

## Your Future as a Slave

Pastor Justin  
June 12, 2016

I love grad Sunday. Grad is a time where people are considering who they are and who they want to become. So I thought we would start off with a bit of a personality test/assessment. It's simple; there are two types of people in the world, and you just decide which one you are.

Toothpaste (our House); apple v android; pie; TP; alarm; IT crowd; dress; 3 types; morning people

We say that Graduation is tricky because you need to decide who you want to be and what you want to do. But these questions are really things that we all wrestle through at various stages of life. In Jr High, we're trying to figure out who we are in relation to other people, in Sr. High we are looking for our identity and considering what we want to do when we grow up; after graduation university students change their majors and programs a bunch as they try to figure out how they will contribute to the world in a meaningful way. Then we grow up, have a family, kids, a home and career, and many still wonder what they want to do when they grow up. Many find their purpose and passion along the way.

It ends up looking different for everybody. Though there is incredible diversity among people, the Bible says that there really are two kinds of people.

Romans 6:16-19 (NLT)

16 Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. 17 Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. 18 Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

19 Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

We are all slaves. We are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness. Now some who are unfamiliar with the scriptures might claim that they are slaves to nothing! They have no need to be set free, because they are not slaves. Jesus came across this too.

John 8:31-34 (ESV)

31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." 33 They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

We are all slaves. Being a slave means that we obey someone. You obey someone. But who?

Who do you obey? Who is *your* master? Who is it that you bow down to? Your sin? Your vices? Your lust? Yourself? Culture? Peer pressure? Facebook? Facebook will tell you what profile picture filter you should have. But who decides if it's right or wrong/good or bad? Who is in charge? It needs to be Jesus. He alone is worthy. There is no one greater than Him. When we obey Jesus – when he is our king, We are set free. We can experience the freedom from the chains of our former slavery. Slavery to sin, guilt, pride, idols, shame and lies. We can experience abundant life through obedience to Christ our King. But you have to decide. If you want to a future filled with God's blessings and freedom, then he needs to be your king.

We want to follow Jesus. But we can struggle with living as though he is our king. We hold ourselves back from surrendering EVERYTHING to him. Parents, are you prepared to surrender you children and their futures to Him? Students, are you prepared to surrender your worldview? All of us need to surrender time, resources, desires, sin that we love. These things hold us back. Have you thought about what holds you back? What is the reason that you cannot follow Jesus where he wants you to go and do the things he wants you do to? What holds you back from spending time in the scriptures, learning about our King and falling in love with Him? What's holding you back from making him your king? What are you clinging onto and don't want to surrender to him? Every one of us gets tangled up in things that distract us. How do we move from knowing Jesus with just our heads and following him with our hearts?

How do we make Jesus our King and Lord?

First is that you have to know him and put your trust in him. If you are not a Christian, then the reality is that you are a slave to sin. No matter how many good deeds you do to make yourself feel better about it, you are a slave to your sinful desires, and you are bound by chains of pride, guilt, and shame. And you will never be free. You will deny it. Try to justify it, but you will still be a slave to sin. Jesus is your only hope for freedom.

As Christians we want to make Jesus our king. And lord, live for Him, and surrender all to him. You don't have to exaggerate. You do need to be genuine, sincere, and passionate. We must be willing to lie EVERYTHING down at his feet. Because there is no one greater in the world that could ever be more worthy of honor and our allegiance than Jesus. Your faith needs to be big enough to surrender whatever he asks. There is one example in scripture about an individual's willingness to surrender that really stands out: When God called Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on the altar.

In your Bibles, turn to Genesis chapter 22 (NLT).

Now this is Abraham who was the first person to follow God since the fall. We don't know why God chose Abraham, but he just started talking to him one day, and Abram just follows. God starts making promises to him about having numerous descendants, but doesn't have any kids

and God does a miracle and Isaac is their promised son. And this story is God testing Abraham's faith and he makes the same promise again.

Let's read together. You can follow in the Bibles or on the screen.

22 Sometime later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called.

"Yes," he replied. "Here I am."

2 "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

3 The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

6 So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife.

Something to note and keep in mind here: today we are horrified at the idea that someone would even consider child sacrifice. And God does not permit any form of human sacrifice let alone children. But Abraham doesn't know that, and he is around cultures that do practice that sort of thing. For instance the Ammonites in the Old Testament would practice child sacrifice (molek), and Israel was told to have nothing to do with them. And although child sacrifice is still practiced in the world today, it's very far removed from us and makes it difficult to see why Abraham would even consider, but in his world that was not an unheard of practice. Let's continue:

As the two of them walked on together, 7 Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

8 "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

9 When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. 10 And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.

Now I cannot imagine what this would have been like. Imagine holding a knife to your child. And Abraham loved him. "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much" Not

only does he really love this boy, this boy is a miracle. And he's the start of the fulfilment of the promise that God made him. But Abraham has Faith in God and he trusts that God will provide. But I'm sure it would have been so hard. There were probably tears involved.

