


## Paul: A Slave of Christ for the Gospel

2026-04-12 – Romans 1:1-7

	<p>The book of Romans is one of the Lord's most incredible gifts to His people and it also directly assaults many foundational falsehoods held by sinners who reject Christ's Lordship. The book is filled to the brim with gospel truth, eternal hope, and everyday wisdom for Christ's church. Even in the opening verses of Romans 1 every single believer in Christ will find themselves in awe of God's transforming grace in the Apostle Paul's life and gain a renewed understanding of God's grace in their own. In Romans 1:1-7, we read gloriously of particular promises and the power of God fulfilled in Christ. We are offered an awesome glimpse at the plan of redemption God is accomplishing to the praise of His glory in the nations. Soli Deo Gloria.</p>
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Grace and peace from God our Father, through Jesus Christ, our risen, ruling, one day soon returning Lord and the only Savior, brothers and sisters in Christ, and friends of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church. It is an honor and joy always to open God's word with the saints, and this is no exception today. So thank you for your warm welcome, and may Christ, our risen Lord, be greatly praised today as we look at his holy and precious word.

A warm greeting as well from the brother and sister saints that I am privileged and have the joy and honor of serving just ten minutes south here at Christ the King Reformed Baptist Church in Niles. It is good to be with you, and a warm greeting. We've been praying for your church. We pray for your church family regularly, and we praise God that there is a lighthouse of the gospel here in Glenview. It's very encouraging to our souls, and we hope that it increasingly shines brighter and brighter to the praise of our King's glory.

In just a moment, I'm going to read the Scripture text before us in Romans 1:1–7. But before I do, I'm going to pray. And I'm going to pray a longer prayer maybe than you are accustomed to. In this day and age, it does seem like we do not, as local churches and as Christians, pray as much as we ought to. And so let me just pray for you all and entrust our time to the Lord before I read the Scripture and we dive into our sermon text. Let's go before the Lord now in a word of prayer.

*Almighty God and merciful Heavenly Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we praise you for being the God who is holy, holy, holy, the Creator, the King who has filled the earth with your glory. You alone are most worthy of all praise and honor. You are the eternal King, the immortal, invisible, only wise God. All things were made through you and for you and to you, whether thrones or dominions, visible and invisible. You are the sovereign creator, the master, and the high king of heaven.*

*We humbly confess with contrite hearts that we so often fall short of your glory. Daily, even many times a day, we find ourselves enticed by far too many sins. We are sorry for how our old self, the sinful flesh, quickly takes over and we submit. We are sorry for not loving what you love and hating what you hate. Forgive us, God, for not proclaiming the gospel of Christ with that unashamed urgency and boldness that you have called us to. Forgive us for wickedly putting so many things above you and above your kingdom so often. We are sorry, Lord, for so many sins—our idolatries, our lusts, our greed, our covetousness, our love of money, our obsession with self, our apathy towards our neighbors and our nation, and even the nations.*

*We repent for how quickly we are ready to mock our elected representatives rather than to pray for them to be born again, to trust in Christ, and to be surrounded by wise counselors. We ask for forgiveness, God, for how quickly we share in the foolishness of the world around us, how little we share the glorious saving gospel of Jesus that saves sinners. God, we know there are so many around us who so desperately need Christ's forgiveness and intercession. So Lord, we are sorry for neglecting our neighbors with the love of the truth. Forgive us, God, for how we do not bear our burdens, the burdens of our brothers and sisters, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

*God, we confess we quickly can be self-righteous, and instead of being quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to anger, as James calls us to, we do the opposite so frequently, forgive us, Lord. Forgive us for how we judge one another and reduce one another to a standard we would never want for ourselves. God, we cry out to you in this moment of silence, knowing and confessing many sins now.*

*Holy Spirit, thank you for your conviction, your power, and your presence. And thank you, God, for guiding us into the truth and directing us to Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for the pardon and assurance found in you through your cross work and your resurrection.*

*Today, God, strengthen these brother and sister saints through the preaching of your word, through the singing of your word, through the edification that the saints will have with one another as they gather in fellowship. Thank you for the ordinary means of grace by which you strengthen the faith of we who are your children. God, we look to Jesus now, the perfect and last prophet who speaks to us, the perfect high priest who lives forever to intercede for us, the King of kings, the promised one who would come from the Davidic line.*

