

Brand New Boss

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Unashamed - A Study of Romans / Romans 6:15–19

Earlier in Romans, chapter 6, Paul showed us that our old life has ended and a brand new life has begun in Christ. Now, he gives us a second answer to the question of continuing in sin: grace has changed our allegiance as well, freeing us from slavery to sin and making us servants of righteousness, called to obey God from the heart and offer our lives to him.

Introduction - Title Slide

- Apparently I've been unintentionally naming my sermons after country music songs.
 - Two sermons ago the song was Carrie Underwood's "Something in the Water," which, as I hope you realized after that sermon, is a very heretical song.
 - And then the last Romans sermon was named Brand New Man and, well, if you were here then you remember where that landed.
 - So this week the sermon title is "Brand New Boss" — but if we're going to keep the theme, then I guess the alternate title is "Take This Job and Shove It."
- I've had lots of bosses over the years.
 - I've worked for some really amazing people. And then I've worked for...well, I'll just say "interesting" people.
 - Of course, my absolute favorite boss had to have been the summer I worked at the Tennessee Valley Ice Company.
 - The "I take my job too seriously" award would go to my manager when I worked at Taco Bell.
 - He treated taco making like he was on a NASCAR pit crew.
 - Nobody wants to wait all day on their chalupa, but this guy was next level.

- The Taco Bell corporate ladder felt more like a step stool than an extension ladder but he was working his way to the top.
- The “I’m not sure how you got to work sober” award would go to my manager when I delivered medical equipment in college.
 - All he talked about was how much he drank after work.
 - His claim to fame was playing a round of golf and drinking a beer at every hole - and he wasn’t talking about the miniature golf course at Sir Goony’s.
- Then there was one of the assistant managers when I worked at Brookstone.
 - That was the store that sold all of the gadgets and massage chairs and stuff.
 - He was in his 30s but made a habit of uncomfortably flirting with all of the young ladies that worked there.
- Here’s what all three of those bosses had in common.
 - They were in charge of me.
 - But something else was in charge of them.
 - The Taco Bell guy answered to his ambition.
 - The golf guy answered to the bottle.
 - The Brookstone guy answered to his lust.
 - They gave orders at work.
But they took their orders from somewhere else.
- Now before we get too comfortable judging a few managers from twenty-some years ago...
 - Ambition, escape, and lust don’t need a Taco Bell or a golf course to show up.
 - They do just fine in respectable people with respectable jobs.

- Even in church people.
- Most of us have simply found quieter ways to serve the same masters.
- That's exactly what Paul says in our text this morning:
 - “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey...”
([Romans 6:16](#))
 - Nobody gets to be their own boss.
 - The only question is who you're taking orders from.
 - And no, ‘Take This Job and Shove It’ doesn't work here.
 - You can't quit sin.
 - You have to be set free from it.
- And the good news in this text is that God doesn't leave you working for the boss you've currently got.
- In Christ, you get a brand new one.

Scripture Reading

Romans 6:15–19 ESV

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,

¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For

just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

Prayer (Return to Title Slide)

- Paul began this chapter with a question: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”
 - His first answer was about who we are.
 - Our old self was crucified with Christ.
 - We’ve been buried with him and raised to walk in newness of life.
 - Then he closes that argument with one of the most freeing sentences in the whole letter:
 - “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” ([Romans 6:14](#))
- That’s good news.
 - But Paul has been around long enough to know how good news gets twisted.
 - Somebody’s going to hear “not under law” and think, “Then no rules.”
 - Somebody’s going to hear “under grace” and think, “Then no consequences.”
 - We have our own version of it today.
 - How many times have we heard and/or said: “It’s easier to ask forgiveness than permission”?
 - Or the one we’d never say out loud: “God’s going to forgive me anyway.”
- So in verse 15, Paul asks the question again.
 - But it’s not quite the same question.

- In verse 1, the question was, “Should we keep sinning so that grace will increase?”
- In verse 15, the question is, “Does being under grace give us permission to sin?”
- And that question gets personal pretty quickly.
- “Can I make an exception here? Can I give in this once, since grace has me covered?”
- Paul’s answer leaves no room for that kind of bargaining: “By no means!”
 - It’s the strongest “no” he’s got.
 - But this time, he doesn’t answer by telling you *who* you are.
 - He answers by telling you *whose* you are.
- The 2000 movie, “O Brother, Where Art Thou” is about the exploits of three fugitives named Everett, Pete, and Delmar.
 - At one part of the movie, they pick up a young man hitchhiking.
 - They make their introductions, and it turns out that the hitchhiker has recently “sold his soul to the devil.”
 - Ironically, in the previous scene, Pete and Delmar had just been baptized.
- Everett, played by George Clooney, looks around the car and says he’s the only one who “remains unaffiliated.”
 - While it may be a funny line, he couldn’t be more wrong.
 - There’s no such thing as being unaffiliated.
 - According to the apostle Paul, everybody has a boss.
 - Which leads to what we will call...

The Myth of the Unaffiliated(vv. 15–16)

- A myth is something people assume so often that nobody stops to check it.
 - And there are a lot of people who function under this myth of unaffiliation.
 - They're decent folk - they're just not holy rollers.
 - They're good to their neighbor - they just don't see the value in "organized religion."
 - They follow all the rules without anybody telling them they better do so or else.
 - Surely, that all has to count for something.
 - The hard truth that Paul is exposing here is that there is no "middle path."
- Verse 15 is a reminder that Paul is talking to people who are supposed to be born again.
 - They're asking the same question that was asked earlier - what do I do about sin now that I am under grace?
 - To make the point abundantly clear, Paul uses the concept of slavery.
 - We have a tendency to recoil at the use of that word.
 - Rightfully so - our own historical experience is more than sufficient to cause that reaction.
 - In the broader context of the first century, slavery was widespread.
 - Large numbers of the population were enslaved.
 - When Paul uses slavery as an illustrative concept, everyone understands what he's talking about.
- But here's the point - when someone was a slave, they were the property of a master and their entire livelihood and purpose was defined by that master

- While I said “everyone has a boss” earlier, that language is much softer than what Paul is using here.
- Paul would say it this way - “everyone is a slave to something.”
- But in this case - there are only two masters.
- And Paul is asking the question - which master are you listening to?
- One option is the master of sin.
 - This is our default state.
 - We’re not unaffiliated by default.
 - This isn’t like some kind of NFL draft where we’re sitting around waiting to find out what team we’re going to play for.
 - **Though he doesn’t explicitly use the language of slavery, in [Ephesians 2](#), Paul does point out our default state:**

Ephesians 2:1–3 *ESV*

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- We were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.
 - No third path.
 - No free-agents.
- Remember what we said - the slave’s identity and purpose is completely wrapped up in the will of his master.
 - So what is the intention of this master?

- In no uncertain terms, Paul says that this master has only one thing in mind for its slaves - death.
- That's what sin does.
- Sin isn't looking to give you an abundant life.
- That was the lie that captivated the attention of our grandparents in the garden.
- God said in [Gen. 2:17](#)

Genesis 2:17 *ESV*

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- **The lie the serpent told one chapter later was this:**

Genesis 3:4–5 *ESV*

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

- The serpent's promise was a lie then and it's still a lie today.
- Sin still promises freedom and delivers death.
- And as we've already established in our study through Romans - we are born under the sin of Adam. All of us.
- But there is a second option.
- The second option is to be a slave of obedience, which leads to righteousness.
- Now hear me carefully.
 - Paul is not saying, “Obey hard enough and God will take you.”
 - Slaves don't buy their way into a new household.
 - They're bought.

- Go back to [Ephesians 2](#) and keep reading:

Ephesians 2:8–10 ESV

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Obedience isn't how you get a new Master.
- It's how you show you have one.
- You could say that it is like a uniform.
 - When you put on a uniform, you're identifying with whatever team the uniform represents.
 - I'm never confused about whether it is FedEx or UPS at the door with a package.
 - They are easily distinguished.
- Which raises an important question - if someone were observing you this week - from the pew on Sunday to the football game on Saturday - would it be clear which master you're answering to?
- The point is this - our obedience to Christ makes it very clear who we work for.
 - You see, this isn't a uniform you can just slip on.
 - It's the kind of obedience that comes from the heart.
 - That's where Paul is going next.

