



## Sermon Transcription • Romans 1:1-7 (NIV)

### The Man and His Mission

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

About...<exhales>...I don't know how many years ago, I went to the Louvre in Paris. My wife was in Paris looking after her nephew, and she was doing some nanny work there and I got the opportunity to join her there, so we had like, you know, as a young married couple without kids, the opportunity to spend quite a few days in Paris. She was there for up to a month and so it became, you started to feel very much like home after a few weeks of being there. We went to the Louvre a couple of different times. If you've ever been to that particular art gallery, it kind of feels like more than an art gallery, right. If you ever go there, you can't actually see all the art in one day unless you are doing like speed walking through it, "Oh, that's a pretty one. Oh, that's a pretty one." I like art, and so you sit and you stare, and you try to understand some of the history or background of the artist, and what he was painting about. It's fantastic. The Louvre is filled with masterpieces. There are beautiful works of art everywhere. But if you go the Louvre, and you don't see the Mona Lisa, you missed it. Not because the Mona Lisa is like overwhelming, in fact if you ever go in there, you realize it's this little tiny picture. And it's covered with bullet proof glass and things like that, and there are crowds around it all the time. It's just that, as far as masterpieces go, which the Louvre is filled with, Mona Lisa is on another level. Right? I say that because the Bible, the New Testament, is filled with books that are really wonderful and fantastic. Some of the books of the New Testament, in particular, I love to read and study, the Gospels are phenomenal, but I'm telling you if you read the New Testament and you don't stop for a little while to stare at the book of Romans, you missed it.

My life was dramatically altered by the book of Romans. When I was in seminary, it was the Greek exegesis of Romans class that I took, was a source of spiritual renewal for me that I just can't even explain. I remember coming home after each day in this class, and this is...I'm not talking about an exciting class. There was an old stodgy professor who had a powerpoint slides that had printed Greek from the Book of Romans and he would just go word from word from word, and talk about "this one's a genitive, how should we classify-." This kind of class. And I would come home after this, and speak to my wife, who was teaching at the time - elementary school - and I would tell her for the next three hours about the earth shattering nature of this book. The little phrases that Paul uses that just exploded my theology. Got to the point where I'd lay awake at night, pondering the book of Romans. I'd wake her up, elbow her in the middle of the night, "No, no, no, just listen to me, see if this makes sense." <sleepy voice> "Uh-huh. That...that was really good." </sleepy voice> She'll tell you about how I followed her around our little apartment, and talking to her about this, she doesn't remember any of it at the time - I think she had headphones in. [Laughter] It was a huge source of renewal for



me. The doctrine that's presented in the book of Romans exploded into a series of affections for me. Like, a series of heartfelt love for God in ways that I'd never experienced before. And so whenever people come and speak to me and say, "Oh...Can you give me something to read?" - you know they're always looking for a book that you can buy at the local store. And I'm always, "Well you could read Romans." I want so desperately for you to experience what I did when I studied Romans for the first time in depth. And so I've waited 10 years with the other members of the teaching team at this church. I've waited 10 years to actually start the book of Romans. That every year I've been saying, "We could do Romans". And they're like, "Well, we could do this-" "No.." "We could do Romans." "Why don't we do Romans?" "We should do Romans." "Guess what!? We're doing Romans." We're starting this year. Now, Romans is a long...ish book. And so we're going to do it over the next number of falls, the next autumns. It'll probably take us from now until when Christ returns. But we're gonna enjoy it. I promise you will love it. You and, you better love it. It's gonna be great.

Today we're going to start our series this fall, in Romans 1-3. Chapters one to three. I wanted to title this series: "It's All Your Fault", because that's actually what it's about. But, no one wanted to print those words on a banner, so it's all your fault. Two things: the beginning of the book of Romans, Romans 1:1-7, is the text we're gonna study. All it is, is a greeting; from Paul to the people in Rome. But you're gonna get a feeling for the nature of this book. I only want to point out two things in the greeting. We're gonna walk through it, but I want to point out two things. Number one: we're going to learn something from the way Paul describes himself. From the man, Paul. And number two: we're going to learn something about the way he describes his mission. So, the man and the mission.

