

Romans: Whom Do You Serve?

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[0 : 00] For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life. Christ Jesus our Lord. Wow, last week I felt like I was sweating up here like a, I don't know what, I think I lost 10 pounds.

This week I feel like I'm putting pounds on as my fat cells try to gain energy with the cold here. And so it's amazing, you know, we don't know where we're going to meet every Sunday.

So the fact that we meet here is a blessing from the Lord and God provided this place. And so each Sunday we figure out what's open and God for the last three and a half years has allowed us a place to come and worship him.

Which is an amazing, amazing thing and we don't ever want to take that for granted, I think. If you're here for the first time or a couple times, my name is Tobin, I'm one of the pastors here.

I've shared before that I have some issues in my life, I have some problems, I'm very teachable. I have four kids. I'm still trying to learn about what that means to have four kids and not leave one of them in the store when we go home or forget where they're at.

[1 : 15] And making sure that we do a head count when we leave. I feel like I'm very teachable in issues of children and childhood. And I think that Christina and I are learning together. One of our biggest tensions or differences is just when it comes down to the idea of disciplining our kids.

We grew up in very different homes and we experienced different discipline and different parenting styles. And so we still talk about this and dialogue with this and try to figure out what it looks like to honor the Lord as we parent our kids and discipline our kids.

And just recently one of our kids, I have to be very careful because my kids are actually sitting in here. So I wasn't expecting that. It's kind of like when I did the sex talk. I did the sex talk and I wasn't expecting my kids to be here.

And they were here hearing their dad talk about sex. But I think that's good because I need to know that the parents have sex and that's how they came about. But we had this issue where one of our kids had did something that required discipline on both of our thoughts.

We said we need to discipline this kid. And so we brought them into their room and we had the talk. And when we were about to do the discipline of this certain individual who will remain nameless, they yelled out, Grace!

[2 : 34] I need grace! We talk about it all the time in church. Can you give me some grace? To which Christina and I looked at each other and we did this thing that parents do.

You know, you kind of... You laugh, right? But you try not to laugh because it's just so neat and precious. You know, and... And so we asked this person, What does that mean to you?

And they said, Well, it means you get a free pass, right? It means you do something wrong and God just forgets about it. He doesn't do anything about it. And you just... You can go on your way.

And you don't have to worry about it because we have grace. We don't have to worry about making mistakes because it's all covered in the blood of Jesus. And I'm free! So I need grace. To which I kind of laughed and I said, Well, you know, I don't think that's exactly what God talks about when he talks about that.

And it certainly is not what he talks about in a parent-child relationship. And so we pursue to put discipline on that kid. Which, again, is something I hate doing.

[3 : 44] But I know that God's called us to do it as parents in different standards and different ways. That night I went back to the room and I sat down with the kid. And what I find is some of the best times in parenting is right before they're going to bed because our mind's unwinding and it was talking and all these things.

And the person said... The person who we remain nameless said, You know, Dad, it's really hard for me sometimes.

I feel like I want to do the right thing, but I can't do the right thing. I know what the right thing is and I struggle with doing the right thing.

And it's almost as if there's this battle going on inside of me. And sometimes the bad side wins and I don't do the thing that I want to do. And then they looked at me and said, You ever have that problem?

And I said, All the time. All the time. Grace. I need grace.

[4 : 54] We've been in the book of Romans for a couple weeks. We've taken a four-week break. We're coming back to Romans 6. What we've seen in Romans so far... Remember, Paul is writing the book of Romans to a church.

The church has been going on for 25 years. So it's a mature church. It has a foundation. It has all the things in place. But he's writing this letter to give them even a firmer foundation. And he's talking through what does it mean to walk with the Lord.

And he's gone through chapters 1, 2, and 3. And he's looked at different people in the Roman culture and in the Roman world and looked at how they live. And how they try to make themselves right. And how they try to justify themselves.

And how they try to do the right thing. And there's some people who don't care at all. And they just do whatever they want. There's some people who are mostly the Jews. And they're very legalistic. And they want to do the right thing. And they want to know what the right thing is. And they want to make sure that you see them do the right thing.

And then there's some people who are just kind of lost. And then he talks about Christ. And he talks about how God's come in there. And God has given us grace. And it's unlike any other religion or philosophy in the world.

[5 : 56] There's nothing like it ever. When you talk to people. You study philosophy. You're never going to hear this again. Because in Christianity what it's saying is that God gives you his righteousness.