There Has Been a Change of Ownership (vv. 17–18)

- Having established that there are only two masters, Paul goes on to reflect on the goodness of God in rescuing us from the master of sin.

- Remember - we were just like the rest of mankind under the master of sin.
- But something changed that arrangement.
- Here, Paul describes that change.
- And he begins by reminding us yet again that this is God's work - not ours.
 - He starts v. 17 with a simple word of thanks.
 - "Thanks be to God..."
 - He doesn't say, "Thanks be to God, with our help..."
 - This work is God's work in us.
 - We've already established this - slaves don't simply go find new masters.
 - There is a process by which they must be purchased.
 - Paul said in [Titus 2:14](#) that Jesus...

Titus 2:14 ESV

¹⁴ ...gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- He paid the price for our redemption.
- So now we belong to him.
- What is the hallmark of this new ownership?
- We have become obedient from the heart.
 - That's a very important distinction.
 - You can be obedient and be resentful at the same time.
 - To understand this, you simply have to be a parent or have been a child at some point in your life.

- There is a difference between a child obeying and a child obeying from the heart.
- A child can “do what a parent says” and not be in the least bit happy about it.
- One might look to Jonah as a good example of this.
 - Jonah was eventually obedient.
 - He did what God said after plenty of running.
 - But Jonah wasn’t happy about any of it.
 - Here’s the difference between Jonah’s obedience and the obedience Paul is describing:
 - Jonah’s obedience came from his feet.
 - Ours comes from a new heart.
 - And you can’t manufacture that. God has to give it.
- And this new obedience has a shape. Paul calls it “the standard of teaching.”
 - But it is more than just precepts and patterns that we’re to follow.
 - The end of v. 17 literally says that we were handed to the teaching.
 - That’s a very different picture than being given a set of instructions to follow.
- If we are handed over to the teaching, that paints a picture of Gospel mold that we are being pressed into.
 - The point of a mold is not for the mold to take on the characteristics of whatever is being pressed into it.
 - The point of a mold is for whatever you press into it to take the shape of the mold.
 - **In 2 Timothy, Paul told Timothy...**

2 Timothy 1:13 ESV

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

- You don't make your own way...you follow the pattern that God has given to us in his word.
- Now, you might look at this and say, "That's very restrictive."
 - "I love self-expression and being my own person."
 - That's fine - as long as your self expression and individualism fit into the mold into which you are being pressed.
 - You don't get to reshape the mold or change the definitions.
 - Because the standard of teaching isn't handed to you for your improvement.
 - You are handed to the standard for it to improve you.
- And for Paul, this is the very definition of freedom.
 - Look at v. 18: "having been set free from sin, [you] have become slaves of righteousness."
 - This is what we call a paradox.
 - At first glance, there are two contradictory statements.
 - We are slaves, but somehow we are also free.
 - That's the beauty of it - for Paul, freedom doesn't mean a spiritual free-for-all where we all get to run around making our own rules.
 - Instead, freedom means having a new, and infinitely greater master.
- So here's the question to wrestle with as you consider this kind of heart obedience.
 - Where are you obeying like Jonah?
 - Doing the right thing, but resenting the One who asked?
 - Or where are you pushing back on the mold?

- Maybe it's a part of God's Word you've quietly decided doesn't apply to you.
- If that's you, don't try to fake a better attitude.
- Go back to where Paul started: "Thanks be to God."
- Ask him for the heart only he can give.
- But a new heart was never meant to sit idle.
 - Paul doesn't stop at "you've been set free."
 - In verse 19, he tells us what freedom is for.
- And notice how he introduces it: "I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations."
 - Paul knows the slavery picture isn't perfect.
 - But he uses it anyway, because we need something concrete.
- And here's the concrete part: the same hands, the same eyes, the same energy you used to hand over to sin...
Now you hand over to God as you...

Report for Duty (v. 19)

- One of the most interesting things about obedience is that it doesn't stand still.
 - If you're obedient to the master of sin, one thing is for certain: You won't get stagnant.
 - Paul makes it very clear - lawlessness is guaranteed to lead to more lawlessness.
 - And we all know that both instinctively and by experience.
 - Tell a little lie and you have to tell a bigger lie to keep it covered up.
 - Just consider King David's lustful glance at Bathsheba.