Romans 1:1-7. So, before I read the first word, I need to give you a historical context for what's going on with the audience and with the author. The audience is of course the people, the church in Rome. Which is made up of Jews and Gentiles. It was started, the church there, by the Jews but it had been taken over by the Gentiles. You say, "What do you mean 'taken over'?" Well, in 49 A.D. the Jews in the city of Rome had started to have a fight with each other over this guy that they had heard about from the eastern Mediterranean who supposedly rose from the dead, they called him *Khristós*. And they'd heard stories that this was Israel's Messiah and he proved his rights to Messiahship, and in fact people were calling him God himself because he had been raised from the dead, and appeared to a whole bunch of other Jews who were now following him. So this was a big theological debate in the city of Rome, among the Jewish community there. The Romans who, of course, were the governing power there, didn't really like the Jews to begin with. And so when the Jews started fighting with each other, they just said, "Okay, listen, we're done with you guys. We've had enough problems with you in the past over your stupid theological debates. Now you're starting to cause trouble in all sorts of other areas. So, we're done with you. Get out! Like, out of this city, outside the walls. Get. Out." So they kicked them out of the city, every last Jew. Like, kicking all the Americans out of Abbotsford. Just, the whole people group. Get out. Well, the problem of course was that, like I said, the church was made up of Jew and Gentile. Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. And the Jewish Christians were the more seasoned, responsible, religious folks. They kept, the church had its anchor in them and they had all the leadership positions. And now they, along with all the other Jews who didn't believe in Jesus, anyone with Jewish lineage had to get out of the city. And so, they left! And the Gentiles are left holding the bag for the church. And they're like, "Um.. who's gonna lead this thing?" "You've got a



pulse, you know. Get in there, let's lead the church!" Now 10 years later, you fast forward 10 years, the Jews start coming back into the city. And the Jewish Christians start coming back into their church, you know, and they open the church doors on the first day and they... "We're back!" And what they see, is what you would see if you let your kids take over your house for... a year right. They were like, "Oh my gosh! What-what have you done to our church?" "Well it's Gentile now. This is the bacon corner, and there's the, you know.." [Laughter] And these Jews were like, "We can't do this! You have to change-What is wrong? It's gotta be Jewish!" So there were these fights going on between the Jews and the Gentiles from this church. And so when Paul writes this letter to them, he is very aware of this...battle. This challenge that's going on between Jews and Gentiles. So, a lot of the book of Romans is about that interaction. There's a lot of talk about how you guys should get along because of the gospel. So that's the situation of the audience.

Here's the situation of the author, Paul. More than anything in the world, Paul wanted to go to Spain. You say, "Me too!" Ok. The reason Paul wanted to go to Spain, was not to sit on the beaches of Barcelona. The reason Paul wanted to go to Spain was because in the ancient world, in the Mediterranean world, it was the edge of the earth. And he wanted to go and preach the gospel to people who had never heard of it before. That was his heart's cry, "I so desperately want to go and proclaim Christ to nobody who's ever heard it." But where he started from - right, Jerusalem, which is on the eastern side of the Mediterranean - where he started from and where he needed to go, Spain, which was on the other side of the Mediterranean. You know, as a missionary, it's sometimes helpful to have a sending church that's not just from where you sent, but that's closer to the location, so that they can kind of be your home base and you can come back to when you're on the field, and then you can go back. We get letters all the time here at Northview from missionaries, who we don't know, who are saying, "Can you help me, because I want to become a missionary to the heathen in Sumas. We don't usually get those ones. [Laughter] But you know, we want to do a ministry to the First Nations group in Mission. So, can you support me cause I'm from Texas and I want to go and serve them, but it's nice to have a church more locally that can support me both financially and in other ways." The book of Romans is basically a letter from a prospective missionary to a bunch of people, to a church that doesn't really know him that well, and he's explaining what he believes so that when he comes to them, they can support him for the ministry in Spain. It's a missionary letter. Where Paul is going to explain the gospel, and boy does he explain the gospel. In the most magnificent way, he explains the gospel. So there you go, you have some context now: the book was written to real people in real situations by a real guy in a real situation.

