

Good morning/afternoon fellow slaves.

Is anyone just a teeny-weeny bit offended by that – gettin’ called a ‘slave’? Well, if you’re offended – tough – just get used to it, because that’s the way things are... Slavery is far from dead. Every single human being living in the world today, is a slave. We are either a slave to sin,, or a slave to God.

We are slaves, to whomever we obey. But the good bit is, **we** get to choose the allegiance: We get to choose, to either obey “sin” (which leads to death), or we choose to obey “obedience”, (which leads to righteousness).

And this choice, becomes **ever** so much more important, as soon as we become a Christian. Before you became a Christian, it didn’t matter so much how you lived – you were a child of darkness, and you could fit in very well, doing whatever you liked.

But things are different now. We belong to God now, and He expects something very different of us. As Christians, we are called to live to a higher ethic. Our standards, are very different to the standards of the world. We’re called to live, as people of God’s Kingdom, in His righteousness.

Today we’re going to be talking about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and what it means for Jesus to be Lord, or more particularly, what it means for Jesus to be **our** lord.

The 1st century Roman church wouldn’t of had too much trouble working out what that means. They were living in a society, where slavery was very common – there were slaves,

and there were masters of slaves... A good slave would cost a lot of money, but once a slave master owned that slave, that slave was 'there to do his bidding'. The role of the slave, was to be obedient to their master.

The slave master was "lord". And the slave, would obey their lord. They understood that.

When we were growing up as kids, we had a bit of a saying – whenever one of our peers would just tell us to do something, and take it for granted that we were going to do it, we'd say, "So what did your last slave die of?" But it didn't take long before somebody came up with the witty answer, "Disobedience."

We are obedient slaves, to the one we obey. We **used** to be slaves to sin. That means "**sin**" was our lord and our master. Sin was the one who ruled us... But at our Christian conversion, is when we made a decision, and we **changed** allegiance. No longer would we be a slave to sin, because we decided to change our allegiance, to Jesus Christ as our Lord.

Verse ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient (alright – it's something that has already happened – we have become obedient) **from the heart** (that means it's not just a "mind" decision – This a heart decision – it comes from the very depth of our being – "I just know Jesus is Lord, and my heart – I surrender to Him, **because** He is Lord"....

OK, so we've become obedient from the heart, but what are we obedient to???.... We are obedient) **to the standard of teaching to which you were committed**,... What does that mean?

Well, I'll tell you what it means: It means **we don't** get to decide for ourselves **what** we believe or how we should behave as disciples of Jesus... It means at the very act of conversion itself – when we choose to become a Christian – this involves a very real, thorough commitment, to obedience to Jesus Christ **and** to His teachings.

What is the Gospel? As an evangelist, what should one preach? Well, Jesus never told us, to go out into the world and make converts – He told us to go out into the world, and to preach the good news, and make disciples... And the question before us today, is “Am I convert?” or “Am I a disciple?”...

Unfortunately, a lot of the time when the gospel gets preached today, they don't let the hearers know what they're in for, and the preacher stops short of giving the whole gospel...

The message might come across as something like this:

- Come to Jesus and He'll heal your marriage; or
- Come to Jesus and He'll forgive your sins, and He'll give you eternal life – you don't have to change; or
- Come to Jesus and be empowered; or
- Come to Jesus and take control of your life; or
- Come to Jesus and He'll bless you with an abundance

And they haven't been told **anything** about counting the cost, or about discipleship, or about the basic necessity of making Jesus Christ, Lord... Jesus said to **His** would-be followers, "Don't start following me, without counting the cost." (Luke 14)ⁱ

To become a Christian, means to commit to the life of a disciple... Now that involves, learning from the Scriptures – receiving Biblical, Christ-centred teaching, and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ...

There's a whole epidemic, of so-called Christians, who have gone down the easy-believism path – their whole theology is based around "I believe Jesus died for me, and He has forgiven me. Therefore I am saved.".... And that's where it ends for them. There are so many people, who claim to be Christians, and they believe they're saved, but the way they live their lives, is no different to how the world do...

What led them to that path? I'll tell ya – they were never taught, what it means to be a disciple of Jesus... Some of the most popular preachers today, claim that "over time", a new convert will gradually acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus, and will gradually introduce Him as Lord, to different compartments of their lives...

That's not conversion... Conversion, is a sudden and complete change of allegiance. Remember last week, we talked about "baptism". We died – that part of us is dead. We've risen to a new life in Jesus. We once used to obey sin – we were ruled over by sin... But at conversion, we bow our knee before Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and we submit our will to His.