*And God, I cry out to you and ask that for the sake of your name, you would do a mighty work in the lives of these brothers and sisters in Christ. May each brother and sister who belongs here at Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church be strengthened through your word and built up and rooted in their most holy faith. God, we pray there be salvation all across Glenview. We pray for Village President Michael B. Jenny here at Glenview, and all the trustee board. We cry out to you, God, and pray for the salvation of those who do not yet name the name of Christ.*

*We pray for your great comfort, God, on those who grieve in our midst. We pray for your comfort, God, upon the family of Lee Eclow, longtime Evangelical Free Church pastor of the Village Church of Lincolnshire. Comfort his family rather, Lord, and his wife Susan, and all who grieve, including his former local church. May they be strengthened by the resurrection power found in Jesus alone.*

*God, we cry out to you concerning the nations. We grieve when we think about what's happening all across parts of the Middle East, brothers and sisters in Christ being persecuted. We grieve when we think about the brother and sister saints in Nigeria being hunted down and brutally murdered. Please, God, we cry out to you for earthly justice insofar as it's possible. And God, our hearts are heavy and we do cry out to you as well for a reminder that these saints are yours and that you will never leave them or forsake them.*

*So God of heaven and earth, strengthen your church, both here in the United States of America, this very blessed but also so broken nation that we love and that we live in. Do a mighty work, God, through your word in the lives of each and every brother and sister in Christ, every friend gathered here. Strengthen those who are weary. Lift up their eyes to see and behold Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. Bind each heart under the lordship of Christ to the praise and majesty of your name. All this we ask and pray in the precious and powerful name of King Jesus. And all who agreed said together, "Amen."*

This morning I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible. Romans 1:1–7 is our text. Hear now the word of the Lord. And if you are able, would you please stand for the reading of the word of God now to honor his holy word.

***Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was a descendant of David according to the flesh and was appointed to be the powerful Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection of the dead. Through him we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the Gentiles, including you who are also called by Jesus Christ. To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*** (Romans 1:1–7 CSV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Pastor, my zeal for the Lord is not what it used to be. It's not what I want it to be. What would you suggest that I do? People frequently, and I would add quickly, rightly ask a question like this to pastors. "Pastor, how can I grow spiritually? I want my love for the Lord to deepen. I want my knowledge of sound theology to grow. I want my life to count. How can I do this?"

Every faithful pastor will sincerely praise God for all these kinds of questions, as he rightly should. And there are no doubt many kinds of ways we could address this and answer it that would be faithful and done on a case-by-case, individual, personal basis. For example, it can be very fitting to gently and humbly press someone on any unconfessed sin in their life if they ask that question. It can be important to ask, "How's your prayer life? How's your relationship with your spouse?" There are many wise answers.

But perhaps nine out of ten times, if any of those questions that I just mentioned—"How can I grow spiritually?"—are asked to me, I will usually respond with something like this: "My friend, might I suggest that you read seriously through the book of Romans?" And I'm not talking here about take one truth here, one truth there, glance over it. I'm talking here about a deep dive, pouring over it, investigating the claims here, learning to love the book of Romans, to be gripped and mastered by the central truths of this awesome revelation from God Almighty.

See, brothers and sisters in Christ, throughout church history, the Lord has used the book of Romans mightily in the lives of his people. Augustine, in the fourth century, heard a child crying out, "Tolle lege," Latin for "take and read." And he rushed into his house, and he found the copy of Romans that he had. And as he read Romans 13:13–14, these words caused a spiritual transformation in his life. He read these words: "***Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in sexual immorality and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.***" (Romans 13:13–14)

These verses caused spiritual transformation in perhaps the most influential fourth-century saint. Later on in church history, Martin Luther, the great reformer, pastor, preacher, scholar, author, would declare the following about the book of Romans: "***This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word, but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or meditate***

*on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes.”*

Or John Calvin, another reformer, said this concerning Romans: “Understanding Romans opens a pathway to understanding the whole Bible.”

