

# Freeing the Slaves

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[0:00] 6, we read the verses 16 to 19. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin or to death, or of obedience or to righteousness. Let God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh, for as ye have yielded your members, servants to uncleanness, unto iniquity, unto iniquity, even so now yield your members, servants to righteousness, unto holiness.

We have here in this chapter a wonderful teaching about the way in which the Lord having delivered his children from the power, from as it were the slavery of sin, sets them free to be able to obey him in righteousness.

There is a sense in which prior to God's intervention in our lives, we can say prior to our conversion, to our awakening in grace and spirit, we may long and desire to do what is right, but we are unable to do so.

How many times do you hear, for example, in testimony of people saying, oh well I knew there was something wrong in my life and I decided I resolved that I would do better and I would put it right and I would make it good and so I tried to do it in my own strength and I decided I was going to change these bad habits, I was going to do better, I was going to make my life better and pound it around and they would try and they would do their best, but they couldn't do it because they are effectively chained, they are effectively slaves to the power of the evil one because this is their human nature, this is what they are born in, it is what we are all born in, is our human nature, is this propensity to sin, this natural desire to sin, even this compulsion to sin, that when we desire to do good, evil is present with us.

[2:11] Now of course, Paul later on in chapter 7 describes how even in a state of grace, that warfare is going on, that conflict within, but by the grace of God, the power of God gets stronger and stronger inside the soul and the flesh gets weaker and weaker, but there is this conflict and until such time as that conflict begins, we are completely imprisoned, we are completely slaves to our old nature and to sin, that is what this chapter is about and what it concludes with, of course it's famous verse 23, the wages of sin is death, in other words, you are paid for what you have done, you have earned that pay packet at the end of the day, by your sin you have earned the wages, which is death, you deserve them, you know, if your employer pays you that, whatever the rate was for the hours you have done and the work you have done, you have earned it, you don't have to say, oh thank you very much, terribly kind of you, imagine giving me this, you've earned it, you've fulfilled the contract and that's what we've done with sin, we've earned the wages, when we are consigned to eternal death, that is just what we deserve, that is our wages, let's see the contrast in that final verse, the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God, a gift is something you don't deserve, a gift is something you haven't earned, it's by a free gracious gift from the owner to somebody who didn't own it and who has no claim upon it, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now if somebody gives you a gift of something, whether it's a box of chocolates, whether it's a nice box of shortbread or whether it's a bunch of flowers or whatever it might be, it may be something they have made themselves or it may be something they have bought themselves, either way, whether it's the ingredients for the thing that they have made or whether it's the time or the labour that has gone into it, it has cost them to produce the gift.

They have paid for the flowers or perhaps they have grown the flowers in their own garden, perhaps they have baked the shortbread, perhaps they have bought the chocolates, whatever it may be, it has cost them, there has been a cost to them in order to acquire the thing which now they are giving

to you.

And so it is a gift that is free to you, but it's not free to them, it has cost them in order that it might be free to you. This is part of their expression of affection, of love perhaps, to the person they're giving it to.

They're conferring a certain honour, a certain dignity on the person to whom they give the gift. It's an expression of affection. It has cost them so that it may cost the recipient nothing.

[ 5 : 03 ] This is the gift of God, totally unlike wages. Going back to verse 16, Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.

Whether it's sin or to death or obedience under righteousness. Now there's a sense here of voluntarily becoming the servants or the slaves or the employees we might say.

Let's think in modern times for a moment. Let's think in terms of employees. We looked at the example with the children of footballers and sportsmen. There is a sense in which whatever job we do, you have a choice whether you apply for a certain job or not.

But having applied for it and having perhaps been offered the job and yielding to it in the sense that yes, you voluntarily accept the job, you take on the job, maybe you sign a contract, now you are the employee of that boss.

Now whatever they require you to do in terms of your work, you must do it because that's your job. And in that sense they own you, not like a slave, but as long as you are their employee, you are obliged to do what they require for the work that they have hired you to do.

[ 6 : 20 ] You didn't have to take on that job, you yielded yourself as a servant to that job. If you end up in that job working against the interests of somebody you like or of doing something maybe you don't really like doing or agree with, let's say you work for a construction company and in order to drive a road through a certain area you have to dig up a whole lot of fields and chop down a whole lot of trees and you don't like that because you like to preserve countryside and that's perfectly you're right.

