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**Slaves of Righteousness**

**Romans 6.15-19**

**Series: The Pure Gospel**

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**The Village Church**

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I. Introduction

- A. How many of you have brought any stones with you?
  - 1. Not talking about jewelry stones
    - a. Talking about real stones
    - b. That you might pick up from the parking lot or outside the construction areas
  - 2. Anybody?
- B. I feel better
  - 1. Because Jesus was almost stoned when He was in church one time
    - a. **John 8:59** (ESV) — 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.
    - 2. It was a close call
      - a. But he obviously made his congregation angry
      - b. Angry enough to want to kill him
  - C. What got Him into trouble with His congregation was that He told them pretty much what I'm about to tell you
    - 1. So, I'm checking out the exits – see which are the best ways to escape
  - D. How did it go down?
    - 1. It started out innocently enough
    - 2. **John 8:31-32** (ESV) —
      - a. 31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
      - b. 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
    - 3. Now I've always loved those verses
      - a. Maybe you have too!
      - b. But these so-called “believers” took offense
    - 4. **John 8:33** (ESV) —
      - a. 33 They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”
    - 5. He gave them wonderful news – how to become free!
      - a. But the implication was clear
      - b. For Him to say that meant that He believed that these people were not free – that they were slaves
      - c. And the hair stood up on the back of their necks

- d. Their blood pressure began to rise
6. So Jesus doubled down
7. **John 8:34–38** (ESV) —
  - a. 34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
  - b. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.
  - c. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
8. And it gets worse:
  - a. 37 I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.
  - b. 38 I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”
9. Things go downhill from there
10. **John 8:39** (ESV) —
  - a. 39 They answered him, “Abraham is our father.”...
11. **John 8:39–41** (ESV) —
  - a. 39 ... Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did,
  - b. 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.
  - c. 41 You are doing the works your father did.”...
12. Then it gets downright nasty
  - a. They think Jesus is saying they are bastard children – offspring of a prostitute
13. **John 8:41** (ESV) — 41 ... They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”
14. Jesus is not afraid to get into the dirt with them:
15. **John 8:42–44** (ESV) —
  - a. 42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ... 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.
16. Then they accuse Him of being a Samaritan and having a demon
17. One thing leads to another – they challenge Him, asking Him if He’s greater than Father Abraham
18. **John 8:54–59** (ESV) —
  - a. 54 Jesus answered, ... It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’
  - b. 55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

- c. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” ...
  - d. 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”
  - e. 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.
- E. So you can see why I might be a little nervous
- 1. I’m about to tell you the same thing Jesus did – that you are all a bunch of slaves
    - a. So I’m checking out the best way out of here
    - b. Just in case...

## II. **The Antinomian Objection – Part Deux**

- A. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves
- 1. We’re in our study of Romans
    - a. And we’re in Chapter 6
  - 2. And you might recall that Chapters 6 and 7 is a long parenthesis in Paul’s argument for the gospel
- B. The gospel – that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself
- 1. He’s laid out that argument in the first 5 chapters
  - 2. He established the need for the gospel in the first three chapters
    - a. How the essential nature of human beings is a posture of rebellion against God
    - b. How we humans suppress the truth about God in unrighteousness, even though what can be know about God is plain from the created world
    - c. That His eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen
    - d. And all humans have observed who God is – and have no excuse for pretending they don’t know about God
  - 3. And as a result of this rebellion of humankind against God, humanity is under the wrath of God
    - a. And God has expressed His wrath by giving humans over to their own depraved inclinations
    - b. And that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
  - 4. But Paul also establishes that God has provided the means of redemption
    - a. That in Christ Jesus – who lived a righteous life that you and I could never live
    - b. And who died on the cross, taking upon Himself the just punishment for our sin
    - c. Provides for us who believe the very righteousness that we so completely lack and so desperately need
  - 5. And through faith alone in Christ, we are declared righteous
    - a. That the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account
    - b. While our sin was placed on Christ in the judgment He experienced on the cross