So praise God for the book of Romans. It takes about an hour to read straight through it. And I can hardly think of something more spiritually significant and powerfully effective in your life or in the life of any church family than reading through and seriously studying the book of Romans. I can say with full confidence, without the slightest degree of exaggeration, that devoting yourself to the book of Romans will greatly bless you more than almost anything else—any podcast, any new research, any best scholarly publication, self-help book, strategist, name it. Romans will bless you more.

It will lead you to a fresh awe of God and his grace and his goodness to sinners who don’t deserve it in Christ. It will put some scriptural steel in your spiritual spine. It will fortify your mind from deadly and foolish errors. The book of Romans will strengthen weary hearts to battle afresh against besetting sins. It will renew your fervent desire to see sinners saved. And it will deepen your love for the Lord and your love for one another, especially here at Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church.

So here’s my main claim today: **Because the risen Lord Jesus is exalted throughout and has powerfully transformed lives through it, devote yourselves to the book of Romans.** It’s a very simple claim. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is exalted throughout this book, give yourself to the book of Romans. By God’s grace, to his glory, be mastered by it, governed by it in all that you do, until you are with the Lord.

Now to be sure, let me just qualify it with this. You need to know, of course, as those wiser than me have said, it takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian. You need the whole counsel of God’s Word. But Romans will not let you ignore the rest of God’s Word. Romans actually pushes you deeper and deeper and deeper into these precious, unrivaled truths. Read Romans, friends—on your own, with your spouse, with your children during family worship, even if it’s just a verse or two, and you have small children like mine who are squirmy and can hardly sit still for five seconds. Read the book of Romans.

Start a Romans book club at your local library and watch the Lord work through his word. Challenge a friend at work with this: “My friend, the book of Romans has changed lives more than any other piece of literature in human history. Would you read it with me?” Don’t delay this, friend. Give yourself to the book of Romans.

The book of Romans has radically changed individual destinies, families, futures. It has changed and shaped nations, including ours, and the nations, and it’s doing this today. The theology of the truth in Romans is doing this right now as we speak. Friends, life is too short, God is too worthy, and sinners everywhere are perishing. So devote yourselves to the book of Romans.

By the grace of God alone, we have in the book of Romans so much solid truth for us. And so today what I want to do very briefly is walk through and look at this introduction and consider Paul and Paul’s Savior and Master Jesus, and then finally ask a few questions concerning the world and you.

First, Paul, the author of the text before us in Romans.

Who is Paul?

Paul was a slave wholly under his master, the Messiah, Jesus.

This word in the translation of the Christian Standard Bible is “servant” or “bondservant,” but it literally means “slave,” *“doulos”*. There’s another word for someone who’s hired, and Paul did not choose that word. Paul had never been to Rome yet; he would go later on after his third missionary journey. He would go there and be under house arrest, so it was not in the plan that he had, but Paul had not yet been to Rome.

Paul was writing though to a divided church of brothers and sisters in Christ from different backgrounds—some from a Gentile pagan background, some from a Jewish background. And so Paul, relatively unknown, does not draw out first and foremost the fact that he is an apostle. He does do that. But the first thing he wants these Christians he does not know in Rome to know is that “I, Paul, am a slave of Christ Jesus.”

This word “slave” has in its mind this absolute submission, this unconditional obedience. There’s total servitude in Paul’s mind to Jesus. Jesus is his master. And Paul is saying, “I am completely at the disposal of my Lord.” John MacArthur summarizes in his excellent book “Slave”: “A slave means Christ is both our Savior and our sovereign. And our lives center on pleasing Him.” To claim the title is to say with the Apostle Paul, “To live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Paul also referred to himself in Titus as a slave of God and also in Philippians. He does that elsewhere in Galatians in the middle of the letter. But understand the gravity of this language. He is a slave, a bondservant of Christ Jesus. That means that Christ is both, as MacArthur put it, sovereign and savior, the one who is at the center of Paul’s life.

And then this salutation, this greeting, Paul wants to make it very clearly known. You’ll remember that Saul is Paul’s Hebrew name, and Paul is his Latin name. It just means “small.” Paul was born to a Jewish family. He was also a Roman citizen. Again, he’d never been to Rome, but he knew there was this division between Christians from a Jewish background, Christians from a Gentile pagan background. They were debating all sorts of things: How to approach the law? How should we understand the law? It’s a debate that rages amongst Christians today.

You see, friends, in 49 AD, the emperor of Rome, Claudius, expelled all Jews, even those who claimed the name of Christ and were Christians from a Jewish background. Acts 18:2 tells us this, that Emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome. And then in 54 AD, Claudius’ son Nero took over, and that ended the Jewish expulsion. The church in Rome grew to be very, very Gentile, though, very pagan in the sense that those from a pagan background came and were not familiar with Jewish customs and traditions. They just knew Jesus Christ was master, Jesus Christ was Lord.

And so Paul is writing here to this divided church, and he wants them to know the most important thing about me is that I am a slave, a slave of Christ Jesus.

Now this is an amazing transformation we should not skip past. I wonder, do you have a friend today in your mind who you think is so hard-hearted, so far from Christ, he or she could never come to saving faith

in Jesus? “I cannot possibly think of this one—my mother, my father, my brother, my friend, my coworker, my child—coming to faith in Christ.” Friends, I present you with the life of the Apostle Paul, a terrorist of Christ’s church who was zealous for this. He was not just some apathetic atheist who was indifferent towards Christ. He was zealously on fire, opposed to Christ and to the Church of Christ. He wanted the people of God to be persecuted. He thought they were blaspheming. And yet here in Romans, incredibly, amazingly, Paul says, “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus.”

Every time you read one of the thirteen letters of the Apostle Paul, friend, I pray you are in awe and you praise God for his grace and for the power of the gospel. The Apostle Paul, powerfully saved and transformed from a persecutor of Christ’s church to a slave of Christ Jesus. This truth shapes Paul’s identity, and as we’ll see later on, God willing, it also shapes every Christian’s identity.

But that’s not all the Apostle Paul was. The Apostle Paul was also uniquely called by the risen Lord Jesus. Look at the next verse of verse 1. It says this: Paul, a servant or slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle. Called as an apostle. What is an apostle? Well, we know clearly from this text it is one who has been called. Called by whom? Is this a self-calling, a designation of “I have made this known, I have made a calling”? No, it is a calling from God Almighty.

We know this from the book of Acts that records for us exactly what happened when the man Paul, on his way to Damascus, encountered the risen Lord Jesus. R.C. Sproul comments that an apostle literally means one who is sent, someone commissioned with the authority of the one who sent him. So as you read through the book of Acts, you can see over and over again that an apostle had to be one who actually encountered the risen Lord Jesus. Paul actually, though, encountered the risen and ascended Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus. So his apostleship was debated. It was a controversy in the early church. “How can we actually stand by and say Paul is an apostle?”

R.C. Sproul is helpful again when he says this: “Not even Paul, in his extraordinary situation, could begin to function as an apostle until he’d been endorsed by the rest of the twelve.” The rest of the twelve disciples with Jesus had never had their apostleship called into question. So if someone today says, “I’m an apostle,” you see this in some local churches, “I’m an apostle. Are you here? Are there still apostles today?” A question that many Christians wrestle with. The answer, friends, is, are there any apostles today to confirm their apostleship? And the answer is no, there are no apostles today, but we have the faithful, authoritative apostolic account. We have the revelation from God through the apostles before us here in the book of Romans.

So Paul is this one who was called by the Lord, called by the Lord. And we see this in the text of God’s Word. If you look there in Romans 1:1, but also if you look a little bit further down in Romans 1:5 and 6, notice what he says about this apostleship. He says this: that his apostleship was by the grace of God. Paul knew this was a gift. He knew he didn’t deserve it or earn it. He knew that we have received, myself and all the other apostles have received this by the gift, by the grace of God Almighty.

And so we praise God for the apostle Paul, who is a slave of Christ Jesus, radically transformed. We praise God for the apostle Paul, who is a called apostle. But that’s not all that he was. Paul the apostle was also one who was chosen particularly for God’s gospel. Paul was a servant of Christ Jesus, Paul is an apostle, and “set apart for the gospel of God”. He was particularly chosen. God had an assignment for Paul. What

was that assignment? To take the gospel to the nations, to the nations, "*ethnos*, to the peoples around the world.

Notice here that we learn much about the gospel. First, there's only one gospel. This is God's gospel, not man's message. We read here as well that, as we'll look at in just a moment, God's made this promise of the gospel prior in the Old Testament. And Paul is saying here, "I was called and devoted to this singular message, God's message, and not my own."