11 At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

12 "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

13 Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. 14 Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the Lord will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

This is an incredible example of faith and willingness to surrender. And for Abraham, the outcome is unknown. He barely knows God. He doesn't have Scriptures to read and he can see that God is good and just. For all he knows, God might call him to do evil. All he knows is that God has made some promises and has been faithful thus far. And Paul says that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. In fact when we think about serving Jesus as our king, we must understand that God is not calling us to evil and selfishness. He's calling us to an extreme righteousness! When we live for ourselves, we might do some good to feel good about ourselves, but for the most part, it's a survival of the fittest attitude, and as long as my actions and beliefs serve me well, then I will take action, even if it hurts others. But God call us to an extreme righteousness, an extreme love. God is not going to call Abraham to do evil, but he also knew that Abraham didn't fully know that. Then after this extreme test of faith, God reiterates the promise he made:

15 Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. 16 "This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that 17 I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. 18 And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me."

Not this test was extreme, and we might wonder why God would do something like that to test someone, but we need to remember that just because we don't see a reason, it doesn't mean that there isn't one. In fact, this passage is full of purpose. This passage contains tons of connections to foreshadow Jesus: A father sacrificing his one and only son; Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice up a hill like Jesus carried his cross to his crucifixion; God providing a sacrifice in our place like God provided a ram in Isaac's place; and Isaac was in a symbolic sense raised from the dead, like Jesus was, and how we also receive new life through Jesus. This has been a pivotal story throughout all Jewish history and even in Muslim history. It points to Christ in a way that is hidden in plain sight. This story is one of the many many many places in scripture that reveal Jesus before he was born. Our ability now to read all of scripture makes

these things plain to us, and allows us to understand that Jesus really is who he says he is, and the reality is that we have to deal with that fact now. If Jesus is who he says he is, then we have to do something with that. You can't just shrug and say that you just don't believe in all that Bible stuff. You have to be able to intellectually explain how Jesus is not God, which just simply cannot be done with all the evidence, or you just have to say that you are rejecting him as your king. And to be honest, God would rather that you are for him or against him rather than being a wishy washy Sunday Christian. In Revelation 3:15-16 God says to one church *"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! 16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!"*

You need to be willing to surrender all to Jesus if you want him to be your king. And lots of people do! Lots of you here in the church, strive to make Jesus your everything. People all over the world suffer and die for the name of Jesus, laying down their very lives.

Nothing can stand in the way of our obedience to Jesus. Many of us are very familiar with the story of the rich young ruler:

Mark 10:17-25

17 As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. 19 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."

21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!" 24 This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. 25 In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

Jesus loved this man. He told him plainly the thing that stood between this man and total surrender. Maybe your love of possessions far outweighs your love for Jesus. Perhaps it's your love of entertainment? You desire to be liked by your peers? If this was Jesus talking to you plainly, what would he say causes your heart to drift, or that stands in the way? Like the rich young ruler, you can be a good person in a lot of ways, but if you don't surrender all to Jesus then you are lost as a slave to sin.

But what if it's not obvious? We need to pray and ask God what has been holding us back. Ask him to reveal it to us. And we need to spend time reading the Bible. It's his word to us, so we should be reading it often. And when we struggle to make time reading his word, or spending time in prayer, that may very well give us the answers to the question. Why is it that you don't want to spend time with God? Are you unsure? Are you afraid of what he will say? Do you find it boring and you would rather be on Facebook?

Maybe it's just that you don't even know who he is or why you would trust him. If you don't really know Jesus, let me fill you in. Jesus is the son of the Father, he is part of the trinity and what we as Christians call God. We believe that God created the world and everything in it. He made people, he loves them and wants a relationship with them. He made you, loves you, and wants you. But in making people, he gave them the freedom to choose. And humanity fell away from God and gave their allegiance to sin and selfishness. People became lawbreakers of God's cosmic laws, and we began to hurt one another, hurt ourselves, and we put on the chains of slavery to sin. God chose this man Abraham and asked him to follow in faith. Though that one man, God raised a nation of people who tried to be faithful. He told them of the ways that people had rebelled against him, how humanity had broken God's laws and committed treason and how He as a good God and judge, could not let people go free without blood being shed for their transgressions. Then the Father sent Jesus - his one and only son whom he loved - to come to the earth to be born. Jesus grew, lived a perfect sinless life, and willingly carried his cross to his own death where he shed his perfect blood, bearing the wrath of God on himself IN OUR PLACE. Jesus died for our sin on that cross. He did it out of love for us. So that we might live. The Father then raised him back to life three days later, showing that Jesus had conquered sin and death. And Jesus's disciples then began to share the message of hope which, we still share today, is simply that **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."** By having faith and trust in Jesus, and through his broken body and shed blood, we restore that broken relationship between God and humanity. And just like Abraham and the Israelites, we too can choose to follow Jesus and be set free from our bondage.

Do you want freedom from sin? Trusting in Jesus is the only way. Accept him as your savior. Say sorry for the wrong things you have done. Trust that he has paid the price for you, and be baptized in water to show that allegiance.

Where are you at today? Are there some things that you need to surrender? Some areas in your life that you cling to? Have you been baptized in obedience to God's word? Are you reading scriptures, praying, spending time with God and getting to know him? Are you falling in love with who he is? Or are you afraid? Are you pretending to be a Christian to please your spouse, or your parents? Do you need to commit your life to Jesus for the first time? Or recommit your life to him because you have been away from him for far too long?

Let's pray together: