

# Slaves To Righteousness

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[ 0 : 00 ] I would like you to take your Bibles and open up to the book of Romans.

If you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs among you, then you can simply turn to page 943. We're going to be in Romans chapter 6 this morning.

In case you don't know, Romans is a part of the New Testament. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old, of course, comes first and then the New Testament. And Romans is more or less toward the beginning of the New Testament after the four Gospels and the book of Acts.

But if you're lucky enough to have one of our Bibles, just turn to page 943. And we're going to read in chapter 6, beginning in verse 15, all the way down to verse 23 to the end of the chapter.

So I want to ask you guys to stand with me in honor of God's Word as we read together. The Apostle Paul writes, What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?

[ 1 : 09 ] By no means. 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?

But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

I'm speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity, to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? The end of those things is death.

But now that you have been set free from 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, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 2 : 22 ] We give you great thanks for these words and for this word and ask for guidance as we study it this morning.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. You know, if you want to be really, really good at something, then the only sure way to become an expert at anything or at least to become better than most others at something is repetition.

To simply do something over and over and over. I don't know how many of you have ever seen the movie Groundhog Day. Bill Murray, it's a classic, alright? Where he lives the same day over and over and over and at the beginning of the movie he's really not much of a guy.

He's really, he's a jerk, right? But as he lives the same day over and over making mistake after mistake his mistakes lessen. He actually becomes a better person so that by the end of the movie he's someone you might actually like.

At the beginning of the movie you can't stand his character. By the end he's someone that you actually might like because he repeats the same patterns over and over and over again. I think life is like that.

[ 3 : 31 ] I think just about anything that we do is like that. If we want to become an expert at anything or if we want to become really good at something we've got to repeat it. And at times we're going to stumble and we're going to make mistakes but then the next time we come around and do those things that we're trying to get better at we don't make all of the same mistakes.

Repetition really is the key to being good at anything. And if the Apostle Paul was good at anything the Apostle Paul was the preeminent example of an evangelist.

Of a person who could proclaim the gospel in just about any location to almost any group of people. So that when he's standing for instance in Athens on a hill speaking to Greek philosophers he can quote their philosophers he can point to their statues and use those as a segway as a means to getting to the gospel of Christ.

If he's speaking to Jews then he can use the Old Testament as a means of getting to the gospel of Christ. Paul was an expert at proclaiming the gospel. And because he was such an expert he could anticipate the objections of those around him.

Just like a basketball player the more often he plays he can anticipate the way that defenders will attempt to guard him and he can find ways around those. So the Apostle Paul now by the time that he writes the book of Romans he has been preaching for some time.

[ 4 : 51 ] He has been on missionary journeys. He has been to city after city to almost every significant region of the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean world. But he has plans to go further.

The Apostle Paul in fact wants to move beyond the city of Rome and go all the way to Spain to preach the gospel there. He says in Romans that his ambition is to preach Christ where he has not yet been named.

That's his goal because that's who Paul is. He's a gospel preacher. He's an evangelist. He's an apostle sent out to proclaim the word of Christ. And he's done that all over the place.

And by the time he comes to write the book of Romans he's writing the book of Romans more or less as an introduction to the Roman Christians people who for the most part he hadn't met. He had met some of them in other cities as they traveled.

But for the most part he didn't know the Christians in Rome and he needed their help. So he wrote the book of Romans as an introduction of himself and of the message that he's been proclaiming all over the place so that when he eventually comes to Rome he might have their help.

[ 5 : 55 ] They would know who he is. They would know what he's about. They would know the gospel that he preaches and that they would be willing then to support him whether financially or in any other way as he travels beyond Rome to lands to where the gospel has not yet been preached.

And so in the book of Romans we have seen in the last several months that he lays out the gospel systematically, logically, sometimes in great detail.

He helps us to have a clear view of what he means by gospel. Of what the good news of Jesus Christ actually is. And because he has proclaimed this same gospel in town after town Paul can anticipate the objections to the gospel before they're even named.

Which is exactly what he's doing in the chapters in which we are now engaged. In chapter 6 he begins with a question. What then? And then in the middle of chapter 6 he begins with another question.

What shall we say then? Because Paul knows how people will respond to the gospel that he preaches. And in chapter 6 he is anticipating objections to the gospel that he's been proclaiming in chapters 1 through 4.

[ 7 : 09 ] In fact, Paul had a sort of standard operating procedure as he went from city to city. Normally when he would arrive in a new city the first place he would go would be the place where he could find the most Jews.

The people that would have the most knowledge of the word of God with whom he would have the most in common since he himself was a Jew. So normally when he would arrive in town to preach the gospel for the first time that it had ever been preached in that town to begin a church out of nothing really he would begin at the synagogue where the Jews gathered on the Sabbath.

We find him doing that for instance in Acts chapter 17. You can hold your place in Romans and turn there if you'd like where we can see a familiar pattern for the apostle Paul.

We could go through all of Acts or at least the second half of Acts which details Paul's ministry and we could see this pattern repeated but it's probably enough to see it once. In Acts chapter 17 Paul arrives in the city of Thessalonica and as was his custom he goes to the synagogue.

Take a look at verse 1 of Acts 17. It says, When they, that's Paul and his traveling companions, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia they came to Thessalonica another city where there was a synagogue of the Jews and Paul went in Luke says as was his custom and on three Sabbath days so three Saturdays in a row for three weeks Paul proclaims the gospel at these synagogue meetings.

[ 8 : 35 ] On three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the scriptures explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

That was his pattern. Come to town find the synagogue Sabbath after Sabbath go to the synagogue and from the Old Testament what we call the Old Testament what they simply called the scriptures from the scriptures he would proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and say to them all of the hopes everything that we Jews have been looking for has been fulfilled in this man Jesus from Nazareth.

and he had mixed results everywhere that he went. As you would expect as God sovereignly touches some hearts and some hearts are left in their sin you would expect mixed results that's exactly what we see here.

Take a look at verse 4 some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. That was fairly typical but what is said next at the beginning of verse 5 was also fairly typical of Paul's experience from town to town.

But the Jews were jealous we are told. That is those Jews attending the synagogue who did not receive the gospel who did not believe the message that Paul came to teach they became jealous because there were some Jews attracted to Paul and his new message as well as some God fearing Greeks that would be Gentiles who nevertheless believed in the God of the Jews.

[ 10 : 08 ] And then there would even be others pagans who would come and be converted to this new teaching and many times they would become jealous. And here in Thessalonica the Jews run Paul out of town.

They even chase him in the next town and he has to leave the next town because the Jews in Thessalonica are so angry that they follow him when they find out where he is. That was Paul's normal experience.

Arrive in town find the synagogue preach the gospel win some converts anger the Jews and then the Jews try in some way to stop him from doing what he's doing. That was fairly normal.

In fact it was it was not just the Jewish people in the synagogues to where Paul would go to preach that would sometimes oppose Paul. It was in fact sometimes Jews who heard the message perhaps from Paul perhaps from another apostle and they believed many of the things that were said.

In fact they would often times accept Jesus as the Messiah. They would believe the basic message about who Jesus is but then they would hit a roadblock when Paul began to proclaim to them exactly what he had done and that faith alone in this Messiah and in what he had done on the cross was necessary for salvation.

[ 11 : 25 ] Even Jews who at times would agree that Jesus was the Messiah would still oppose the gospel that Paul preached. So if you turn back a page or two in your Bibles Acts 15 you can see where many of these things at one point in time came to a head for the apostle Paul.

Acts 15 verse 1 says that some men came down from Judea and were teaching brothers unless you are circumcised which is shorthand for unless you obey the law that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai that is the Ten Commandments and all the other rules and regulations that God gave to the Jews through Moses unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses you cannot be saved which is the exact opposite of what Paul proclaims.

We know that because in Romans Paul tells us he says that we know that no one is justified by the works of the law that is by obeying the law of Moses. You don't get right with God you don't get declared righteous by God by obeying the law of Moses.