But if you're going to work for that company and do that job then this is what you've got to do. In a sense you don't have a choice. You've got a job to do.

You have to do it. You have yielded yourself to this employer. Now you must do what the employer requires or you part company with them. Now of course as far as sin is concerned it's not even that simple because although we do, we are born in transgression and sin although we're born with original sin nobody with the exception of course of Jesus who wasn't born in original sin nobody says I'm born in original sin but really I hate sin I just want to do righteousness I want to do good I don't want to give in to sin or temptation or anything we're not very old in fact we are still at infancy stage before knowing in a sense inside what is good and what is wrong we choose the wrong we choose what we think we can get away with mommy says don't take another another biscuit or another sweetie a little baby waits until she's looking at me and then goes for another one why? because he or she thinks they can get away with it they know what they've been told but they're doing the opposite because it pleases that we yield ourselves to sin even though yes this is the state in which we are born we yield ourselves servants to obey it and then we become servants more and more the deeper down we go whether sin to death or obedience unto righteousness but God be thanked you were the servants of sin but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you we'll come to that in just a wee minute but think first in terms of you were the servants of sin but now you have obeyed from the heart a form of doctrine guilty in other words you've stopped obeying sin now in one sense revolutions happen in countries and some of you will remember of course in the 80s early 90s when effectively with the overturn of communism in Eastern Europe revolutions happen in one country after another almost like a domino effect and what happened was people who had been relatively obedient whether to the state or to the secret police or whatever it might be just stopped obeying they came out in the streets or they ceased to live in fear of the regime anymore and there was this sense that the regime just didn't have power over them anymore people whom they had revered whom they had obeyed and so on they just stopped obeying that's how revolutions take hold people just stop obeying and that's when you realise that really it's not the number of soldiers you've got on the streets or how effective your police force is or how frightened everybody is or whatever people keep a regime in power because they yield obedience to it and when they cease to yield obedience the regime comes crumbling down it doesn't matter how vicious or fearful it has been it will come down when people cease to yield obedience to it and when we cease to yield obedience to the

inclinations of the devil when we cease to yield obedience to sin and turn instead to righteousness it begins to lose its power over us but for that to happen of course somebody has to set us free our turning away from sin to righteousness is not as it were the initial stage somebody has to intervene first it has to be

God's work of grace first to enable us to turn it's like if you were in your little cell pacing up and down six feet across and six feet back and so on and there's the door you can see through the bars out into the fields and the horizon and all the rest of it the sunshine but here you are in your little cell and it doesn't matter how much you try and force the door you can't do it you can't do it in your own strength it doesn't matter how free you try to be and how many exercises you do in your little space in your cell or how much you try and walk up and down and get exercise you're not free but only when somebody opens the door from the outside then do you have the option of walking out you could still stay in the cell if you wanted but with the option of freedom who would choose to some people of course do but once the Lord has enabled you to be free once he has intervened in your life at last you have the chance having been the servants of sin to be able to obey from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered and once you come out from the cell once you walk out into the open fields once you feel the sun upon your face once you feel the grass beneath your feet and the breeze and the freshness and the openness and the liberty and the joy that is there there's no way you would choose to go back except perhaps of course there'll be times when the heavens open and it comes bucketing down and maybe the roof over your head in a little cell might look a little more tempting then but you can't go back but once you have been set free then you are able to obey once somebody has opened the cell door and when that happens it leaves its mark upon you in the sense that it defines who you are and what you are this is the the greater unpacking as it were of verse 17

[12:29] God be thanked you were the servants of sin now I'm going to get the emphasis right here it's not Paul saying oh thank God you were the servants of sin he means God be thanked you were past tense the servants of sin that you have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered to you or unto which you were delivered and in the sense of which you were delivered to it's the sense of being cast not the sense of being cast aside or thrown in the sense of you know casting a shoe or whatever but cast in the sense of you know cast iron poured into a mould when molten and then sort of fixed and it becomes it becomes moulded and molten and then once the cast is opened then whatever comes out of it has this form this shape this imprint upon it which having been thus moulded in this way it carries the stand that carries the imprint of that by which it was shaped that's the sense of being cast of it delivered you into which you were cast into which you were moulded it left its stamp it left its imprint its image upon you when we become the children of God it leaves its imprint upon us we cannot in a sense go back at least we cannot pretend that we were not set free by Christ some people having experienced something of the Lord's grace obviously do and obviously did even in those days turn back you know