One of the things that's interesting in the day and age we live in is that so many people forget about this concept of calling or vocation. But R.C. Sproul helpfully comments on this, that vocation is a concept popular when the Christian faith had far more influence in the culture. And here's the realization: it was the realization that every human life is to be lived under total authority of God. It's connected to slavery. Every job I take is to be in conformity to the will of God. Sproul says, "My life is to be dedicated, whether I'm a minister, farmer, carpenter, physician; each one has a vocation, a calling from God that we are out to carry out for his glory and the benefit of his kingdom."

For Paul, that calling was the gospel. He was obsessed with how can I see the gospel of Christ's kingdom spread throughout all of the earth, particularly to the nations. Paul was an instrument particularly chosen for God's gospel. We see this in other texts as well. We see this in Acts 9. In Acts 9, one of the things that's amazing is Acts 9:13 and 16 says this: "**Lord,**" *Ananias answered, "I have heard from many people about this man, how much harm he's done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has authority here from the chief priests to arrest all who call on his name."* Ananias is thinking, "That's me. I'm one of them."

But then in Acts 9:15, the Lord said to him, "**Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.**" Saul the one persecuting those following the Lord, following the name, will now glorify and magnify the name.

Did you notice in Romans 1:5 it says we have received grace and apostleship through him to bring about obedience of faith among all nations? And then it says, on behalf of his name. On behalf of his name. This one who persecuted Christ's church would come now to be the one who's proclaiming Christ's church. He was persecuting the saints of God; now he's talking to the saints of God and calling them beloved of God. Something glorious happened in the life of the apostle Paul.

Paul was a slave wholly under his master, the Messiah Jesus. Paul was an apostle uniquely called by the risen Lord Jesus. And Paul was an instrument particularly chosen for God's gospel. That's a summary of the life of Paul.

But then we come to the theme, the glorious theme, not only the book of Romans, but of all Scripture, and that is Jesus. Jesus, friends, is the gospel's heartbeat. At the burning center, at the very core of the good news, of God's plan to save sinners, is Christ Jesus, the eternally begotten, beloved Son of God.

If you look in this intro, seven verses, ten times you will see references to Jesus Christ: Paul, servant of Christ Jesus, his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, descendant of David, appointed to be powerful Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, through him we've received apostleship and grace, his name among the Gentiles,

Jesus Christ has called us, and grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is obsessed and focused upon the gospel center, namely Jesus Christ.

And here's a challenge for you. When you go out and you talk about not only the work that God's doing here at Cornerstone, when you go out into the world and you're talking about your faith and Christianity, what it means to follow Jesus, how quickly is Jesus in the conversation? We can talk about many things. Many truths from the Scripture. And we should. Those are all helpful. But is Jesus Christ at the burning center of the gospel you preach? For Paul it was. Jesus is at the core.

And why is he at the core? Because he is the promised Son. He is the promised Son. Look there in your Bible again, at Romans 1:2: "***which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his Son.***" Jesus Christ fulfilled other offices in the Old Testament—prophet, priest, king, judge—but he also fulfilled the role of promised son. He fulfilled all those types, all those shadows, as we see all throughout the New Testament. But here, Paul wants to hone in on the fact that one has come from the line of David, just as God's word said one would come from the line of David.

Look at 2 Samuel 7, where we read the following in verses 11 through 13: "***The Lord himself will make a house for you. When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, the Lord says to David, I will raise up after you a descendant who will come from your body. I will establish his kingdom and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forevermore.***" (2 Samuel 7:11–13)

Solomon was not the one who fully fulfilled this. Not even close. Certainly he partially fulfilled it, but there's always this longing, this expectation for a Davidic son to come. Tim Chester comments on this and says the following: "*Jesus is not just another king in the line of David. He is its ultimate destination. He is, as the well-known hymn 'Hail to the Lord's Anointed' puts it, great David's greater son. He will be the king who ultimately rescues God's people and who reigns over them forever. At the cross it looked as if the Davidic line had finally been extinguished, but God raised Jesus from the dead. Now Jesus has ascended to receive the eternal throne promised to the house of David. God has much bigger plans for Project David,*" Chester says. "*Plans that will culminate only when we see the salvation of a new humanity and rest in a new creation.*"

It's glorious. The Lord Jesus Christ is the promised Son, the promised Son who was predicted and prophesied to and bore witness to in the Scripture. And of course, that's not all that Jesus is and was and forever will be. Jesus is also the risen Lord, the risen master. This word "*kurios*" in the Greek has as its total allegiance. It's connected to slavery. It's something that in the Old Testament, the Lord God Almighty was uniquely referred to. This is Jesus saying, "I am God incarnate. I am the Lord incarnate." And Paul's saying, yes, Jesus is the risen master who defeated death.

