'll start to realize that the Bible has actually profound wisdom.

And so here's the very first thing. We're going to go through these first ones fairly quick, I hope. Andrew, if you could put up the next point. Human autonomy is an illusion.

[16:04] Human autonomy is an illusion. Human autonomy is one of the greatest values in Canada and the United States. Look at advertisements.

Human autonomy. They used to talk about Freedom 55. I'm on the Freedom 75 plan myself. But, you know, financial freedom at 55. And, you know, you get this car and there's a type of freedom or liberty to it.

You wear this perfume. You get the jacket. You get the watch. Consumerism is often all about you deserve freedom. And if you buy this consumer thing, you will have freedom.

And a lot of things in newspapers are all about this whole idea of freedom and understood as a type of human autonomy. It's a great value in Canada. But the Bible is going to say that human autonomy is an illusion.

In fact, actually, it's very interesting that in our culture, if you just take a step back from the Bible for a second, that in our culture, many scientists and philosophers believe that human beings have no freedom whatsoever.

[17:04] That every single thing that a human being does is controlled. Often, lots of psychotherapy all talks about how, at the end of the day, we are thinking, our feeling, our desires are the product of forces that are beyond our control.

That even today, I don't know, you know, your mom didn't like you enough when you were a kid. Or your father didn't pay enough attention to you. Or, you know, that people said nasty things to you. And it explains why you can't, you know, you can't keep a commitment.

Or you have to go to the bottle. Or you have to take drugs. Or you're driven to succeed. And it's easy for us to explain each other away in terms of forces that are beyond our control. Yet, at the same time, we have human autonomy as a huge value.

And the Bible, before it's going to say other things about this, it's going to say that human autonomy is an illusion. In fact, you see, from the perspective of human autonomy, all you need is you need, I'm an autonomous person.

I choose the rules I want to obey, I want to follow, and I just follow them. But the Bible's going to say that human autonomy is an illusion. The second thing is, but it's going to say it in a way which isn't cynical.

[18:11] Remember, those of you who have come to the church before, is the Bible is never cynical. The Bible is always realistic, but it's never cynical. And it's easy to say, oh, human autonomy is an illusion.

And you can just picture somebody that are having a \$27 breakfast at some hip cafe, drinking beans where they actually, coffee and the beans, they actually know who grew the beans and what they like for breakfast.

And human autonomy is an illusion. And it can be a cynical type of thing that actually can justify consumerism and all sorts of irresponsible behavior. But the Bible is never cynical, ever.

But it always speaks the heart, the reality of the human heart and the presence of the living God. The second, next point, Andrew, here's the song. The Bible is going to say here that human beings got to serve somebody or something.

I'm just going to disagree with Dylan a little bit. The choice isn't between you serve the devil or serve the Lord. The devil's always trying to make it look like he's more important than he is. But the Bible is going to teach.

[ 19 : 20 ] That's what Paul is saying here in Romans 16, is that the choice between you, the choice for human beings is not service or autonomy, but who you serve or what you serve.

And that's always the human choice. Because human beings are made in such a way that we're always giving ourselves to something, that there's something or some person or some project or some idea that makes sense of our life to us, that makes certain things seem wise, that certain things seem unwise, that there are certain things that we have to have.

And it's because there are those certain things that we have to have, those certain things that help us to understand how the world works and what we need to flourish. And that often explains why we do things and why we disregard moral laws or spiritual laws or other laws.

You know, maybe it's that at a certain age, that for a guy that he has to have a girlfriend, or for a girl, a young woman, that she has to have a man in her life.

And that might be completely, he or she might be completely, utterly unaware of it, but it drives them as something that they need to have for their life to have meaning, their life to have make sense, their life to have fulfillment.

[ 20 : 46 ] And so it leads them to breaking friendships, and it leads them to maybe spending money foolishly, and it leads you to maybe doing things in terms of sexual knowing that in your heart of hearts, in your mind of minds, you know it doesn't actually work, it's sort of foolish, but there's sort of a driving for that all of the time going on in your life.