God saves you. Every other philosophy, every other religion is going to say. You do this. And you do this. And you do this. And if you do this well enough. Then God's going to go. Great job.

I love you. Come on in. But Christianity isn't like that. Christianity says it's a gift. And people have a hard time with receiving gifts. Especially in Asian cultures. Don't we? We always look for giving back something else.

And try to make it different. Or try to make it right. We try to change it. But he says it's a gift. And it's given to you. And Paul continues in this talking. And what he's done in every one of his books.

And every one of his writings. Is what he does is he says. He uses this teaching technique. And the teaching technique is this. Let's look at what God has done. Now let's look at what we should be doing. He never says this is what you should be doing.

[6 : 56] And so God will do this. But he always says this is what God has done. This is what God has done for you. This is what grace means. This is what the gospel means. This is what his son coming means. This is what his death on a cross means.

This is what his blood shed out for you. Atoning for everything you've ever done wrong. And ever will do wrong. And everything you have done. And you shouldn't have done. And you might have done. And you wanted to do. And everything you should have thought.

It just wiped out of there. He says this is what grace is. And in light of that. Then how do we live as God's people? Do we just say grace?

And sin doesn't matter? Or does God call us to live a life that's different than everyone else around us? What does it look like? And we talked about that in Romans 6.

And we come to the passage today. And I think the passage is so appropriate. Because it deals with the issue of what my kids are struggling with. What I'm struggling with. What does it look like for this gift to be given to me?

[8 : 00] What does it look like for me not to be under the law. But to be under grace? In Romans 6.12 it starts off. He says therefore. Whenever you see therefore. It means what did we talk about?

We talked about the gospel. We talked about Jesus coming. We talked about the gift. He says therefore because of all these things. Do not let sin. Do not let selfishness. Do not let things that are against God's will reign.

Be a part of. Be king of. Be king of. Rule completely in your mortal bodies. Your parts. Your eyes. Your ears. Who you are. Tobin. All of you. Do not let it reign in your body.

So that you will obey. The word there. Obey. Actually means answer the door. So don't give your parts over to sin. So that when it knocks on the door of your life. You open it up. And say hey come on in. He says because in light of everything that Jesus has done. In light of the gospel. In light of grace. Do not give your parts to sin. To be king of your life.

[8 : 57] Do not go present. To present. The word means active. It means continual. It means to put in front. It means put inside. It means put beside. It means come alongside. It means help.

Don't allow your body members to help you. Do sin. Guilt. Shame. Evil. Don't act as tools for unrighteousness. But present.

Give yourself to God. As those who are alive now from the dead. In your members. Your eyes. Your ears. Your hands. Your heart. Your words.

Your gifting. Your talents. You give all of these things as instruments to righteousness of God. For sin shall not be Lord. Over you.

For you are not under law. But you're under grace. For some of that means if we struggle with lust. It means that we don't go down to Wan Chai.

[9 : 56] To the emperor club. And do your business there with your clients. And watch the prostitutes come in. Because as you do that you're presenting your members. To sin and unrighteousness.

And you're struggling with that. For some of us if we're struggling with lust. It doesn't mean troll the internet and see how many different websites you can go to. Because every time you do that. What you're doing is you're opening the door.

And you're allowing sin to come into your life. And you're allowing it to control you. For some of us we struggle with just materialism. And it means if we struggle with materialism.

It means don't present your members to materialistic things. Be careful of what you look at in the internet. Maybe if you struggle with the internet. With the materialism. It's not a good idea to be going on the websites. And checking all the shopping things.

And all the things you should be doing. And what it looks like. For some of us we struggle with pride. Or anger. Whatever that is that you're struggling with.

[10 : 53] Whatever that is that's trying to grab you. To get you open the door. So it can come into your life. Paul's saying be careful. Because if you let it in. It's going to control you. And by the way.

You're a child of God now. And you're no longer in that realm. That kingdom. You're in a new kingdom. You're in my kingdom.

And you have a choice. Before we just walked. And we were in the kingdom. And we had no choice. We didn't know where we were. But now. Because of Christ. Because of grace. Because of the gospel.

He's picked us up. And he's taken us into. A new kingdom. In a new realm. And we have a choice. Who we're going to open the door up to. And who we're not going to open the door up to.