- What could have stopped at a glance escalated into conspiracy and murder.
- **James points out this progression as well:**

James 1:14–15 **ESV**

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

- But the good news is that the opposite is true as well.
 - If you pursue obedience and righteousness - that's going to have a cumulative effect.
 - It is part of this beautiful thing called sanctification: the process by which the Holy Spirit works in you and through you to make you more and more like Jesus.
- And here, Paul says to “present your members” as slaves to righteousness.
 - In other words, don't hold anything back.
 - You used to present your members as tools of unrighteousness.
 - But that's all changed now because of your new master.
 - What can you do with those “members”? Here's what this looks like.
 - **Eyes: fix them on Jesus**
 - Where do you find your eyes going? What master captivates your vision?
 - [Hebrews 12:2](#): “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”
 - **Mouth: build others up**

- We know what it's like for our lips to spew poison...just check out social media for 30 seconds and you'll see it.
- We can do better.
- [Ephesians 4:29](#): "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."
- **Ears: listen first**
 - Like the old saying goes - God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason. Use them in the right proportion.
 - [James 1:19](#): "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."
- **Hands: work as for the Lord**
 - Hands can be guilty of wrong by action and inaction. But hands in service to God can be used for great good.
 - [Colossians 3:23](#): "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."
- **Feet: carry the gospel**
 - The lost aren't coming to you. Take it to them.
 - [Romans 10:15](#): "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"
- **What about your mind? It's a member too.**
 - [Romans 12:1-2](#): "...present your bodies as a living sacrifice... Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind..."
 - Notice the word "conformed?" Remember the mold.
 - The world has one too and it's always pressing.
- Remember, a slave belongs 100% to his master.

- Present all of your members and all of your faculties to God.
- And remember the good news about this.
- You're not doing this alone.
- Sanctification means actively obeying God in the strength his Spirit supplies.
- The One who gave you a new heart empowers you to live under your new Master.

Invitation

- So let's come back to where we started.
 - Everybody has a boss.
 - The only question is who you're taking orders from.
- Maybe this morning you've realized you're a lot like Everett in that car.
 - You've thought of yourself as unaffiliated.
 - Decent folk. Good to your neighbor. Not a holy roller.
 - But you've never actually trusted Christ.
 - I need you to hear this as clearly as I can say it:
 - **There is no neutral ground.**
 - If you haven't been set free by Jesus, you're still working for the old master.
 - And Paul tells us exactly what that master pays.
 - Just a few verses later, he says it plainly.
 - "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." ([Romans 6:23](#))
- Notice the difference.
 - Sin pays wages, and you've earned every one.

- God doesn't pay wages. He gives a gift.
- You can't turn in a two-week notice on sin. You can't work your way out.
- But you can be set free.
- Jesus gave himself to buy you out of that old household.
 - This morning, you can turn from sin and trust him: the One who died for you and rose again.
 - And for the first time in your life, you'll have a Master who is actually good.
- Maybe you're already a believer.
 - You know you belong to Jesus.
 - But if you're honest, you've been picking up a few shifts for the old boss.
 - Not a lifestyle. Just an exception here and there.
 - That's the kind of thinking Paul answered with "by no means!"
 - So don't keep managing it.
 - Don't try to fake a better attitude.
 - Tell God the truth.
 - "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." ([1 John 1:9](#))
 - Turn from that old master.
 - And present those members back to the One who bought you.
- And maybe you're not sure which one you are.
 - You've been around church a long time, but you honestly can't say whose you are.
 - Don't leave here guessing.

- That's exactly the kind of conversation we'd love to have with you this morning.
- In just a moment, we're going to sing "Just As I Am."
 - And that's the right song for this.
 - Because you don't clean yourself up to come to a new Master.
 - You come just as you are, and he does the changing.
 - If God is working on your heart, whether it's trusting Christ for the first time, coming back from the old master, or just needing someone to talk to, I'll be down front.
 - You don't have to have it all figured out...but you do have to start the conversation.