And the fact is that a lot of us, what we do is driven by what we think is of ultimate value in our lives. And that explains, actually, because human beings, we give ourselves to something, we serve something.

And in fact, as the Bible explains, in other places apart from here, Paul doesn't do it here, he's trying to make a more general point, that the fundamental problem for most human beings is that we don't just serve something or someone, we serve legion.

We serve legion. And I'm not using that as an analogy for demons, but we serve multiple and contradictory idols. And that's what actually goes on in the human heart and in the human life.

And then here's the next point, Andrew, if you could put it up. When I am redeemed by Jesus, I do not become less human. I begin to become more human.

[ 22 : 12 ] The average person in Canada does not believe that this would be true. They would believe that to become a Christian, a follower of Jesus, is to move towards looking like you eat lemons all the time, that you'll have a sour, grumpy, frowny face.

Like you've always just, you smell a fart, and your nose is all screwed up because you just walk around in life and everything just stinks and everything just smells.

And you have to give away your money and you have to do weird things with your sexuality and you have to kiss your brains goodbye. And that would be the fundamental way that Canadians often view the Christian faith.

But at the heart of the Christian faith is that if we understand the gospel, we understand the Bible, is that when I am redeemed by Jesus, I do not become less human. I begin to become more human.

Now, here's where we're still just camping in Romans 6.16. One of the problems with reading the book of Romans is that the word which is translated as slave is the word *doulos*.

[ 23 : 27 ] I don't know if I'm pronouncing it correctly because I don't speak Greek. I read common... But I know that that's the word *doulos*. And the problem is that there's no real equivalent in English. Those of you who have been here before know that there's no real equivalent in English.

Some of your Bibles translate that as slave and some of them translate them as servant. And neither word really fits. The problem with servant is as soon as you see servant, you think Downton Abbey.

And you think the head servant. And they speak with a really, really cool English accent. They're aristocratic.

They're competent. And maybe if we're not thinking of Downton Abbey, maybe we're thinking of things like the Fresh Prince of Valer or other types of things where the servant is the smartest person in the family and sort of runs the family and bosses the family around.

And that's definitely not what is meant by *doulos*. The other problem is that when we think of the word slave, we think of movies like Django Unchained. We think of the atrocities going on with ISIS and the reintroduction of slavery and other types of Islamist extremist groups and the type of complete and utter violence and degradation done to other human beings, just as in the worst of the American South has happened.

[ 24 : 46 ] And that's not what's meant as well. At the time that Paul was writing this, in this original context, one-third of the Roman Empire were *doulos*. One-third.

And I don't know how they figure this out, but anthropologists have figured out that in the first several decades of the Christian church, 70% of people in church were *doulos*.

70%. Over double the figure in the empire. And so the people... And here's the thing with *doulos*, is that if you read the Bible, if you read the story in the book of Acts about the Ethiopian eunuch, he was a *doulos*.

But he was, in our terms, he was the head of the Bank of Canada and the finance minister and the controller general of Canada and all of those things, and he was a *doulos*.

If you read the book of Daniel, Daniel and his friends were *doulos*. And yet Daniel managed whole parts of the Babylonian Empire.

[ 25 : 57 ] So that in the Roman Empire, a *doulos* could have very, very high positions and be very, very powerful and prestigious. They also, of course, could be like, you know, slaves rowing in a galley and be treated abysmally and terribly, but the range was quite wide.

But the key word, the key understanding of *doulos* is that you didn't belong to yourself. You belonged to another person, and you were under the direction and the authority of another person.

And so Paul is saying that human beings, at the end of the day, don't belong to themselves. And we ultimately take direction from something and give ourselves to something and obey something that we understand to be our highest good.

The thing that we need, the thing of ultimate importance, the thing that if we don't attain it, it creates anxiety within us. And we all share different idols. And we all have multiple idols.

And so Paul is saying that that's just the way human beings are. It's the way we need. And when we become a follower of Jesus, it isn't that that giving of ourselves and belonging to another comes to an end, but it's changed.