### **[The Man]**

Romans 1:1,

"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God..."

I want to stop there. Ancient letters are very different than the way we write letters. You do remember writing letters, right? Before...this [texts with thumbs]. Before the texting. We used to actually write with pen and pencil on paper, to our "pen-pals", who were located in far off lands. When we started



our letters, we wrote whose name first? Theirs. “Dear Joe.” If it was a girl, “Dear Stephanie, How I love you.” [mimics writing a letter in the air] Their name came first and then you’d write your name at the end. If you wrote a long letter it’d be on the front page and on the back page. If you got one of these letters, you’d open it up, and you’d start reading, but if you didn’t know who it was from, you’d always flip through and go to the back page. “Oh, it’s from...Jim” Then you’d go back to the front. In the ancient world they wanted to let you know up front who it’s from. So they’d put their name first, and if they were writing to you and they didn’t know you well, they would write to you and put their title after, right? So this letter is from Joe, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. My father when he was, whenever he wanted to get a better deal on our phone rates, or confront a teacher at our school, he would always get on the phone. And they would say, “Yes, Mr. Bucknam?” and he’d say, “*Doctor* Bucknam.” He pulled out his PhD, right. When he’d write letters to them, he’d pull out his PhD, “Ron Bucknam, Ph.D”. I’m *Doctor* Bucknam. You do that if you don’t know a group of people and you want them to take you seriously, you write all the letters after your name: B.A., S.P.L. 46. Whatever it is that comes after your name, you’d write those things down so that they will take you massively seriously. That’s your credential. What’s Paul’s credential? Yes, he calls himself an apostle, and he says he’s set apart for the gospel of God. But what is the first thing he calls himself? Paulos, in greek, *doulos*. Slave. I know it’s printed ‘servant’ in your Bible. The word is ‘slave’. Like if you want to know what my credential is to speak to you about the gospel and what I self identify as, I am a *slave* of Jesus Christ.

We use all sorts of different images in the New Testament to describe our relationship to God. So, God’s here [hand raised to eye level], we’re here [other hand raised to mid-torso], what kinds of images can we use to describe that relationship? Well the New Testament writers will use things like: you are the body of Christ. And they use that for a reason; ok, think about that. Jesus is the head, and we form the limbs. So just like your body, there’s a dependence from the limbs to the head. You can’t operate your hand without a brain. Though, some of us try. [Laughter] You can’t do that, likewise, you can’t serve Christ without him; being linked to him. You have an interdependence with your other body parts. The hand can’t say to the eye, “I’m more important than you.” Because of course they’re for different purposes, but they serve a function, right? So, that image is used to try to conjure up certain theological ideas about what it means to be a follower of Jesus. The body of Christ. We’re also the family of God. We’re children of God. We love this one. I mean, I love that. If you want to know how God feels about you, and yes, God does feel about you. The same way you feel about your kids. If you really want to know, especially if your dad’s in the room, how God feels about his children. You just think about what happens in your heart when your son hits the baseball. Or when your daughter is dancing in front of you. Last night my daughter was trying to show me her dance moves. She’s not in dance classes, she’s just really good at feeling music, and she’s dancing, ballerina style around my room, and I’m crying. I’m like... [wipes tears from eyes] I’m like, and my wife is like, “Stop. What are you doing?” And I’m like, “I can’t stop!” [continues to wipe eyes] “What are you doing?” “...Sophie.” That’s how the Lord of the universe *feels* about his kids. I’m wicked. I’m evil. So are you. My love for my daughter is tainted by my sin. In God, there is no taint. There is no sinful correction in him. He loves you with a love that you cannot imagine. So we use images for that. That we are his children, adopted into his family. We eat at his table. Body of Christ, the children of God, and slaves of the master. What’s weird to me, quite honestly as a pastor, is how little I hear that taught on in the church. It’s all over the place. The language of slavery to the master is everywhere. But it’s very rarely



