

There is a story of a dad working outside with his 3-year-old son. He had taken Kevin outside to play while he trimmed the hedges. Holding his hand, he knelt down beside him so that he could look at him face to face. Slowly and carefully he said, "Now, Kevin, you can play here in our front yard.

- You can go next door and play in your friend's front yard.
- You can ride your Big Wheel up and down the driveway.
- You can go in the back yard and play with the dog or play on your swing.
- You can go back inside and watch television.
- You can stay here and watch me trim the hedges.
- These are all the things you have my permission to do.

But you can NOT go out into the street. It is very dangerous there. You cannot play in the street. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

And 3-year-old Kevin nodded his head and said "Yes, Daddy".

The Dad let go of his hand and he ran straight to the curb, put one foot in the street, and then turned his head toward me and smiled, as if to say, "Foolish mortal!" ***Now – why would that little boy do that?***

Why – after understanding all the freedoms his father had allowed him would he deliberately go out to the one place his dad had told him not to go?

He did it because that little boy is like so many people.

- They want to be FREE to do things "their way"
- They want to be FREE to live by their own rules
- They want to be FREE to be the ones who make the final decisions of what is right or wrong for them

The reality is from a very young age people often reject the authority of their parents. This is the heart of the conflict between people and God. God created us and loves us. He wants to bless us.

But - too often - people reject God's authority and think that being a Christian is all about restrictions, rather than understanding that God's laws are there for our own good.

The reality is most people like to be in charge and struggle to let God be in charge.

In John 8 Jesus tells the crowd "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

This is reinforced in our passage today in Romans 6

It seems unusual and many would argue, but the Bible declares in no uncertain terms: Everyone is a slave to something...

1. **You're either a slave to sin and free from God**
2. **Or you're a slave to God and free from sin.**
3. **There is no other option open to you.**

I was reading the other day how some computers get taken over as slaves by a virus. The owner doesn't know it, but somehow their computer gets used to send lots of email ads, or worse still tries to gain credit card numbers and passwords to steal money. All sorts of evil goes on, your computer is a slave, and you don't even know it.

Everyone is a slave to something... most people don't know it.

If we are not a servant of God, it tells us in Romans we will be a servant to sin. Please don't think I am saying that Christians are less sinful than everyone else. I am not saying that. Christians are simply forgiven.

Now some may ask why would rejecting God – and His authority in our life – enslave us?

Well, if you reject God in your life, Ephesians 2:12 says, we would be "...without hope and without God in the world."

Today, many people are living in spiritual slavery without realizing it. They chase false gods of money, success, power, personal comfort and romantic love—only to realize they still have an emptiness that can't be filled by any of those things.

### **When we put ourselves in Gods place, we become a god**

In 1875 a British poet named William Ernest Henley published a short poem that expressed one way to cope with life's circumstances. The poem, called "Invictus," ended with these famous lines: "I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul." In popular culture, those last two lines usually represent some kind of heroic and self-sufficient stand against evil and injustice without submitting to God. The journalist Daniel Hannan called the poem "a final and terrible act of defiance.

Sixteen years after Henley first published "Invictus," the British preacher Charles Spurgeon offered another philosophy of life. On June 7, 1891, in the closing words of his final sermon, Spurgeon urged people to submit to a better "Captain" for our soul. Spurgeon said: "Every person must serve somebody: we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ. Either self or the Saviour. You will find sin, self, Satan, and the world to be hard masters; but if you wear the uniform of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls .... If you could see our Captain, you would go down on your knees and beg him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow him. It is heaven to serve Jesus."

Gollum is the slimiest character in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. If you are a true-blue fan of the books, you know that originally this character was a Hobbit named Smeagol. But his obsession with possessing the Ring deformed him into Gollum, a name he got after his habit of making "a horrible swallowing noise in this throat."

According to a collection of literary authorities quoted on Wikipedia, Smé agol "still vaguely remembered things like friendship and love, while Gollum was a slave to the Ring who knew only treachery and violence."

This is precisely what happens to people tangled in sin. Without Jesus we can't be set free

The good news is in today's passage, Paul mentions the problem so he could introduce the solution. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) This verse is a well know verse. I remember memorizing it when I was young. I also remember hearing mention of it every time I heard someone share the gospel. The wages of sin is death.' But that is simply the bad news. Thankfully Paul did not end the sentence there.

Neither did Jesus. The good news is that there is a gift. There's NO catch. Paul said the 'gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. If we focus on what we can earn, then our wages result in death. However, if we accept this free gift then the gift brings eternal life instead of death. Isn't that amazing! Jesus gave Himself as a gift when he died on the cross so we can be forgiven..... all we have to do is put our faith and trust in Him... put Him in charge not us.

I am so glad that Paul ended this chapter with the good news.

In the March 2010, issue of *Time*, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was featured. There was one significant question a reader submitted (in bold), followed by Tutu's answer:

**What is your favourite Bible verse and why?**

Tutu: Romans 5:8. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It sums up the Gospel wonderfully. We think we have to impress God so that God could love us. But he says, "No, you are loved already, even at your worst."

How do I conclude

Abraham Lincoln once passed a slave auction block and saw a young girl being sold. His heart melted. He put up a bid, and eventually she belonged to him. After he paid the money, he told her, "You are now free." "What does that mean?" she asked. "It means that you're free," Lincoln answered. "Does that mean I can be anything I want to be?" "Yes, you can be anything you want to be." "Does that mean I can go anywhere I want to go?" "Yes, you can go anywhere you want to go." With tears in her eyes, the young girl looked up at Lincoln and said, "Then I'll go with you."

This is the response that Paul is saying Jesus wants from us. Jesus dies on the cross to free us, He paid for us with His life, He wants us to go with him.