I find one of the most chilling sections in the entire scripture that which we read in Hebrews 6 and verse 4 it's impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame it's impossible for them having tasted and having known the freedom and then going back into their cell as it were impossible for them ever to be free again we might think well why can't they just keep repenting why can't they just keep coming out why can't they just turn again and again and again and again because every time you go back your hold is weakened your strength in the Lord is weakened somebody using the illustration of what was to do with marriage actually and they were thinking in terms of how where people in this promiscuous age are actually looking for the happier ever after that's why they go from one partner to another to another to another and each time they are looking for the one that will leave them fulfilled and satisfied but each time you give a little bit more of yourself in every casual passing relationship they likened it to if you think of a post-it note you know these wee sticky pads that coloured you tear them off you stick them on the fridge or wherever it might go and you write something on them and you put them on and you write the message on and then you tear it off and you stick it somewhere else and then you take it off and you stick it somewhere else every time you move that sticky note from one surface to another to another to another it loses a little bit of its adhesion until eventually it is incapable of sticking anywhere and this is the point with having once

tasted the goodness of

God and then gone back again to the world you lose your adhesion you're able to stick what the Lord wants but once torn off and put back on a different surface now so much of the adhesion is lost in going back there's not even a taste now to go back to the Lord because you've tasted it once and you've chosen to go back to the world now it's not the same as just backsliding this is a conscious choice to go back let God be thanked verse 70 you were the sins of sin but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctor which was delivered you in which you were cast molded stamped imprinted with the image of God when we are born again we are born with our parents imprint upon us most of us they are some physical resemblance to one or other of our parents and if you were to see children beside their parents you could say oh yes I can see he's very like his mother he's more like his dad because you can see the physical resemblance you can see the family resemblance when we become the children of

God we are imprinted with his resemblance we are stamped imprinted molded as it were by that in which we have been cast we will not be perfectly Christ like but we will look more and more like him the more we go on with him being then made free from sin you became the servants of righteousness I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh as you have yielded your member servants to uncleanness and to iniquity even so now yield your member servants to righteousness and to holiness you freely gave in to the one now God has set you free to freely give in to the other well in a sense you weren't free before but it's what you were happy to do it's what you're happy to do because that was your nature that was your old nature and you were just acting in line now that you have the option of freedom now you're servants to a new master a new master for whom servity is effectively freedom you know

Paul writes you have to recognise that in Christ is your complete freedom he himself describes himself remember in chapter 1 verse 1 he says Paul a servant of Jesus Christ called to be an apostle the word we have for servant is literally the word for slave it's the Greek word that means slave now going back a couple of verses at verse 14 sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under the law but under grace you think well if we're under the law surely that's restraining sin that's stopping sin from happening but as James points out James chapter 2 verses 10 and 11 for whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet in offending one point he is guilty of all he even said do not commit adultery he said also do not kill and if thou commit no adultery yet if thou kill thou art become a transgressive the law if you're under the law you're effectively under sin because you cannot keep the law that's what it means if you keep the whole law but still offend in one point just like if for example you've been a law abiding citizen all of your life but you get done once for speeding or for shot lifting or whatever it might be that you're done then you have a criminal record and yes 99% of your life might have been absolutely completely law abiding but you'll be on the police files after that because of that one sin that one law breaking act in which you were caught that one transgression so likewise if we choose to be judged by the law then the minute we break in anything that's us we're condemned under sin but it says verse 14 sin shall not have dominion over you because you're not under the law you're under grace the free gift of [ 20 : 22 ] God it's not the wages of sin it's the gift of God what then shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace God forbid you see this is what some people would accuse the free grace of the gospel of uncanny well if it's all done to God if it's all election if it's all God's grace and what Christ has done and you don't have to do anything yourself then that just encourages people to be sinful doesn't it it just encourages them to say well God's done it so I can do what I like I don't have to worry about being holy I don't have to worry about being good or faithful or devout or whatever because God's done it all so I'm saved anyway I can send my little heart out to the end of my life except that if God has genuinely saved and redeemed you you are recast molded as it were cast into this mold this imprint whereby you come out reshaped he molded with his imprint stamped upon you you are changed being born again you now bear the image of a different father you can no longer choose sin you may fall into it but you can no longer consciously choose sin any more than you could consciously choose righteousness before it's like if Mo