Jesus Christ, as you see from this text, is truly God and truly man. He came from the Davidic line. He had, not in a fleshly, sinful sense, but from a human sense, a sense that he took on flesh. He was truly man, and also Jesus is truly God, the Son of God. Jesus is the gospel's heartbeat. Jesus is the promised son. Jesus is the risen Lord. That's what the Apostle Paul, in just these few verses in Romans, the intro, is trying to declare, is trying to make known. I want you to see this, the Apostle Paul is saying.

This brings us next, though, to our third and final section of today's sermon and this introduction that I pray spurs you on to read the book of Romans, to immerse your life in it, to give your life to this, friends. And it's simply this: the world and you.

I have some questions for you that I want to challenge you with today, because clearly when you read this text of Romans 1, Paul understood that the grace of this apostleship, this office that he was in, the slavery he had to his Messiah Jesus, it was connected to something, it was going somewhere, namely to the obedience of faith among the nations, among the *ethnos*, among all people. And Paul writes with affection to this church in Rome he had never visited. He calls them beloved of God. He calls them saints.

A saint in the Bible uniformly is not something that is designated for someone who's earned it or done a lot and denied themselves. It doesn't require a group of people to gather together and to designate he or she as a saint. In the Bible, the word "saint" is reserved for any and all, regardless of age or background, who call on Jesus Christ and claim him as Lord. If you are a son or daughter today of Jesus Christ, you are a saint. You are a holy one set apart for God and for his mission.

And so here is the first question I would challenge you with in love today: Is this glorious master your master? Is Jesus Christ the sovereign in your life? Does he call the shots? Does his word have the most weight? My friend, you and I have to realize that when it comes to our lives there's no guarantee. There's no guarantee of tomorrow. There's no guarantee that you and I will live throughout the rest of today. Senator Ben Sasse, who's dying right now of stage four cancer, probably has just a few months left to live, dying before the public's eye. Put it this way, we are all on the clock. You're on the clock. I'm on the clock.

Is Jesus Christ your master? The reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli once helpfully wrote concerning slavery: *"It is the property of a servant to not be in possession of his own rights, but rather to be about the business of his master. For this reason, if we are the servants of Christ, it is necessary that whatever we live, breathe, and think, we direct it all to Christ."* Is Paul's master your master? Is Paul's Lord your Lord?

Have you confessed and cried out to God and trusted in Jesus, his crosswork, for the forgiveness of sins, taking your penalty? Have you trusted in Jesus, the risen Lord? And can you say, "Yes and amen, I'm a slave to Christ"? And if you can, praise be to God for his grace in your life.

If you're here today and you would say, "That does not describe me. Jesus is not my master. I am not his slave," my friend, I urge you, I urge you, to repent of the pride and arrogance that thinks you will walk on this earth and not meet this master and meet this Lord. You will. It is not a question of if you will, but when you will. And the only hope, the only hope is found in Christ alone. Make him your master today. Cry out to him for salvation. See your sin, the ugliness and the vileness of your sin before a holy God and ask for mercy. God will grant it and he will grant it graciously.

Is this master your master?

The second is this: Is this gospel message your message? Is this gospel message your message? When you heard me say all those things—this is God's gospel, not man's. This concerns Jesus, the promised Son. This was not an accident or an afterthought. God said, "Oh no, I have to respond to this. What am I going to do?" God planned this from all eternity to bring this gospel to bear.

Is this gospel message your message? Is this what you are all about? Are you about the business and the message of the Messiah Jesus? And here's a way to gauge this, by the way. When was the last time you shared this message with gladness and you told someone the gospel?