That's the opposite of what these people are saying. Jews who've come to spoil Paul's message. Jews who've come from Judea and have an end with the brothers.

Jews who most likely would have assented and agreed that Jesus is the Messiah but wanted to say on top of believing that Jesus is the Messiah you must also obey the law of Moses or you cannot be saved which angered Paul after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to talk to the apostles and the elders there.

[ 13 : 04 ] No small dissension means Paul was ticked off. Paul was really angry. Paul experienced these things over and over and over throughout his ministry so that when we come to the book of Romans Paul has at his arsenal a fully formed ready to use array of answers to objections that could be raised to the gospel that he proclaims.

So if in chapters 1 through 4 of Romans Paul is laying out the good news of Jesus Christ that we are declared righteous by God on the basis of faith alone and not on the basis of obeying the law of Moses now in chapters 6 after chapter 5 provides a bit of a segue now in chapter 6 Paul is fully prepared to answer objections to that gospel before they are even voiced by anyone.

Paul has sort of an imaginary opponent here in Romans chapter 6 and so you can see it clearly turn back to Romans 6 if you would you can see it very clearly in verse 1 because at the end of chapter 5 he made a statement he said that the law the law of Moses actually was given by God it came into the world not to deal with the problem of sin not to rescue people not to save people from their sins but he says in fact that the law came in to increase the trespass but where sin increased he says grace abounded all the more so the law he says far from solving the problem of sin far from being necessary to make you right with God God actually gave the law to exacerbate the problem of sin to make the problem of sin worse so that it would be seen more clearly and so that the grace of God that overcomes sin would be magnified all the more greatly and if you say things like that people are going to come back and say well Paul if you're saying that the law only increases grace then why shouldn't we just go ahead and continue to sin continue to disobey the law so the grace of God is magnified all the more and we saw in the first 14 verses of this chapter

Paul lays out a clear definitive answer to that objection to the gospel should we just remain in sin continue in sin so that grace increases to overcome greater sin and God gets more glory and Paul says by no means certainly not don't you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have died with him you have died to sin is Paul's first answer to the first objection you can't live in sin anymore because you're a changed person you're a different person now something has happened to you you died to sin and then at the end of the answer to that first objection Paul makes another statement about the law and grace where he says in verse 14 that we are not under the law not anymore we are now because of our faith in Christ we are under grace he says which raises another objection that Paul cuts off before it's raised he says in verse 15 where we begin this morning what then are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace that's a logical question

Paul if we are no longer bound by the law if we're no longer as you say under the law if the law is no longer something that we must submit to in order for us to get right with God then shouldn't we just sin why would there be need for any kind of moral reformation in our lives and in our hearts if the law cannot provide a path to being right with God if the law cannot and is not now a means for us to enter into God's kingdom if we're not under it anymore and it's all of grace shouldn't we just sin should anything really change we'll just believe in Jesus be thankful for what he's done for us be thankful that he's paid the price for our sins and then commit a few more sins that he's paid the price for no big deal that's a logical objection to the gospel that's not a crazy thought

[ 17 : 28 ] Paul's not Paul's not creating straw men here in other words Paul's not coming up with very weak poor objections to what he's been teaching so that he can easily knock them down and look like he's the superior intellect Paul is bringing forth the opponents that he's faced everywhere that he's been he's bringing forth their strongest most logical objections these objections make sense if you believe the gospel that Paul preaches they make sense so how do you answer that sort of a question what is the role of moral reformation in the life of a person who's already confessed that you cannot get right with God on the basis of moral reformation where does it come in Paul begins to answer our question very clearly and he really he says he creates two categories here in the second half of chapter 6 you either belong in the category of being a slave to sin or he says you belong in the category of being a slave to God or righteousness so that the answer to the objection is listen we all belong in one camp or the other why should we not just continue in sin because we're not under the law but under grace because when you look at who you are who you are will belong to a certain category of person you will either belong to the category of slave to sin or you will belong to the category of slave to God and righteousness notice what he says here in verse 15 or 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 that's just common sense if you hand yourself over to someone as a slave and you obey everything that they say then you're their slave that's not complicated that's fairly simple do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves you are slaves of the one whom you obey now here are the two choices either of sin can be a slave to sin which leads to death so not the best of choices or of obedience which leads to righteousness those are the two choices slave of sin slave of obedience or slave of righteousness later on he terms it slave of God those are the two options those are the two categories in which you can find yourself one or the other one leads to death one does not in fact he creates throughout this passage he creates a sort of chain of events for each of these so that if you are a slave of sin that inaugurates a certain chain of events that eventually leads to death and not merely physical death