- C. Well, that raised an objection
1. Two of them, actually
    - a. And that's where this parenthesis comes in
    - b. Chapters 6 and 7 each deal with these objections
  2. The first one is what we call **Antinomianism**
    - a. I know how you all love the word "propitiation" so much, that you would love to have another word to enjoy as well
    - b. So the word of the day is "Antinomianism"
    - c. Which means "anti-lawism"; or against the law
    - d. Gk root – nomos = law; anti = against
  3. Antinomianism is the notion that if we are declared righteous in Jesus Christ, by simply believing in Him, why shouldn't we just sin like crazy
  4. **Romans 6:1** (ESV) —
    - a. 1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?
  5. Of course Paul replies to that anticipated question by saying "By no means!"
    - a. And His first answer to that objection has to do with our union with Christ
  6. It's a union that takes place because when we first believe in Jesus, we've died with Christ
    - a. Something has happened to us
    - b. We've died to sin
  7. And what happens is illustrated by our having been baptized into Christ
    - a. Baptized into His death
    - b. That spiritually speaking, we've become so identified with Christ that we can never be the same
    - c. Like you can never go back to being just a cucumber after you've been baptized – pickled!
- D. Well, Paul concludes that section – our union with Christ – with this statement, with this command, this imperative:
1. **Romans 6:12–13** (ESV) —
    - a. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.
    - b. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,
    - c. but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life,
    - d. and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.
  2. We called this **"the presentation imperative"**
    - a. Don't present your members to sin
    - b. Present yourselves to God
    - c. Present your members to God as instruments for righteousness
  3. And then He says this:
  4. **Romans 6:14** (ESV) —

- a. 14 For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.
- E. But that raises another question
  - 1. Another form of the Antinomian objection
  - 2. Romans 6:15 (ESV) —
    - a. 15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? ...
  - 3. And once again, he answers, just as he did before:
    - a. By no means!
- F. So this is the Antinomian Objection – Part Deux
  - 1. And the answer to this part of the Antinomian Objection has to do with slavery
  - 2. The answer to the first part of the Antinomian Objection is our union with Christ
    - a. The answer to the second part is –
    - b. You are all slaves
  - 3. But the real question is
    - a. Slaves of what?

### III. The Freedom Fallacy

- A. Truth be told, we are just as sensitive to the issue of slavery as the Jews were in Jesus' day
- B. The Jew's response to Jesus' words in John 8 exposed their raw nerve on the subject
  - 1. And it itself, it's a stunning response
    - a. It's amazing that they would have the chutzpah to even raise the objection!
  - 2. John 8:31–32 (ESV) —
    - a. 31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
    - b. 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
  - 3. Listen to their response!
  - 4. John 8:33 (ESV) —
    - a. 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"
  - 5. What? Are you kidding?
    - a. The Jewish people – never enslaved to anyone!
  - 6. Whoa!
    - a. Have you heard of Egypt?
    - b. The very origin of the Jewish nation was slavery
    - c. They, as a nation, were born in slavery
    - d. For 400 years!
  - 7. And now – now as in Jesus' day – who are those Gentile-looking men walking around in military garb with swords and clubs and chariots?

- a. Who are those guys?
  - b. Not actors in a passion play, are they?
- 8. Do you people know that you people can barely use the bathroom without permission of a Roman soldier?
- 9. And between Egypt and the Roman occupation, there were those brief interludes when they couldn't even live in the Promised Land
  - a. The Assyrian and Babylonian exiles
  - b. Ok – they weren't so brief, were they?
- 10. And even when they were in the land, in the generations following Joshua they spent more time enslaved by the neighboring peoples – the Philistines, and the Amorites, and the Moabites, and a bunch of other ites
  - a. It's harder to find a time when they were *not* slaves of one sort or another than when they were!
- 11. And yet they say, "We've never been enslaved to anyone!"
- C. Now maybe you say, "Well, that's different; we're not like the Jews in Jesus' day. We're a free people – 'land of the free and home of the brave'."
  - 1. Ok, I get that
    - a. But you people are just as much slaves as the Jews were
    - b. And in the same way Jesus had in mind
  - 2. **John 8:34** (ESV) —
    - a. 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin."
  - 3. You see, these Jews in Jesus' day were twice slaves
    - a. Slaves to the Romans who occupied Palestine
    - b. But worse – slaves to sin
    - c. Because everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin
- D. And we – no, we don't find ourselves occupied by a foreign power – yet
  - 1. But we bristle when someone suggests that we are slaves
    - a. That we are under bondage
  - 2. We have a raw nerve
    - a. How dare you suggest that we are slaves?
  - 3. Even when we admit we sin, we claim we're free
    - a. Oh, I can stop that anytime I want
  - 4. Right
- E. **Romans 6:15–19** (ESV) —
  - 1. 15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!
  - 2. 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?
  - 3. 17 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,
  - 4. 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

5. 19 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, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.
- F. So freedom is a fallacy
  1. Freedom is a figment of our imagination
    - a. Freedom is a pipe dream
- G. The question is not whether you are a slave or not?
  1. The question is to what are you a slave?