Paul interestingly in the same section of Romans will go in just a little bit and say this: he will say, ***"I am eager to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome."*** He wanted to share the gospel with Christians. Do you share the gospel with Christians? Do you comfort and encourage one another with the gospel? Do you remind a brother or sister, ***"Jesus Christ is Lord. He was promised in the Old Testament and there's good news for you and me that we are not going to be given the penalty that our sins deserve but God in Christ Jesus has taken that in full, that we are fully forgiven and free and friend we are bound for eternity with our Lord who has saved us by his blood"***?

Do you speak the gospel to encourage the saints? Do you speak the gospel and share the gospel not as a suggestion? You don't go out in the world with your friends and neighbors—please don't do this—and treat the gospel like a suggestion. The gospel, friends, is not a suggestion. It is a command: **Repent and believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life.** It's the gospel message. Paul preaches here and all throughout the book of Romans how you can be right before a holy God and a sinner can stand in the presence of God and be justified, declared righteous!

Is that message your message? And can you say it is all the grace of God? Notice the shorthand for the gospel right there in Romans 1:7: ***"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** When you see that in the New Testament, it is Paul saying the gospel: God has given you undeserved favor. He has given you peace with himself. Romans 5:1 says, ***"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a shorthand expression for the gospel.

Is the gospel message here in Romans your message? Jerry Bridges, who's now with the Lord and enjoying the presence of our Savior, wrote many good books. One that shaped me powerfully in college was "The Discipline of Grace". And Jerry Bridges would say things like this: *"Do you realize you need the gospel as much on your best day as on your worst day?"* I love that. Amen. We should realize we are utterly dependent on God and we need his grace every single day.

The third and final question I would ask for you is not only is this master your master, not only is this message your message, but also is this global mission your mission? Now to be sure, not every man or woman, boy or girl will go on the mission field and be a missionary, but Paul was very much a zealous missionary. And every brother or sister in Christ, everyone who names the name of Jesus Christ, must realize that we are going to be about advancing God's global cause to the nations that Jesus Christ is Lord. It's at the heartbeat of Paul's ministry. It's at the heartbeat of this letter of Romans.

And so the question is, is this global mission your mission? Are you thinking about how the gospel can go forth to the nations? Are you sharing this amongst yourselves? Are you talking about how God is bringing nations here and reaching nations with the gospel of Jesus? Yes and amen. We should spread the gospel in our neighborhoods. Without a doubt. Praise God if you're doing that. If you're sharing the gospel with your friends and co-workers, that is wonderful. Let's keep doing that. That's a part of this.

But also let's see very clearly that the Lord has a heart for the nations. Look there in Romans 1, again, verse 5: ***"We have received grace and apostleship through him to bring about the obedience of faith among all the nations on behalf of his name."*** Among all the nations—there is not a single nation left out of the cosmic scope of God's redemptive plan to save sinners. That should cause us to praise God and go with confidence knowing there are people here in this nation, this remote tribe, there are people all across the world, and God has those he will save by his grace among them.

Is this global mission your mission? Understand this, friends, Paul preached a gospel that would go and call kings to repent, would call men and women in positions of power to repent and trust in Christ, to declare Jesus Christ is Lord. He had a gospel that was powerful to save, as it says in Romans 1:16. The apostle Paul wrote as a zealous missionary who identified himself first as a slave of Christ. And he said, "Jesus is my master." He knew his calling. He was not just convicted a little bit by this. He was consumed with this calling, the promotion of this gospel to the nations.

And so my friends, give yourself to this glorious master. Give yourself to God's gospel, the true gospel. Give yourself to this grand global mission. And know with confidence God is saving sinners from every tribe, tongue, language, and nation.

The book of Romans, friends, if you are discouraged spiritually, will strengthen you and bless you. Give yourself to this, to the praise and honor of our great God.

Let us pray. *Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we thank you for your gospel. We thank you for the grace that you have poured out upon sinners who don't deserve it like us. And we pray, God, and plead with you now that you would have your way and do your awesome will and work through your word amongst the brothers and sisters of Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church, uniting them in the gospel of Christ, uniting them on mission for the gospel of Christ so that the name of Jesus is made much of both here around Glenview and also God all across the nations to the praise of your glory. All this we ask and pray in the precious and powerful name of King Jesus. And all who agreed say together, "Amen."*