We can choose who we let in our life. And what we give our eyes. And our ears. And our hearts. And our minds. And our words. And our money. And our talents. And our time. We can choose what we give all those things to.

[11 : 55] And Paul's just exhorting. And exhorting. And encouraging. Watermark. And saying. God has done amazing things. Give your stuff to God. Because he's going to take care of you. He's going to control you. He's going to be there for you.

Romans 6. 14 and 15. And it's almost as if Paul knows. That somebody's going to ask a question. He knows there's going to be a question asked.

Because within his church. There are people struggling with different ways of life. Within our lives. In my heart. I struggle with these things. Some of us are struggling with legalism.

It's this chair right here. You can think of Paul's congregation. Most of them. A lot of them were Jews. They knew the law. They wanted to obey the law. They wanted outward things that you could see.

So that you could see them obeying the law. They wanted you to do things that you could do outwardly. So they could make sure that you were obeying the law. But they never looked at the heart. They never looked at why you did things.

[12 : 55] And for who are you doing the things? They just looked at you doing the things. And then there was another group of people who were just. It's really. The word is licentiousness. And I say it that way. Because I took Latin.

Ninth grade. Tenth grade. And I had this really. Kind of creepy Latin teacher. And he would always go. Licentiousness. Which means uncontrolled. That you can do whatever you want.

That you can just let your passions go. I mean it's like the worst of the Greek and Roman cultures. It's not just sex. But it's everything. And you have these licentious people there. And they're struggling. And they say no.

Grace. Grace alone. Grace is all we need. Sin doesn't matter. You can do sin. Because God has covered your sin with grace. Don't worry about it. And the church is kind of swinging back and forth. Pendulum. And you know. Some of us are also in our lives. Some of us camp over here. And then we become really convicted.

[13:54] And then we come back here. And then we come back here. And Paul says if you have that question. In chapter four. In verse 14. 15.

Because he knows you're going to ask. Well if there's grace. Then why don't we just sin? Because everything is forgiven. And it doesn't really matter. And I really want to do these things. I really want to do these things.

These things are going to bring me happiness. These things are going to make me excited. Why can't I just do that? And in the rest of the chapter. Paul shares.

Why not do an illustration. There's three things I want us to learn. In this illustration. The first thing we're going to look at really quickly. Is what is our true identity? Who are we?

What is our identity? The second thing I want us to look at is. How does our identity change? Well we know this identity. But there's this change that's happening in us.

[14:51] How does that change happen? And the third thing I want to briefly look at. Is just in ten minutes. We want to look at. We want to look at. What does it look like now that we've changed.

And how do we do these things? So what's our identity? How does it change? And what should we look like right now? Okay. You ready? Okay. So the first thing he says here.

As we look at in verses 15 and on. He says this is what our identity is. Because remember. We're talking about our identity. And Paul says our identity is we're slaves. Paul says that every one of us in Watermark.

Every one of us in the world are slaves. How do you feel when I say that? I mean some of us feel. I mean if you watch 12 Years a Slave.

Or the Butler. I've been watching this Civil War series by Ken Burns. It's amazing. But it's all about what's going on with the slaves. And when we think of slavery we go. Oh that's terrible. That's incredibly bad.

[15:51] But you know in Paul's day when people heard that. They just thought that's just what life is. It was interesting. This week I was helping my kids study for a sociology test. A social studies test.

And we did a wiki search on slavery in Rome. Because that was what their test was on. And if you do a wiki search on slavery in Rome. You see that 30 to 40 percent of the people who lived in Rome were slaves.

That there were probably one slave for every three. Three slaves for every one person. I mean there was a majority of slaves walking around. And the slavery was a lot different than we think of it. It wasn't racially oriented. It was just. It just happened sometimes in war and in life. And people were abandoned. Actually often the slaves were really educated.

And they were tutors. The people who tutored the kids of the Greek and Roman leaders. Were often slaves. Very highly educated. So slavery has this very different view.

[16:50] To Paul and to the people in his church. As he hears these things. You know sometimes people would become slaves. Because they had a debt. I mean sometimes they owed large sums of money.

And there was no chance of them getting rid of the debt. And so what they would do is they would come. And they would sell themselves. So if I owed E money. I would come to her.

And I said I can't pay it. But I'm going to put myself into slavery for you. And let's decide how long that's going to be. And maybe it's two months. Maybe it's two years. Maybe it's ten years. But at the end of that time.