#### IV. Only Two Choices

- A. And the text says there are only two choices
- B. Romans 6:16 (ESV) —
  1. 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey,
  2. either of sin, which leads to death,
  3. or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
- C. One or the other
  1. There's no fence-sitting
    - a. You can't be Switzerland
    - b. You can't declare yourself neutral
    - c. You can't pretend that you're not voting
  2. You're in one camp or the other
- D. And you better get that sorted out
  1. Today would be nice
- E. You see, the freedom fallacy says you can be neutral
  1. You're free to choose whatever you want whenever you want
    - a. But that's a fantasy
  2. You can't be nothing
    - a. You're either a slave to sin or a slave to obedience
  3. How do you know?
    - a. Which one do you obey?
    - b. "You are slaves to the one whom obey"
- F. And depending on the one whom you obey, there are consequences
  1. "Either of sin which leads to death"
- G. Sin, you see, is always destructive
  1. God is the One who sets the standards
    - a. The author of the Ten Commandments gave them to us
    - b. To us – as a reflection of His nature and character
    - c. To us – for our welfare
  2. And to sin – which is a violation, both of the character of God and of His righteous commands
    - a. Is to attack the very image of God in humanity
  3. We become inhuman
    - a. In our attitudes

- b. In our dispositions, our wills
- c. In our behavior, our conduct
- d. In our emotions
- e. Even in our thinking
- 4. That's why, as we learned in Romans 1, when God judges humanity before the final judgment
  - a. He lets us do what we want
  - b. Because when we are not regenerate, not born again by the Holy Spirit, and do what we want, we destroy ourselves
- 5. "Either of sin which leads to death"
- H. "Or of obedience, which leads to righteousness"
  - 1. That's the other alternative
    - a. And there's no third way; no third alternative
  - 2. "Obedience" means obedience to the Law of God
    - a. The essence of which is the Ten Commandments – which even Ted Koppel said were not the Ten Suggestions
    - b. And the essence of which is Jesus Christ Himself
    - c. Christ – the eternally begotten Son of God
    - d. Christ – who is altogether lovely and without sin
    - e. Christ – who is the Word become flesh
  - 3. They are all one and the same
    - a. Obedience to God and His word
    - b. Obedience to Christ, His Son
  - 4. And the consequence is the opposite of the consequence of obeying sin
    - a. Which is destruction
  - 5. Here the consequence is righteousness
    - a. Righteousness begets more righteousness
    - b. And righteousness is its own reward
    - c. The author of Hebrews speaks of the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12.11)
  - 6. Do you want peace?
    - a. Do you want contentment?
    - b. Do you want happiness – true happiness, what the Bible speaks of as joy?
    - c. That is produced by being a slave of righteousness
  - 7. The world wants you to think the opposite
    - a. That to be righteous is no fun at all
    - b. It's a big downer
    - c. That it kills happiness
  - 8. But remember – the world is under the influence of the evil one
    - a. And as Jesus told the Jews in the temple, he is a liar and the father of lies
    - b. Righteousness yields blessing; yields peace (Shalom; internal well-being) – regardless of circumstance
  - 9. So that's the choice



- a. Either of sin which leads to death
- b. Or of obedience (to the Law and character of God) which leads to righteousness
- c. More about that in a moment