mentioned. I think the reason that you and I recoil, at least I do when I read that language. What do you mean we are slaves to the master? Is because we, when we think of slavery, we think of the African slave trade. We think of *Roots*. We think of *12 Years a Slave*, we think of *Amistad*. We think of a white man with a whip and a long moustache and a scraggly beard, whipping black people because they didn't pick up the trash properly. That's what goes on in our minds. And we think to ourselves, "There's no way that God is like *that* master." Yeah, and you're right, he's not. That's not the image Paul is trying to conjure up in your mind. The image he's trying to conjure up in your mind is from Exodus 21. Here's what it says, Exodus 21:2, where God in his law is giving some rules around slavery. He is not endorsing slavery tacitly here, he's giving rules so it doesn't destroy people. Like, "You guys are gonna sin and have slaves, fine. Let me put some rules in place to make sure that it doesn't destroy you."

Exodus 21:2-6,

"When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.... But [verse 5] if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever."

So, look, you could sell yourself into slavery or be purchased. And if you're a Hebrew, you needed to be set free after six years. But if, after that sixth year, you say to yourself, "My goodness this master is so wonderful. So gracious and so kind. That I'm cared for by him, in ways that I could never be cared for by anyone else. All of my needs are taken care of." You could go and say to your master, "I want to serve you in response to your grace, I want to serve you for the rest of my life." And there was a ceremony that you had for this. That person would stand in a doorway and they would take an awl, a pointy implement, and they would put it in their ear and they'd slam the door on it. This is the way they used to pierce their ears, right? So, forever, 'til the end of your life, you would have a physical mark showing that you belonged to another. That you have been enlisted, by your choice, into the service of another because of how wonderfully loving and gracious they are. You do see why Paul's picking on this image now. Cause that's the description for the Christian. We who have been shown so enormous grace by God as have been redeemed out of slavery, he bought us with a price out of sin, we then respond to him by saying, "I want to be yours forever. There's no one, no master who could ever love me like this. So I will give you everything I have." We deny ourselves, we take up our cross, and we follow. We are slaves and he is our master. That means that your life is not your own. Listen, if you're a Christian, if you call yourself a Christian, your life is not your own you've been bought with a price.

That has some significant implications. I'll give you two of them. One of the implications of the fact that you're a slave and he is your master is that much of what's spoken about in Christian churches these days, should be changed. You say, what's been spoken about a lot of Christian churches these days. Well I'll tell you, I listen to a lot of sermons. You have a dream? You have a vision? You have an idea? You have some sort of hope in your heart for the kind of person that you want to be? A vision for your life? Have you drawn it out on a board and prayed over it? Spoken it out? God's job is to



come alongside you and to achieve that end. He's your copilot. He's your butler. He will serve and help you along the way to be all that you could be. You could have your best life now, you know. If you just enlist God's help in *your* dream. Is that how it works...slaves? Is that the way slaves approach their master? "Hey, master, I got a really good idea. What I need is for you to come behind me and support me in it because it's a great idea. If you don't, I'm gonna be really angry, I might go somewhere else..." Is that the way slaves deal? No, that's not the way slaves deal with it at all. He is the main character in the play. We support...we his supporting actors. His mission is the goal, not ours. His ideas, his values, they're all what we're on about. We humbly and happily submit to the one who is greater. He is our master and we are his slaves. John MacArthur said it well, he said:

"True Christianity isn't about adding Jesus to my life, it's about devoting myself completely to him. Submitting to his will and seeking to please him above all else. It demands dying to self and following the master no matter the cost. To be a Christian is to be Christ's slave."

Okay, but like, specifically, what does that mean? So here's, I want to show you, I want to press this a little bit further with you. I just want to take one further step. The Apostle Paul actually uses this slave imagery, the language to apply this idea to something that I think everyone in the room will be able to identify with. It's in 1 Corinthians 6:18,

"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? [Listen to the motivation now on why you should flee sexual immorality] You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

Seriously, when you stand naked in front of the mirror, you are looking at God's possession. What you do with what you see in that mirror is what you're doing with God's stuff. You were bought with a price. So honour God with your body.