We commit ourselves, to be taught (to receive teaching)... The Greek word actually means “to hand ourselves over” to be taught... We don’t get to decide for ourselves, what we believe. We don’t get to choose what’s right and wrong, and whether we should be obedient to God or not... We hand ourselves over (completely) to His teaching, and we obey...

There once was a time when it didn’t matter how we lived. V19 tells us we were **slaves to impurity and lawlessness**, and that just led to **more lawlessness**, ,, but what was the fruit of all that? It led to death. And V23 says: **For the wages of sin is death....** And if you think about how you were before you were saved, you don’t want to go back to it, do you? Aren’t you ashamed of it? Aren’t you now ashamed of:

- How selfish; or
- How violent; or
- How immoral; or
- Untruthful; or
- How impure; or
- How ungodly you once were.....

Are you not ashamed of what you were????

Well, if you’re ashamed of what you used to be, well that’s a very good sign – that’s a sign that your heart is being sanctified... That’s a big theological word, isn’t it – “sanctified”. And I use that big theological word – “sanctified” or “sanctification”, because it’s right here in the Bible reading, and we need to understand it.

When we become slaves of God, we begin to produce a very different fruit, to what we used to produce. The fruit of **un**righteousness, leads to death, but as slaves of God, we produce a different fruit.

And there's a process here. Some people would like to think, "I'm saved, and that gives me eternal life"... But that misses the whole, wonderful journey of this thing called "sanctification"... God is glorified in this world, as He sanctifies us (in this world) – as He changes us, from creatures of which we were ashamed, into children after His own heart...

What gives God more glory than a changed life??? And what detracts from the glory of God, more than someone who claims to be a Christian, and yet lives in darkness????

As slaves of God – following in His paths of righteousness, **the fruit you get leads to sanctification, and its end, eternal life.**

We can't skip that middle bit, called "sanctification"... In fact, why would we want to? As a Christian, you've made a commitment, to Jesus Christ as Lord. And the paths that your Lord will lead you down, as you continue this journey of discipleship – one thing is guaranteed: He will continue doing His sanctifying work in your heart, every step of the way...

And that sanctifying work will continue, while ever we are obedient to our Lord.

How do we know that we're on the road to eternal life? It's easy – the road to eternal life, is marked by sanctification, at every step along the way.

I'm sure you've noticed, there's times in your life where you can look back and see where God has done a really amazing work in you, and God has changed you, in a beautiful way.... But then there's other times, where you've just stayed the same:

- Stuck in the same old rut
- Tied up in the same old sins
- Maybe you even feel you were getting worse
- The fruit of righteousness seems to be scarce
- And the fruit of **un**righteousness, is growing big, and plump, and deadly

Do you know what that's a sign of? It's a pretty sure sign, that we're not obeying Jesus as Lord. If Jesus is Lord, we've made a commitment:

- We've made a commitment to learning (to being taught)... You cannot grow in Christ, if you are not receiving teaching. And let me say, it's really important, to get good teaching – accurate teaching – biblical teaching. There's a lot of bad teaching out there – And it's often very popular, because it appeals to the flesh...

How are you going to be able to tell which is good, and which is bad? Well, that means you should be reading your Bible yourself. And I hope you do. And when somebody teaches you something from the Bible, check it out for yourself. In fact, today, don't take my word for it – when you go home, look up Romans 6, and read it again...

So, we've made a commitment to learning – to being taught, and we won't grow unless we are.

- Secondly, we've made a commitment to obedience. Being taught, isn't just a matter of knowing stuff in our head – it's not going to do much good in our head, is it??? It has to make its way to our heart. We become obedient, from the heart. Do you know what that means? It means that as you love Jesus more you'll obey Him more, because you love Him.

I didn't only obey my parents because I was afraid of getting the strap – I obeyed them because I had a loving relationship with them. And the best way for me to show them my love, was to obey them...

What do you think they would have thought, if one hour a week, I would sit down and read about my parents, and sing about my parents, and talk to my parents, and tell them how much I loved them, and did that for one hour, on one day a week... And then for the rest of the week, I ignored them, and disobeyed them, and wouldn't listen to them.... That wouldn't be love, would it?

And yet, isn't that how so many of us treat God???

- So, when we're committed to receiving teaching, and to obedience to Christ, and this commitment comes from the heart,, that's what takes us down the path of sanctification...

And I reckon I can be pretty sure of making a promise on this:

- Commit to receiving good teaching;

- Commit to obedience
- Commit from the heart

And you'll find the Lord is sanctifying you – That The Lord is changing your heart to become more like His. And in doing so, He's preparing us for eternity.

The road to eternal life, is marked by sanctification, at every step along the way.

Amen.

ⁱ Luke 14:25–33 (ESV)

The Cost of Discipleship

²⁵ Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.