[ 27 : 19 ] It's changed in a profound way. Andrew, if you could put up the next point. I either serve, I will be like God, or God himself.

That's the choice. You see, the word *sin* here is a bit of a complicated word. If we're honest, it's a complicated word for post-modern Canadians and for Christians living in Canada in the year 2015.

For many people, when we see the word sin, we think of sex. In fact, many people outside of the church, and that always influences how Christians think, when they see the word sin, when they hear Christians talking about sinners, they think, oh, that means they don't do sexual things the way the Bible should say.

But that's not what sin means. And for others, within the church, when we see the word sin, we think of, like, real obvious evil things. We think of punching innocent people, or we think of owning slaves, or being a slum landlord.

If you don't think of that, you should think of that, by the way. You know, we think of just great injustice, or great hatred. But that's actually not what the word sin means either. It's included in it, but it's not actually what sin means.

[ 28 : 32 ] Because sin includes soccer moms in Canada. It includes billionaires. It includes movie actors, and actresses, and very, very successful people.

But when you think of the word sin, and Paul does it very helpfully here in verse 16, he's trying to help us to go back to the garden, and to Genesis 3. And at the heart of all sin, is I will be like God.

And my desire to be like God, and therefore establish my own order, my own worth, my own value, my own ownership, and my own control.

And that can take the form of even generosity. Because we assert ourselves by being generous. We give to create obligation.

We give to make people in our debt. It can be all part of our self-justification project, our self-righteousness project. It can all be part of our, just our rules, but at the heart of it isn't the most extreme forms of sin, but it's an awareness of this fact that in the garden, we didn't want to accept God as God and us as creatures.

[ 29 : 54 ] But we want it to disregard his words, and disregard his order, and disregard the good, and be our own good, and be our own gods.

And all sin is at heart. Genesis 3. Every time you read the Bible, but especially as you read the book of Romans, that it's all about being like God.

So I either serve, I will be like God, or God himself. Now here's the problem. The problem is that I can't leave myself now to fix myself.

It doesn't matter if I have an out-of-body experience. It doesn't matter if I do dream work. It doesn't matter if I go into trances. It doesn't matter if I spend all my time in church or all my time in prayer.

The fact of the matter is I can't leave myself to fix myself, which is why the heart of the Bible is to get us to come to the point in time when we realize that we can't leave ourselves to fix ourselves, and that living a life centered around I will be like God only leads to brokenness and does not defeat death, and the hope that we come to the point in time when we say only God, only God, only He can justify me.

[ 31 : 16 ] Only He can make me right with Himself. Only He can make me right with His created order. Which is why in the book of Colossians it's this cosmic thing, this idea that it's not just that you're made right with God, but God is the creator of all things.

It's why it touches ecological sin and economic sin and national sin. It's a big idea. It's not just some private spiritual experience between us and God.

It's that only God can make me right with Him and His order. Him as creator and me as creature. Only God. And so, the heart of the gospel is that, I mean, we just have a wooden cross up here, but the gospel says that this is real.



It's why Christians insist that when you read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and Acts, you're reading history. that God really exists, that He really shows up in our neighborhood, that He really sends Jesus, that Jesus really is God, the Son of God, setting aside His divine prerogatives, taking into Himself our human nature, that He really does come and walk amongst us, that He really does live the sinless life that we could not live, that He really does perform miracles, that He really does act with power, and that He really does die upon the cross, and that His death upon the cross, this act of humiliation before imperialistic powers and religion and spirituality and the best of the military and the best of the academy and the best of intellectual and moral life, and that crucifies Jesus, the Son of God, and that this apparent defeat and humiliation of God, the Son of God, is actually God's power to free us.

Looking beneath the appearances, that Jesus goes deep, deep, deep, deep, however deep we have fallen, He goes deeper still to get us and to bring us up.

[ 33 : 22 ] And that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, there is a transfer of ownership. I no longer belong to I will live like I will be God.

That God Himself now owns me. And God Himself owns you when you put your faith and trust in Jesus.