I think he has in mind here more than physical death also spiritual death I think that because if you look down at the last verse in this passage verse 23 he says that the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord so that the opposite of death in verse 23 is eternal life in Christ which is more than enduring physical life it includes enduring physical life because we'll be raised from the dead to reign with Christ forever if we've trusted in him it includes that but we know that eternal life is more than just this life extended it's far far more which means that the death the wages of death held out for those who are slaves to sin is more than merely physical death it's a spiritual death we would refer to it as condemnation the wrath of God eternity in hell separated from the love and grace of God that's the route that being a slave to sin takes you toward that's the end but there are steps along the way notice look at verse 19 he says he says he says he says for just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and lawlessness leading to more lawlessness you see how it works here he says you once presented the members of your body now we saw this language last week in the previous verses the members your members of your body your hands your eyes your feet can be put either into service of sin and he will use them as weapons in a war on behalf of unrighteousness or

Paul says the members of your body hand feet eyes tongue sexual organs whatever can be put into service of God and God can use them as weapons for righteousness and now he uses the same language again and he says if you're a slave to sin that is if you present your members as slaves to impurity synonymous another term for sin here and to lawlessness that will lead to what more lawlessness!

So it starts simply it starts with simple submission to some form of sin which leads to more sin which leads to more sin which eventually leads to death not just physical but spiritual everlasting death it is you might call you might call it a pattern of impiety it's inexorable it leads that way automatically it's like a downhill path if it's steep enough then once you start down that downhill path it's very very difficult to stop gravity is powerful sin is powerful once you start down that road it's very difficult to stop it's hard to get a foothold or a hand hold it's difficult but on the other hand Paul says there's another category to which you might belong you might no longer be a slave to sin which implies that all of us at one time were slaves of sin all of us belonged in that category but you might now be in another category you might now be a slave of righteousness or obedience or God himself and there's a pattern there as well notice the pattern for slavery to God or slavery to righteousness verse 21 what fruit were you getting from the at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed for the end of those things the end of the sinful things is death but now that you've been set free from sin and have become slaves of God the fruit you get leads to sanctification and it's in eternal life so the other pattern is that you submit yourself as a slave to righteousness or God which results in righteous living which results in sanctification that is you are made more holy and righteous it's not merely external but it's internal

God actually makes you more righteous it leads to sanctification and the end of sanctification he says is eternal life so you can either follow a pattern of sin to increasing sin to death or you can follow a pattern of slavery to God to increasing righteousness to sanctification to eternal life those are the two paths that exist those are the two trajectories that you can be upon and Paul says those of us who have had our sins forgiven by the death of Christ on the cross those of us who have had his righteousness counted as ours or put in other terms those of us who have stopped trying to earn God's favor through obedience to the law or today we might say through being a good person those of us those of us who stopped that and trusted in the grace of God through Christ to redeem us and save us and rescue us those of us who have experienced that have now been removed from the category of slave to sin and have become slaves of God himself you cannot be in both categories you cannot you cannot be simultaneously a slave of sin and a slave of righteousness you simply cannot be when you trust in

[ 26 : 03 ] Christ something happens to you and Paul uses three different metaphors in this chapter to help us to understand what happens to us when we trust in Christ yes we have his righteousness counted as ours yes our sins are forgiven that's justification that's the first four or five chapters of the book of Romans but something else happens namely what we call sanctification we begin the process of actually being transformed by God into a more righteous and holy person and that happens Paul says for all those who are justified by the grace of God so if you're not under the law anymore but you're under grace you cannot just simply continue to sin because you're not a slave of sin anymore you're a slave of God and of righteousness now let me show you that from the text so you don't think that I'm just saying that look in the middle of our passage here verse 17 after