I was watching a video, that came out this week, when I was a little younger. Okay, I was little. On Saturday mornings I would get up and I'd watch cartoons. It was the only time in the week that they had cartoons on when I was a kid. So, NBC, which is the..one of the biggest television companies in the United States, you all know that, they started to show in the middle of the cartoons, they would have these public service announcements that were called "The More You Know". They would have, movie stars and other celebrities stand in front of the camera and say things like, "You know, if you wear a helmet before you fall down on your bike, it'll save your head." Then they'd have this little star that would come across the screen with a rainbow behind it, [hand gesture] <bling> "The More You Know". I learned most of my morality from "The More You Know". And they'd say other things too. "You know if you want other people to treat you well, you should treat them well" <bling> [hand gesture], "The More You know". And because Bill Cosby said it, you're like, I'm gonna do it. Well, they've struck up some of these again, recently. The one I saw this week actually was about queer theory. It was a man dressed as a woman who was saying, "Look, here's the way it works when we're born we have doctors who look at us and they guess - that's the language that is used there - they



*guess* at what our gender's gonna be. So they look at us and say, 'Oh, you look like you're going to grow up and be a man!' Sometimes the doctors are right, and sometimes the doctors are wrong. Sometimes the person grows up to be in line with what their biology seems to show, which means we call them '*cis*-gender' or they grow up to not be in line, to feel not in line with the biology that they've shown at birth and we call that person '*trans*-gender'. Wouldn't it be better," says this public service announcement. "For us, for the doctors to not arbitrarily '*guess*' at what kind of gender we have but instead let kids, people, grow into whatever it is that they feel that they want to be in their lives." [hand gesture] <bling> "The More You Know". Now listen, I am not bringing this up because I want to debate queer theory, although that would be useful, in another context. What I want to show is that we live in a culture today that says that you have the right to determine whatever you want to determine sexually with your body. You get to be the sovereign ruler over what you see in the mirror. You can use that in any way. If you disagree with what you see, gender wise, you can construct a new one. It's just a gender. *You* are the ruler. *You* are the master. And yet I'm telling you, Christians, are different. We say, "Listen, I am *not* the controller of my life. There is one who stands outside of me and who gets to determine what he does with his stuff. I am bought with a price." So I honour God with my body.

## [The Mission]

So we've gone through two words in the book so far. Okay, so this is great. This is gonna last a while. Two words. Here we go! So that was the man, Paul. The little phrase: "*doulos*" - slave - that I wanted to point out. Here's his mission. Now, I'm gonna read through verses one to seven and I want to show you how his argument plays out. But I'm really interested in the little phrase that shows up at the end, okay? So, let me just talk you through this text and then I'll point out the phrase at the end that I want to develop with you, okay? So verse one again, Romans 1:1-7,

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—[and you say, "Well, okay, describe the gospel for me, Paul. What gospel - what good news are you talking about." Well he describes a little bit here, which...verse 2] which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. [So look, my message, Paul says, "My message is not a new one. You can go to the old testament and see how the promises were there about the Messiah and how they were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So I'm just building off of what came before." This gospel was promised beforehand through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures and verse 3] it concerns his Son, [we are gonna want to talk a little bit about who the son is now], who was descended from David according to the flesh [So he is human and he is of an earthly, kingly descent, right? And, verse 4] and he was declared to be Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, [So he's not just the Son of David, he was declared to be the Son of God. He demonstrated his God-ness by rising from the dead. Remember he claimed before he went to the cross and was resurrected that he was going to rise again three days later, to prove that he indeed is God. That's what happened. So when we're dealing with Jesus, we're dealing with a fully human man and a fully divine God, wrapped in one. And I have to keep moving to get to the end here, but I would like to talk about that for a little while. But let me keep going,] Jesus Christ our



Lord, through whom we have received [“we” - Paul saying me and my buddies who are preaching, we have received] grace and apostleship [so our ministry - me and my buddies - has a goal. Our mission is this] to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations. [If you came to Paul and you asked him, “What are you on...why are you doing this? What is your goal when you go and proclaim the gospel?” “To bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations...” I’m going to come back to that. Verse 6] including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, [And then finally he gets to the greeting. Okay, this letter is] To all those in Rome, who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