That there's a real transfer of authority to the real God that really does exist. Christ. And that's what Paul is trying to get us to understand.

And understand that as the gospel grips us, as we understand that the gospel is true, that it's real, that God looking at you and me and seeing all of our imperfections and all of the things that are strong and good about us, all of our potential, all of the things about us, but even all of the bad things, even all the things that are so bad that we've repressed them, that seeing this, still He loves you and still He loves me and still He dies upon the cross to be our Redeemer.

And if He does it for me, He'll do it for any person on the planet. That when we, in a sense, say, Father, only You can rescue me, will You rescue me?

[ 34 : 55 ] Jesus, only You are that power that in justice God does and in grace He does to make me right with Himself. Will You take me?

Can I enter into You? Can You be mine? Can I be Yours? He turns no one away. No one away. It doesn't matter if you're doing hard time in the hardest prison in the world or the most successful person.

He turns no one away. It doesn't matter if you're same-sex attracted or you've never been same-sex attracted, you've only been opposite-sex attracted. It doesn't matter if you're university educated or if you're barely educated at all, He turns no one away.

He doesn't weigh our merits but He pardons our offenses. And Paul's original here is, you see, this is a powerful understanding.

Remember, it's very possible that if there were 200 people who were Christians in Rome, 140 of them were of the doulos class and the other 60, they understand the doulos class.

[ 35 : 56 ] They understand how that works. And every single one of them, this is this bombshell to them. Okay, on a human level, I belong to, you know, old Fred there or whatever.

But, you know, on a human level, we understand that if Fred sells me to Jill, that I now have a new owner. And the cross of Jesus is Jesus doing something and when I put my faith and trust in Him, it breaks my ownership to I will be like God and all the idols that I give myself.

It actually breaks it and it's as if Jesus takes you and me by the shoulders and lifts me to a different status of I now belong to God again.

I belong to God. And let me tell you, friends, when Jesus died upon the cross, He defeated sin, He defeated death, He defeated all hostile spiritual powers, He completely and utterly defeated them, and if He's put His hands on your shoulders and moved you to the domain where you now live for God, nothing, nothing will take you from His hands.

Nothing. He will never let you go. That's the gospel. And now let's, you know, when you read this text, look at verse 17.

[ 37 : 22 ] But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of I will be like God have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed. In other words, you've heard the gospel and you've believed that slavery is not the final word about you but that you can belong to God.

Not because you're so beautiful or so wonderful or so successful but because of the power of God for salvation. Verse 18, and have been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness, of right standing with God.

I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations for just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness because slavery grows.

So now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification. I'll talk about that more in a moment in closing. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

In other words, you didn't belong to righteousness. That's what it means. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

[ 38 : 33 ] But now that you have been set free from sin that you no longer are owned by sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death. The payoff of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Andrew, if you could put up the almost final point. God's gift of grace makes us whole, free, and fruitful. I put the us in in purpose.

Because holiness doesn't mean as I said that you look around always as if a fart's just gone off in the room and it's really smelly and at the same time you're eating lemons with no sugar and you just have this really ugly expression on your face.

Unfortunately, there's a whole pile of Christians that's what they think holiness means and they embody it. Lord, have mercy upon us. But holiness means you're set aside for God.

[ 39 : 41 ] And it means that as God sets you aside for himself, he doesn't do it just alone. We enter the Jesus way one by one but we walk the Jesus way with Jesus and others. And holiness is a restoration to community.

Holiness involves a restoration of ourselves with the created order. Holiness means that we start to become fruitful. Holiness means we start to become whole. Holiness means we start to live eternal life.

And it's all gift. All gift. My time is almost up. The marriage analogy which comes after that, it's the same. Paul just, you notice that the word are, or, it's the same type of thing.

He just uses a different analogy and the different analogy is that you're either married to self-justification and rule keeping or you're married to grace. You can't, you can't be unmarried and you can't be married to both, you're only married to one.