Paul has laid out the two options briefly in the first couple of verses of this paragraph in verse 17 he makes a statement but thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed notice how he terms this here I think he's sort of using the terminology of his imaginary objectors and turning it on its head he's saying that you were once a slave of sin when you were under the law and you were trying to be a good person and you were trying to obey all the rules you were actually a slave of sin because sin uses the law to enslave you but now that you're not under the law but you've become obedient wait obedient to what obedient to the standard of teaching you received obedient to the gospel I believe is what he's saying here the gospel that was proclaimed to you this is the same kind of obedience that Paul has in mind when he uses the phrase the obedience of faith elsewhere in

Romans this is trusting in Christ to become obedient to the standard of teaching that we've received is to trust fully in Christ rather than our own ability to obey the law of Moses or some other set of rules that we've set up for ourselves so Paul is saying now thank God that even though you used to be a slave of sin now you've trusted in Jesus now something has happened to you as a result of that verse 18 and having been set free from sin you have become slaves of righteousness that's what happens when we're converted that's what happens when we trust in Jesus yes he credits Christ's righteousness to us but he also makes us a slave of righteousness now so that we're on a path and that path draws us much like sin draws us but it draws us increasingly increasingly toward righteousness one of the reasons that we find this passage somewhat difficult to connect with is because of all this language about slavery because when we talk about slavery within our culture there are two roadblocks for us to understand this passage or at least to take it to heart number one is just our history as a nation with slavery we cannot in our minds picture slavery as anything other than horrible and demeaning and evil we cannot picture it as anything else because of the history of race based slavery in our country and I understand that but we also have a preoccupation as

Americans we have a preoccupation with the idea of freedom and we think of freedom as an absolute sort of thing you are either free or you are not free and it's only good to be free and free in every respect but Paul's not thinking in those categories Paul's not an American he lived 2000 years ago and those ideas were nowhere near the forefront of his mind Paul is saying here you're a slave no matter whether you like the terminology or not he even acknowledges I'm speaking in human terms here because of the weakness of your flesh I'm having to use metaphors he admits that but he's not embarrassed by the terminology he simply says we're all slaves every single one of us I know as Americans I know as westerners we are predisposed to think that the natural human condition is freedom but it's not it's something we yearn for but it's not the natural human condition the natural human condition is slavery we are born slaves of sin and you will remain a slave throughout your life the question is who will be your master will you be a slave of sin your entire life and end in eternal death and condemnation or will you become a slave of God through faith in Jesus because as a slave of God he begins to work in us new things he begins to create new patterns within our lives he begins to transform us and the challenge for those of us who actually have become slaves of God the challenge for those of us who have trusted in Christ is to embrace our identity as slaves of God and to reject all of sin's attempts to convince us that we are still its slaves one of the things I find really interesting in sort of a sad kind of way is reading stories about

African Americans after the Civil War was over how many many African Americans though they were legally set free from their slave owners continued to live their lives for generations even no different than they lived as slaves still addressing their former white masters as masters still giving deference to them in every sort of way and there were cultural pressures there were things that made that that enshrined that in law in the decades that followed and that's not a simple thing to parse out I get that but it is it's heart wrenching to look and to see that people who had been set free from cruel slave masters nevertheless in their minds still thought of themselves as under the slave masters and I think sometimes the challenge of the Christian life is to recognize that we have a new master to recognize and remind ourselves that we are not under the power of sin anymore that's the point of the death metaphor at the beginning of chapter 6 you died to sin with

[ 33 : 18 ] Christ that's the point of the warfare metaphor in the middle of chapter 6 where sin is like a ruler a king trying to take over the throne of your life but sin can't be master over you and that's the point of the slavery imagery to say you're no longer under the power of sin sin no longer sits on the throne of your life and your heart and your body and sin is no longer your slave master you have instead been made alive to God God has removed that former king of your heart and God has now become your new slave master but we still struggle and Paul acknowledges that reality he acknowledges that we still have a struggle that we still in many ways it's a it's a mental struggle to convince ourselves that we are not really slaves of sin anymore look at verse 19