But that little phrase that I want to play with. If you ask Paul what his mission is, he would say, “It’s to bring about the obedience of faith.” At the end of the book, when you get to the end of Romans, you’ll see that he uses the phrase again. So here you have in the first few verses, that language, “my goal is to bring about obedience of faith” and at the end of Romans, in Romans 16:25-27,

“Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith — to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

He brackets the whole book with this phrase. What does it mean? What does it mean that Paul wants to “bring about the obedience of faith”. Here’s why I’m bringing this up, those words in theology, in Christian theology, are often at odds. Here’s how. How are you saved? As a Christian, what’s the answer to that question? Okay, well how are you saved? Well, you believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It’s actually the message of the Reformation. *Not* by works. So we preach rightly that, look, there is nothing that you can do to earn standing before a holy God because no matter how good you are, you will always fall short of his holiness unless you’re completely perfect. And how’s that going for you? There was one who was completely perfect, his name was Jesus. He was the son of God. His righteousness is given to you when you show faith in him. When you believe in the Lord Jesus, his righteousness is given to you so that you stand before God holy, not because *you* are, but because *he* was. So we rejoice in this truth. This is like the most earth-shattering, amazing truth that Paul actually draw out in the book of Romans and try to press upon you. No one deserves it, you can’t stand before God on your own. You need the righteousness of Christ, it’s been given to you. You’re *not* saved by works. Okay, but wait a minute. Have you ever noticed how many times in the Bible they command works?

In Matthew 25 it says, in fact, that at the great judgment, where Jesus is going to come back and he’s going to separate the sheep from the goats. He’s going to separate them based upon how they treat the least of these my brothers. It doesn’t sound like faith. That sounds like what you *do*. If you go to the book of James, you’ll end up reading, repeatedly, listen, if you don’t use your tongue properly, if you speak certain ways to people - you’re not a Christian. Well that sounds like *works*! True religion is this: you treat the widows and the orphans in their affliction and keep oneself from unstained from the





world. That's in James chapter one. *That* sounds like works! So what's going on? How do faith and works interact? Well that's a theological question that is delightfully answered, I think, in the phrase that Paul uses here: "I preach to bring about the obedience of faith", the working of faith. In other words, when I preach, what I want to see in the lives of people is not just belief, not just profession made, but I want to see lives transformed by the gospel they profess to believe. That true faith produces obedience. That if you are not producing obedient lives in reflection of what you say you believe, you probably don't believe it. My son, a few years ago, he was at school and he came home, and he said, "Dad, they talked about a 'trust fall' at school."

And I said, "I know what those are."

And he said, "Yeah, you fall back and stuff. And the guy who is speaking there said that he, they do it at corporate retreats and stuff."

Which I've always thought as funny, right? You don't trust the person to clean out the trash basket, but will catch you, right? But, maybe I work at a different place than you guys do. [Laughs] Anyway, some of you will get that later, that's okay. The person falls back, you ask ahead of time: "Do you believe that we'll catch you?" "Yes." "Okay, prove it." And then you come back.

My son said, "Dad, that's really cool."

So I made a joke, and I said, "Ethan, look, would you want to do that? Do you trust me? If you were gonna fall back, and I were going to catch you, do you trust me?"

"Yeah, of course I trust you."

"Really? Really, you'd really trust me?"

"Yes, I totally trust you."

"So *you* would do it?"

"I would totally do it."

So he was standing there, and at this moment, he turned his back to me, and he started to fall back. Now, here's the thing. I *thought* we were talking, you know, generally about a time in the future that we might...[laughter] You know like, "If we were to do this, later, Dad..." So I was just sort of...it was philosophy to me. So when he turned his back to fall backwards, I turned my back to go get a KitKat—you know? And then I heard this massive thud on the ground and his arm was like, bent He broke his arm. So, to this day, he doesn't trust me at all. Awkward. A trust fall is an interesting image, though, right? The trust fall. What we're essentially saying with it is that if you say it, you can prove it. And what do we say about somebody who says, "No, no, I trust you", but never falls back. We end up saying, "No, you don't." Proof's in the pudding, man. Yeah, that's what the Bible is teaching. The Bible's teaching that true faith produces, by necessity, work. It shows itself in the way someone acts in response to the profession. So you get Ephesians 2:8-10,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works [You didn't work yourself into the faith. You could do nothing to get it. It is the gift of God. Not a result of works] so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [for what?] for good works, [it's not a result of works, but it's *for* good works] which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Listen, I want to apply that in a few different places. A couple, as we finish here. Number one: if Paul wasn't merely interested in bringing about faith, but the obedience of faith in his hearers, then the first