V. **Slaves of Obedience**

- A. But here's the good news (the great news!)
  - 1. **Romans 6:17-18** (ESV) —
    - a. 17 But thanks be to God,
    - b. that you who were once slaves of sin
    - c. have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,
    - d. 18 and, having been set free from sin,
    - e. have become slaves of righteousness.
  - 2. That's what's happened to you – when you believed in Jesus
    - a. And what will happen to you when you believe in Jesus
    - b. Which I hope is today!
- B. These are all indicatives – statements of fact concerning all who believe in Jesus
  - 1. All of “you” who believe in Jesus
  - 2. You were once slaves of sin
    - a. But having come to faith in Jesus, something has changed
    - b. Just like we learned in the first answer to the Antinomian objection – something changed in us – we were united with Christ
  - 3. We were once slaves of sin – but no more!
- C. We have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed...
- D. That “standard of teaching”
  - 1. That is – the gospel
    - a. That we sinners are in need of righteousness
    - b. That only in Christ is their true righteousness
    - c. That God makes Christ's righteousness available to us by faith
  - 2. And when we believe – we have obeyed that standard of teaching
- E. “From the heart”
  - 1. It's not that we've said the right words
    - a. We're not saved by saying the so-called “sinner's prayer”
  - 2. Or that we know the right theology
  - 3. We're saved by having a new heart; a believing heart
    - a. A heart that finds the righteousness of God attractive and no longer repulsive
    - b. A heart that delights in the presence of God
    - c. A heart that loves God where we used to keep Him at arm's length – or more!
  - 4. Obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching
- F. “To which we were committed”
  - 1. Committed – that our wills have been so transformed, that we are all in

- a. That, like our union with Christ, which is unalterable – we were committed to the gospel
    - b. As the hymn declares, “No turning back, no turning back”
  - G. “And having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness”
    - 1. In that transaction – we have been set free from sin
      - a. But again – not free from everything
      - b. But now – slaves of righteousness
    - 2. But to be slaves of righteousness is no burden
      - a. But rather blessing abundant!
      - b. With all of its peaceful fruit
  - H. But now – who do we thank for all this blessing?
    - 1. Do we pat ourselves on the back?
      - a. Do I say, “Good job, Hawkins – what a wise person you are; what a noble person you are; what a righteous person you are – to have chosen Christ”
    - 2. No!
      - a. “But thanks be to God”
    - 3. **1 John 4:19** (ESV) — 19 We love because he first loved us.
    - 4. We were born of God!
    - 5. **John 1:12–13** (ESV) —
      - a. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
      - b. 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
    - 6. We who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which we were committed
      - a. And having been freed from sin
      - b. Have become slaves of righteousness
    - 7. For which we thank God
      - a. For which we worship Him

VI. **The Presentation Imperative – Part Deux**

- A. So just as in the first argument Paul made against the Antinomian objection – he followed that up with the presentation imperative
  - 1. Here’s what you must do
  - 2. Don’t present you members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness
  - 3. Present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life
  - 4. And present your members to God as instruments of righteousness
- B. So also in Part Deux of the argument against the Antinomian objection, there is another presentation imperative
  - 1. Another instruction
    - a. Another command
    - b. Another way to respond
- C. **Romans 6:19** (ESV) —

1. 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.
  2. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness,
  3. so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.
- D. You used to use your bodies – your members – as instruments of impurity and lawlessness
1. Of impurity and lawlessness – which leads to more lawlessness
  2. You see, sin generates a downward spiral
    - a. It gets worse and worse
    - b. It never gets better
- E. So now – here it is, another presentation imperative
1. Present your members as slaves to righteousness
- F. Do you follow the logic?
1. Indicative – the fact about who you are in Christ Jesus
    - a. You were set free from sin
    - b. You have become slaves of righteousness
  2. So act like it (you’ve heard that before!)
    - a. Present your members – members of your bodies – as instruments of righteousness
  3. You’re free from sin; you’re slaves of righteousness
    - a. So that’s how you are to use your bodies
    - b. And your minds – which in our embodied nature, can’t be separated from our bodies, our brains
- G. “Leading to sanctification”
1. To holiness
    - a. To Christ-likeness
  2. Whereas sin leads to a downward spiral
    - a. Righteousness leads to an upward spiral
    - b. Growth into Jesus Christ

VII. So, put down your rocks

- A. Come to grips with your own slavery
- B. But thank God
  1. That you, who were once slaves of sin
  2. Have become obedient
    - a. From the heart
    - b. To the standard of teaching
    - c. To which you were committed
  3. And having been freed from sin
    - a. Have become slaves of righteousness
- C. And turn your slavery into worship