I'm 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 so now present your members your body parts as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification Paul says you are slaves of righteousness you are slaves of obedience you are slaves of God now present your members as slaves of righteousness you are a slave live like a slave of God it's not any different than what he said earlier in the chapter where he told us that we have died to sin and then he says in verse 11 so you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus it's a reality it's true for you you're not a slave of sin if you've trusted in Jesus you are now a slave of God so what should you do don't present your members to sin because he's not your master present your members to God as slaves to him and slaves to righteousness see I think that one of the greatest obstacles to actual lived out practical righteousness in our lives is that sometimes we want we have within us this drawing to go back to the old downward path of sin and gravity still works there it's still operative there though we don't have to set foot on that path when we do gravity is still operative it still begins to pull us down so that what might seem to be one small sin still leads to larger sins and begins to pull us further and further away but the opposite is also true is it not that one act of righteousness in obedience to Christ usually leads to more and when Paul says present your members as slaves to righteousness what he means is take your body parts who you are and use them to do righteous things and that will establish a pattern of piety rather than a pattern of impiety it will create habits of holiness within your life and then you'll find yourself in the process of sanctification of becoming more and more holy you know

I regularly attempt to diet and exercise I don't always succeed at dieting and exercising there are times when I'll go weeks or sometimes even a few months without actually exercising but I try to maintain a pattern of exercising regularly and not eating insane amounts of food alright I'm not a crazy dieter okay I don't absolutely cut anything out of my diet I just try not to eat insane amounts of food and eat a whole lot of bad things but what I have noticed about myself is that if I miss one workout particularly if I miss Monday's workout I'm probably not doing Tuesday through Friday either that's just the way that it is and if I eat poorly in the morning I'm going to eat poorly all day long it's just going to happen because once you've stepped foot off of that trajectory and off of that path and once you've gotten your foot onto the downward path where gravity holds sway and pulls you down it generally continues to lead to more things so I don't know how many of you have ever experienced that moment where you've been doing a pretty good job diet wise exercise wise you've been doing well you've been exercising you know all the days that you're supposed to exercise whether it's every day or every other day you've been doing that you haven't cheated on your diet and then you're out and about outside of your normal routines and you see it you see that thing that you cannot resist now for me it's the main thing that I can't resist are brownies

I can't do it I can't I cannot occasionally I manage to do it but generally speaking I cannot go to the mall without going to the great American cookie company and getting the best thing that they make which are the brownies that's the best thing that they make if you see me in the mall which you're not likely to see me in the mall but if you do you will probably see me with a brownie in my hand or crumbs somewhere on my body because a brownie is going to happen most likely if I go to the mall if I go to the movies I get a brownie it goes in the pocket it's better than anything I've got in the movie theater that's a terrible thing to do but nevertheless the downward trajectory of sin begins with the brownie for me often times I just have trouble resisting the brownies the other thing that gets me is those Easter time those gigantic egg shaped peanut butter cups I can't my mom got me a whole package of them this year it was just not right I cannot

I can't some things you just find yourself weakened towards and I don't know in terms of sin it's going to vary for each of us within certain degrees so that some people can pass very close to the path of sin in certain areas and never be tempted to set foot on that path some things just will not be a temptation for you but for others if at that point they come too close to the path they will almost every time step onto it and that will often times begin a downward slide that's reality that's how our lives work but the opposite is true as well there are also patterns of righteousness things that we can do we often call them spiritual disciplines because they're harder than sin but these spiritual disciplines can also begin a new pattern they can begin to pull us toward greater and increased acts of righteousness and actually strengthen us against the moments when we draw a little too close to certain forms of temptation so for many of you particularly for many of the men the internet sites that you visit the things that you click on the videos that you let stream on your phone or your computer or the images that you allow to come up they sit there and they tempt you and they call to you and you feel them because

[ 40 : 54 ] I know I've read the statistics and I've talked with enough men to know that that's a major problem in the world today it's a major sin problem and for some it is such a strong pull it is the weakness it is what you might call the besetting sin you cannot draw near to it you can't get close to the path of sin at that point because you can't keep your foot off the path not on most days and then for others of you it's going to be other areas of your life some of you are very prone to jealousy and when you begin to hear about the things that are happening in other people's lives when you begin to read on Facebook or whatever the false picture of people's wonderful great lives that they post on there you become jealous and you begin to covet and envy rises up in you and you sometimes for some of you you cannot look at those things you cannot listen to those conversations without being drawn in it is it will vary from person to person but I guarantee you every person in here has an entry point has an on ramp to the path of sin all of us have it and if you don't learn to both stay away from it and if you don't learn how to find the exit ramps to righteousness you will be in grave trouble so two things I want to encourage you with this morning two things as you endeavor to live your life as a slave of

God and no longer a slave of sin two things practical things that I want you to do this morning and this afternoon as you go home number one I want you at least for your own sake in your own mind I want you to identify where are the on ramps for you onto the path of sin where are they there may be three or four or one or two or a dozen of them for you where are they and I don't mean in a sort of a vague way I don't want you to just sort of name oh well I kind of struggle with gossip okay that's the sin where's the on ramp for that where is it in your life or there's certain people that you just can't spend a lot of time around or there's certain activities that you just you can't be a part of right now at this stage in your life because it's too easy of an entryway and then secondly you're going at times to struggle you're going at times to take that ramp because you don't even see it coming and it catches you blindly so what are the exit routes how do you how do you get off of that path very quickly how do you get off of that path and the easiest answer to that is to do what Paul says you are dead to sin consider yourself dead to sin remind yourself don't let sin reign in your body guess what sin shall not rule over you remind yourself you're no longer a slave of sin you're a slave of righteousness so present your members as slaves one of the greatest weapons that we have are the scriptures themselves and the truths and promises contained within this book planted firmly in the front of our minds not buried deep in the back but memorized and put on the forefront of our minds so that when we find ourselves on the wrong path we have an easy exit and we say

I don't have to stay here I don't have to be this person sin's not going to be not going to lord over me sin's not going to be master anymore I'm dead to sin I can get right off of this path and you have the scriptures as an easy exit of course there are other spiritual disciplines that you need I mean it's it's not it's not just so that we can sing songs and see each other that we get together on Sunday mornings this corporate worship is essential for our spiritual lives you cannot with any degree of success live the Christian life apart from a church body you cannot do it you can't you need the spiritual discipline of being a part of a community of believers and not in a detached distant way to where you say that's the church I go to I don't really know anybody there I'm just going to show up occasionally you need the discipline of being a part of a body so that you can have an on ramp to righteousness every single week of reset you need that spiritual discipline you need during the week to be at some point in time connected with other believers you may work in an environment where there aren't any other believers or you may be at home with your kids all day and not talk to another adult all day long and so the struggle is all the greater so look for opportunities

Wednesday night Bible study the occasional ladies Bible studies that we do the men's group that meets on Thursday mornings now or find some it doesn't have to be something that our church does but find some group of Christians to connect to in some way during the week so that you're not just seven days apart between connections with other believers these spiritual disciplines are the exit ramps off of the pathway of slavery to sin and they are on ramps to slavery to God and righteousness and if you can't identify the ways in which you get on the path to sin and the ways in which you can quickly get off you will find yourself spending a lot more time than you want going down that path you will find it so two things know the know the on ramps to sin know the exits off and then lastly and this is probably the most important thing none of this will work for you none of this will work none of this really matters for you if you are not one of those for whom Paul gives thanks to God because you became obedient from the heart to the gospel if you have not turned from sin initially and trusted in

Christ if you have not switched allegiances if you have not trusted in Jesus if you're still under the law and you think you're a pretty good person and that's going to cut it then you're still a slave to sin if you have not trusted in Jesus none of this will work for you because you live as a slave to sin and there are no exit ramps until you trust in Jesus and so apart from all of these other considerations trust in Christ start there and change who you are before God before you change who you are for Him in your life let's pray