My debt is paid. And I'm free. I'm no longer a slave. The interesting and the thing I often would forget. Is that when I became E slave.

It meant that I gave up all my rights. That she was in control of me totally. Whatever she said I had to do. Because I was now her slave. I had no rights whatsoever.

[17 : 51] And Paul says that we here in Watermark in the world. There are only two types of people. Either we're slaves to sin.

Which leads to death. Or we're slaves to obedience. Which leads to righteousness. There's not any other types of people.

Either you're a slave to sin. Which leads to death. Or you're a slave to obedience. Which leads to righteousness. So you're working out your slavery. And you're paying off your debt.

And you're hoping that one day you're going to be free. And when I get free. He signs this certificate. And I'm a free person again. But slavery was very common. And everyone knew that in that day.

And everyone experienced it. And Paul changes his tactic. And he says we're not now just talking about physical slaves. We're talking about spiritual slaves.

[18 : 51] And what he's saying to us, Watermark, is that in this room right now. There are only two types of people. Either you're a slave to sin.

Which leads to death. Or you're a slave to obedience. Which leads to righteousness. Now I have drawn this out on a piece of paper.

And I have in this illustration and example. I'm not exaggerating probably 10,000 times in my life.

And whenever I draw this illustration out. And I said there's only two types of people in the world.

There's people who are slaves to sin. Which leads to death. There's people who are slaves to obedience. Who leads to righteousness. Here's a sheet of paper. Which one are you? How do you think most people answer? What do they say?

They usually say I'm in between. I'm in between. I mean I'm not a total slave to sin. I mean I do some bad things. But I'm a pretty good person. And I'm not totally obeying God.

[19 : 58] But sometimes I obey God. I mean I obey God when I go to church on Christmas and Easter. And some things like that. Or I put money in that little bag when people are asking for donations. So I'm not totally obeying God.

But I obey him a little. So I'm in between. And what Paul says is no. You're either in here a slave to sin. Or you're a slave to obedience and to righteousness.

So the question is. Which one are we? If you had to write out in your journal right now privately.

Which one are you? What would you say? I mean what would it look like? I mean he uses this illustration. Two types. And it's not the first time.

He's not making up something different. I mean Jesus talked that way all the time. Didn't he? I mean Jesus talks and he says. Hey there's two builders. One's wise and one's foolish.

[21 : 00] There's two gates. One's wide and one's narrow. There's two types of trees. One is good fruit and one is bad fruit. You can't serve two masters. You either hate the one or love the other.

Or you love the one or you hate the other. Who is your spiritual master? And Paul says something really interesting. He says you're going to know your master by who you serve.

So the question I want to ask us is. Who are you serving today? Who do you serve with your hands? Who do you serve with your heart?

Who do you serve with your mind? I'm not going to ask who do we say we serve. Because I've learned in my life that words often mean nothing. But I watch my hands.

And wherever my hands go to. Wherever my time goes to. Paul says that's who you serve. That's your master. So who's your master today?

[22 : 05] Who's your master today? I mean think about it.

Every one of us in here lives for something. I mean something gives us strength today. Something makes us feel strong. Something makes us feel valuable.

Something makes us feel important. Something makes us in control. Something makes us feel significant. Something makes us feel loved. What is it for you? What is it that gives you significance?

For some of us it might be our work. Or our health. Or our bodies. Or our family. Or our friends. Or our kiddos. Or our money. Or just security.

And Paul says whatever that thing is. Whatever that thing that gives you happiness and security and health. Whatever that thing is. That is your God. So what's your God today?

[23 : 13] What is the master that you're serving? What is it that you are a slave to? Because we all have gods. We all have things that control us.

We all have things that bring us happiness and hope and health and security and meaning. What is it that ultimately does that for you today? Maybe if I asked the question.

If we followed you around after today. And we just watched and videotaped your life for one day. If we watched and videotaped your life for one day. And we looked at your life. What would we say is your master?

What would we say that you're clinging to? What is the thing that you're serving? What is the thing that you're a slave to? And Paul says you're only a slave to one of two things. Either you're a slave to sin. Or you're a slave to righteousness.

There's no in between. So which one are we today? Which one is our master? I often find my master by asking where I spend my time.

[24 : 20] Because usually I spend my time with the thing that masters my life. Sometimes when I'm wandering off I ask questions like. What makes me angry?

If something were taken away from my life. What would make me really angry? I mean not just angry but furious. That's my master.

That's my God. That's the thing I need in my life. To keep me going. To give me hope. To help me walk with him. And so Paul says what is your master today?

Because we all serve one or the other. And it's not an in between thing. So what is it? And then he says something amazing.

Verse 17. He said God comes in. And he changes us. He changes our hearts.

[25 : 26] He changes our minds. He changes our affections. The things that we desire. The things that we want. The things that we strive to. And when he opens our eyes and our minds and our mouth and our ears.

To see his son Jesus. We fall in love with him. And when we fall in love with him. And we understand the gospel. And we understand grace. And what it costs God to give it to us. It changes us. We live differently. We serve different things. We spend our time differently. Our words are different. The things we read are different. Maybe even the things we do are different.

Because we live in this new realm. This new master has come into our life. So the question maybe we should ask is. How are we different now?

[26 : 31] If you're sitting in here and you say. Yes I'm a Christian. I serve the obedience and righteousness. Which comes from God. And it's making me more like Christ every day. And everything that Christ done.

Is coming to me. And when God looks at me. He looks at his son. Because that's what happens in Romans. We've talked about that. There's this exchange. And so when God looks at us now. And we've been serving him. How are our lives different. Than they were before. Tobin are you more loving?

Are you more gracious? Are you more caring? Are you more gentle? Are you more kind? Do you use your time and your money differently? Do you invest in my kingdom now? Or do we still build into. The kingdom of sin.

[27 : 32] The kingdom that I live. Now Paul's not saying. That once you come into this new kingdom. That everything is perfect. That you never sin. You never tempted.

You never mess up. He's not saying that. He's not saying you become perfect Christians. But he's saying there's a difference. There's a change. If I ever was going to write a book.

I've told you that. The title of my book would be. A turtle on a fence post. Because you see a turtle on a fence post. And you wonder. Well how did that turtle get up there? And you just know. The only reason it got up there. Is because somebody put it up there. And that's my life.

God just put us there. But chapter one of that story. Would probably be. The dumb things I've done in my life. My wife is very happy. That I've done most of them.

Before I got married. But one of the dumbest things. Was I decided to go with some friends. We went into Cambodia. When they were kind of having this civil war going on. In 88. And we were walking through.

[28 : 30] Khmer Rouge territory. And Angkor Wat. And we were exploring all these things. With this Khmer little kid. Was showing us around. And we walked into this area. And all of a sudden. I

walked up to this Dutch.

Or Danish UN guy. In a blue outfit with a hat. And there's three Khmer guys. And he goes. Stop. And I'm like. He goes. You are walking in a land mine field. Stand right there. And he came over. And he got us out of the land mine field. And we walked out of the land mine field. And we walked to the safe place. And we're talking about what he was doing. And all of a sudden. The walkie talkie comes on. And they're all panicking. Freaking out. He goes. What's going on? He goes. There's this group of Khmer Rouge. They're coming through right now. And they're coming in the way you came. And so we have to go out that way. I'm like. So we have to go out through. The land mine field. You can see why it's number one in the dumb things I've done. He said. Yes. Follow me. And we step by step.

[29 : 37] Followed him out of the land mine field. Paul's saying that our conversion is kind of like that. That you and I were playing in this land mine field.

We didn't know we were there. The things that we wanted. And we thought were cool. And we were playing with them. And we thought they were great. He actually says. Those things are going to kill us. They're going to blow up. And destroy our lives. We think they're going to give us life. But they're actually going to kill us. And the scary thing is. We don't even know that. I mean. We think it's great. I mean. Porn is amazing.

Having sex with whoever you want. That's amazing. Accumulating all these things. Just for me. That's amazing. And Paul says. You're playing with something that's going to destroy you. That's going to kill you. And you're blind to your blindness. Scripture says we're blinded to our blindness. We don't even know that.

[30 : 32] And so. God comes in. And he grabs us out of this land mine field. And he puts us in this new field. And there's this wall between these two fields. And we start playing around in this field here.

And we're doing life. And we're walking. And we're doing things. And all of a sudden we hear this voice. Hey Tobin. Come back over here. You remember all the fun we used to have? Come on. We're still having fun.

And we want you to come into the field. Come on. We need you over here. And Paul says we have this choice now. The choice is. Are we going to open the door. And walk into the field. And start playing with the land mines.

Or are we going to say. No that's not me anymore. That's not who I am. Augustine. One of the early church writers.

Tells this amazing story in his biography. He was just licentious. As a young man. And he knew every woman in the town. And everything that happened. And he had this conversion experience. It was pretty amazing.

[31 : 26] And he's walking down in the middle of town. And he sees this woman. Who was a courtesan. Who had been with him for many years. And she was just. And she saw him. And she wanted to be with him. And it started up a fling again.

And he said. Hey. How are you? She goes. I want to be with you. And he goes. Thank you so much. I really appreciate that. But I'm sorry. I'm not really interested. And he walks away. And she's thinking in her mind.

Well maybe he doesn't recognize me. Maybe he doesn't know who I am. And so she yells out. Augustine. It's me. It's me. And he looks at her.

And he goes. I know. But it's not me. It's not me. I'm different.

I've changed. And Paul says. You and I are going to be playing in these fields. And these voices are going to continually beckoning us back into the fields. And now we have a choice. Because before we didn't have a choice.

[32 : 21] We were just playing with the landmines. But now we're free. Now we can choose life. Now we can choose things that aren't going to kill us and destroy us.

Now we can choose the good things that God wants for us. And the question is. Will we? Do we want that?

To be honest. Sometimes I hear this voice. And it says. You can have more fun doing these things. You can have more fun going back into the line of mine field. I always struggle in myself. And I wonder why it's so hard for me. To give my life to God.

I mean it's one of the things that offends people the most in church. If I'm going to offend you today. And I probably offended you multiple times.

[33 : 23] One of the ways I'm going to offend you. Is I'm going to say. You know God has called us. As his people. And to becoming his people. To give all of our life to him. And to most people. That's really really offensive.

Because they don't know. If they can trust God. They don't know if God is good. Is God this electric octopus. That's going to shock them. And cling on to them. As they grab on to him.

Or is he going to be good for them. And help them. And want the best things for them. They don't know that. We don't know that. It's because we don't realize who we are.

We don't realize the change that's happened in us. I love sports. I agree with Alfie. Soccer is for girls.

Growing up in a military family. My dad always told me. That soccer was a communist sport. He said Americans use Boy Scouts. And soccers. And communists use soccer.

[34 : 23] So don't ever do soccer. I'm still trying to get over that. Right. But I love baseball. And I played 16 years of baseball. I think it's one of the things. Probably people keep saying. You're really gifted in baseball.

You're really excellent in baseball. And I remember. After about my fifth or sixth year. We had this new coach. And this coach was. He was like the coach from hell.

Coach Kilgore. I'm going to go back and strike his name off. So I don't want anybody calling him. But he was the worst coach. He was mean. He was terrible.

He was strict. He cussed. He yelled at everybody. He made the athletes cry. He made the parents cry. He was just the meanest, orneriest coach and leader and master I've ever had in my whole life. Four months. I played baseball under this guy. And I just couldn't wait to get off and get out of that season. The next season, he wasn't my coach anymore.

[35 : 20] I had a new team. I had a new coach come up to me. And we're talking about that. And it was just, oh, wow. But all of a sudden, Coach Kilgore walks up. What did I feel?

I mean, I'm like, yes, sir. Yes, sir. And if he said drop and give me 20 push-ups, I probably would have given myself 20 push-ups. Why?

Because I forgot whose team I was on. I forgot which coach I had. Now, what if you had a coach Kilgore for 25 years, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?

Sin. Death. And praise be to God who comes in and he changes our life and he shows us Jesus Christ.

And we see gospel. We see the grace. We see our need. We repent of our sins. We turn around and we follow him. Do our actions change right away?

[36 : 37] I mean, our position changes right away. We're in this new kingdom. We're in this new realm. We have this new king who controls everything. But do our actions change right away? They must not because Paul is writing Romans to a church that's 25 years old.

And Paul talks about it even in his life. I'm still trying to learn. I'm still going forward. I'm still struggling. It takes time. It takes us reminding each other who we are.

Whose we are. Who's in control? Who's in control? Who's our God? What's our God like? What does God want for us? That's why we come to church.

That's why we worship him every Sunday. We worship him because he's the only one worthy of our worship. But we come together to encourage each other. So Paul ends this whole chapter and he says, be careful.

Be careful who you're serving. Because if you go back to that old life, Romans 6.23 is a very interesting verse. We quote it sometimes. We talk about the wages of sin is death.

[37 : 43] The wage, that word, actually isn't like a lifetime going to hell type of thing. It actually, in Greek, it means your day's pay. So you work a day and it actually means your fish wages.

So Roman soldiers were paid in fish. They work a day. They get paid fish to eat. And he says, so the wages, your daily wage for sin is death. He's saying that you didn't die physically when you sin at that moment.

But you're building death into your life. You're playing with the landmines. You're touching things that are going to destroy you. You're going to touch things that are going to kill you. And Paul says, don't do it.

Because you have a new master now. And this new master is good and he's kind and he's gentle and he's fair and he's loving and he's gracious. And he's giving you a gift that you can never earn. I've often thought about that in the very beginning when we said, I owed a debt to E and however long it took for me to pay off my debt, that's how long I had to work for E. How long do you think it would take us to pay off our debt to E, O God?

[38 : 47] We can never do it.

We can never do it. But he pays it off. His son pays it off. Paul's saying as we go through the journey of life, we're going to have struggles.

Who's your master? Who's your God? What are you serving? What brings you life? What brings you hope? What makes your life worth living?

And he's saying that anything besides God is going to ultimately destroy you. Any choice besides obedience and righteousness is going to kill us.

Who are you serving today? Who's your master? What kingdom are you in? Who are you opening the door for in your life?

[40 : 15] That's what Romans 6 is all about. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your goodness and your mercy in our life. We thank you for your word which is living and active and never changes.

And it hits us differently each time we read it. But it presents the message of your son Jesus. Who is more loving and beautiful than we could ever imagine.

Who pays a debt that we could never, ever even comprehend or pay out. Who gives it to us as a gift.

Who now encourages us to walk in a way that is worthy of that. It's his people. We're not asked to walk in a way worthy of it before we get the gift because that would be impossible.

But we're asked to walk in a way that shows how much we love God for all that he's given us.

Father, I pray for this church, your church, the people in here.

[41 : 20] I know that we're all at different stages of life on the journey. We're all at different places. There's some of us in here who are still playing in a landmine field. And we're picking up landmines. And they're blowing up. But we say it's not that bad.

It'll get better. And we don't realize that we're sowing death daily into our lives. We're paying a wage that will never be able to be paid back. And I pray for them, those of us in here who are there, that we would, you would open their eyes.

Verse 17, that you would come into their life and that they would be just presented to you face to face. And they would have to make this decision. And the decision is a no-brainer as they see who you are and their need for you.

And I pray that they would invite you into their life. They would surrender our lives and ask you to be the Lord of their life and the King of their life and their God.

Lord, I know there's some of us in here who, like me, we abuse your grace. We abuse your mercy. We abuse your love and your justice. And we just, we enter into the field again and again.

[42 : 25] And we just think, well, it doesn't really matter. But it does matter. It shows us that we don't really understand what you've done. We don't understand grace.

We don't understand mercy. If we ask, why not? Lord, help us. I just confess for us as a church, we need you. We're so thankful that you are the God of second chances and that you change us.

And as we sing over and over again, you don't give up on us as your children because you've pursued us from eternity. Lord, help us to encourage each other and speak the words of affirmation of who is our King and who are we as slaves to.

And what does that mean to be slaves to the righteous King of Heaven? Help us to encourage each other in that way. And Lord, I pray for us as a church.

I pray for Watermark. Watermark. We're not here just to come together and encourage each other and get our needs met and go away. But we're here to present your son to people who don't know him yet, to people who are walking in the landmine field, to people who are getting blown up.

[43 : 34] Help us to realize that. That the church isn't about us. The church is about your son and about you. And you're the hero of the church. And you're the hero of the story. And you've grafted us into this story.

And you've done amazing things in us and through us. And now we're your children. Help us not to go back. Help us not to open the door and let things in. Help us to show us what it means to walk

with you in your mercy and your grace.

Help us be a church that invites people to church and invites people to community and invites people to our home. And shares with them and just are friends with them. Help us to be intentional with people who don't know you.

Help us to make this part of Hong Kong different, not through our efforts, but through your efforts living through us. So Father, we thank you for this day and we love you. We desperately, desperately need you.

Thank you that you are the good master. The good God. Our Lord and Savior. In your son Jesus' name we pray.

[44 : 46] Amen.