implication is that we ought to follow suit. Our goal when we proclaim the gospel to people is not to get them to pray a prayer or make a profession, even though that is a necessary part of it, our goal is to see them walk with Jesus. When I was much younger and starting in ministry I had to oversee an outreach to some children. There was a lady who came in to do some training. I remember she did some training with a particular tool that you could share the gospel with. It was a really great training. She said at the end, she had a printed out prayer. She said at the end, "I need the kids to pray this prayer." It was on the back of the book. You *have* to use the words of this prayer. So I said to her, why, in the meeting, "Why is it that we need to use the exact words of this prayer?" "Because this is the exact prayer that saves. If you pray this prayer, there will be kids who 30 years from now will be able to point back to this moment and show that this prayer saved them." Did it? Listen, in the evangelical church today, I'll tell you what, one of the things we really focus on is getting people through the door. We want you to pray a prayer, we want you to confess faith in Christ. And in many cases, we say to ourselves, [brushes hands] "Job done!" And we write in our missionary report: 15,000 people prayed the prayer to receive Jesus. Is that the goal? Don't misunderstand me. It's part of it. But is it the goal? No. Paul is not interested in bringing about faith. It's the obedience of faith that he wants to see formed in the lives of people. If you go to a race today, and you stand at the beginning of the race and you cheer rightfully about the people who take their first step in that race. "Whoo! It started!" Will you in that moment, go home? And drive home in the car after seeing the first step of the race, saying to yourself, "Wow that was a great race! Job done! Hope you got the crown, cause we're gonna give him an ice cream cake when he gets home and that says 'good race'." No, of course you won't. You know it's just the start. A significant moment, but just the start. What you want is them to take the next step, and then the next step. We want them not just to show faith, but the *obedience* of faith.

And finally, if Paul wasn't merely interested in bringing about faith but the obedience of faith in his hearers, we ought to be careful when we persist in saying "no" to our master. Because it might just show that he's not our master. We might need to be careful to realize that sometimes we profess faith all the time, but that faith has no legs. And because it has no legs it's not real. Do you know, the last number of weeks, here at the church, I have actually, after my sermons, gone upstairs into our offices and shared with different people up there how I feel like I'm just this angry preacher, repeating the same message. And I don't want to be the mad, crazy preacher, right. I want to talk about the love of God. I want to talk about all these wonderful things that are true about the gospel, the grace. We're doing Romans. I remember, praying, "Lord, why is it that you keep bringing these passages in front of this church?" Over the last few months, anyway, if you've been around here this summer. Whenever I'm preaching it seems to be a passage about "don't be a hypocrite". And so like I end up preaching these things, and I go upstairs and think, "Oh man, God!" We're gonna do Romans. Romans is about grace. And then the first, 'slave' is the *second* word! So, what do you think God's doing here? See here's the thing, I believe in the providence and sovereignty of God. So I believe that the Lord before the foundations of the world probably put these passages in order and you are sitting here because he wanted you here. And the reason he wanted you here is so that you and I could together say, "We're not going to be hypocrites. If we profess something about Jesus, we're going to walk in his way." And there are many of us who are saying "no" to Jesus. So let me just, again, plead with you. If at any point in your life you are looking into the eyes of your Lord, your master. And you are saying, "No."



Reconsider. His way is better than yours. His plan is better than yours. His future is better than yours. His use of your body is better than yours. He's better than you. Reconsider.

Let me pray. Father, I am so thankful for this text and for the beginning of Romans. I pray Lord, that you would help us to reflect more and more on it. As the days go by, and I pray, Father, that you would do what you will before us. But again, I pray that the knowledge that we are happy slaves would infiltrate our hearts and minds. And that we would respond to you, Father, lovingly, pierced ears and all. In Jesus' name. Amen.