It's just a different analogy. I don't have time to go into it but that's the heart of it. So here's a couple of things that we can sort of take away. A lot of times, I'm not trying to say that we shouldn't show willpower but a lot of times as we all know, willpower just doesn't work.

[ 40 : 54 ] Willpower doesn't work. I mean, it has a partial effectiveness but it, a lot of times what we need to ask ourselves when we're doing compulsive things and things that we know that are wrong, what we need to do is we need to say, Father, will you grip me with the gospel?

But will you grip me with the gospel? Well, Father, help me to understand what I'm serving. What is it that I, Father, please reveal to me what it is that is my ultimate good?

If we're always angry with our wife, if I was to go around always saying that my wife was stupid, if I was to treat her in that particular type of way, well, what's driving me? What is it that I understand or think is really important?

What's at the heart of who I am? And then once we ask the Father to reveal that to us, ask Him to break it, to grip us with the gospel. Jesus who, becomes a servant, becomes a *doulos* to free us so we can be free in God.

And the second thing is, and this is in verse 19, this is what we're going to end with, it's the tool belt analogy. Look at verse 19 again. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations, for just as you once presented your members, which can also mean tools or instruments or weapons, as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your tools, weapons, instruments, as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness, to being holy.

[ 42 : 31 ] And it's the exact same analogy which we looked at last week. And it's this. The Bible is saying that every day when you wake up, it doesn't matter if you're retired, it doesn't matter if you're independently wealthy, it doesn't matter if you're just going to, as a job, as a janitor, it doesn't matter if you're going to manage hedge funds and make millions of dollars in a day, it doesn't matter if you're a social worker, it doesn't matter if you're a stay-at-home dad, okay?

But in a sense, every human being, we wake up and we show up at a job site where we're owned. And when we come to the job site every day, we carry in, we have our tool belt around us and in our tool belt we have our money, our time, our sexuality, our mind, our body, our strength, our family relationships, our influence.

We have our tool thing, a big box of tools in our right hand and our left hand, of course, we have as construction workers do those unbelievably huge lunch boxes that they carry around. And every morning when we wake up, we show up at a job site where we're owned.

So we do every day. It's a way to understand how you live your day. And here's the problem. Many of us are showing up at the wrong job site.

Sorry to use this as the cross. And over here is the different idols that we're in slavery and bondage to. And over here is the realm of grace where the one who owns us is the one who died for us, who loves us so much that he died on the cross, he suffered humiliation so we would be his.

[ 44 : 15 ] And when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, Jesus, as I said, picks us up and puts us here. We now belong to him. But brothers and sisters, friends, so many of us, so often me, when I wake up in the morning, I show up at this job site.

Paul is saying, stop showing up at the wrong job site. Begin your day by realizing who owns you, who has redeemed you, who you serve, and bring the best of who you are to him.

That you bring the best of who you are to him, not so he'll love you more, because he can't love you more, but out of gratitude and knowing that as you know his will and his heart and as you dwell more and more in what he did for you on the cross, that as you think about that, it will nudge you, it will draw you, it will shape you, it will ground you to live in a way that brings him glory, not yourself, and is actually leading you to be more human and more free.

So I'd like you all to stand and I'm going to invite you to say this prayer with me. It's the same one we said last week. And if you have never given your life to Jesus, if you've never asked him to take you from this to this, use this prayer as a conversion prayer.

Offer yourself and he will take you as his own. And for all of us, if you're at all like me, brothers and sisters, you need help to remember to not show up at the wrong job site.

[ 46 : 11 ] So I ask you, invite you, if the Holy Spirit leads you, to pray along with me. Lord, thank you for the gift of this new day. I come to you ready to work for you under your direction.

I bring the best of who I am and all of who I am. I bring my mind, body, time, money, creativity, sexuality, influence, job, and life.

I am here to work for you. Please guide, direct, and strengthen me to do what you would have me do. Please free me so I work for your glory and not my own.

In Jesus' name, amen. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, draw us to yourself, make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who live for your glory.

And this we ask in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.