Johnson is now in a blue shirt then he can no more say oh well I'll play against Selphic this time so I'll play along with them and I'll try and help them and he can't do that now he's got a new employer now he's got a new shirt now he's got a new team he has to play in the opposite direction those of you remember when you were at school if you were playing any kind of game and then new people joined the game said okay we'll have to redivide the teams now so and so you used to be on that

side now you play with the other side to even it up so they've got a good spread of people of different ages and so on so having played in one direction now you're on the opposite side is that when you think I'll help my old teammates to win no you don't you're going to play the game you're going to get all your best you're going to do the most now you're playing on the opposite side you're no longer playing for the devil you're no longer fighting his corner you've been redeemed by Christ you've been changed by Christ you've been born again into Christ you bear his imprint his stamp shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace

God forbid just because we say oh well I'm sinned anyway I can do what I like but if you are truly saved what you like to do what you desire to do is to please your heavenly father what you desire to do is to be like Christ what you desire to do is to live for him what is in your heart now is the longing to be his and to be his alone you see sometimes people get the idea entirely mistaken idea that as human beings we don't have to be the servants of sin or the devil or the servants of God why aren't I just my own master why aren't they just then why am I able to control my own destiny Jesus said you cannot serve two masters nor of course by implication can you serve none Matthew 6 verse 24 no one can serve two masters and he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other you cannot serve God and man you can't serve God and the world the powers of this world the attractions of money and so on likewise Paul says again first Corinthians chapter 6 verses 19 and 20 what know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy

Ghost which is in you which ye have of God and you are not your own for ye are bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's you are bought with a price why is a footballer play for one team and then for another they're total rivals because he's been bought he has been bought with a price now he's owned by a different side now he must play for a different side now he must expend every last nerve and sinew to further the aims of his new masters just as we desire now if we are born again to serve every ounce of our being and lay at the Lord's feet and serve them with it 2 Peter says this chapter 2 verse 19 that whilst they that is the forces of the world promised them liberty they themselves are the servants of corruption for of whom a man is overcome of the same he is brought in bondage we were overcome by the evil one before but since we are set free in Christ we have been overcome with the love of Christ we are no longer our own it's like the beloved says in the song

I speak but my heart waketh it is the voice of my beloved that knock out saying open to me my sister my girl my love my undefiled and my heart is going out to the beloved because my heart is not my own because you are bought with a price you have been changed it is not simply that oh well I'm free now I can do what I like and sin my little heart I accept that your heart no longer desires that sin shall we sin because we're not under the law but under grace God forbid know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey his servants ye are to whom ye obey whether sin to death or obedience unto righteousness people think well why can't I just be my own boss why can't I just do my own thing in reality it doesn't work like that in reality none of us has that power it's like if let's see at the end of the American Civil War and the slaves are getting set free and I say well we had a master who was our master before we were slaves and now we're free but now we need a job we've got nothing to eat we've got nowhere to live we've got no one to clothe us we've got no one to feed us we've got no one to provide for us so we need to work for somebody else hopefully yes perhaps for wages but we need to work for somebody else in other words having got rid of one master you have to have a new master or else you'll perish and you might say well you could set up your own business you could set up your own business you could be self-employed you could do your own thing but try telling that to a slave who has never known anything except being told what to do being made what to do yes he's been housed yes he's been clothed and he's been fed but he has never had an independent existence of his own ever now we are standing as our little mortal beings that we are between these two powerful forces there is the

[ 27 : 23 ] God of all the earth the Lord of heaven and earth who has ruled all things from all eternity and there is the devil now the devil is many things but he is not weak weaker than God but he's not weak and he's not stupid he is not lacking in power he's not lacking in diligence he is exceptionally diligent and we are looking at God on the one side and the devil on the other side and say well I don't want either I just want to rule myself and the devil just rubs his hands and he thinks that's fine you do that because what you're effectively doing is you're belonging to them you don't have power of your own you don't have strength of your own I don't have strength of my own I don't have the power to determine what is righteous what is good what will serve my purposes because the definitions of good and evil are good God evil is the devil so you're going to be one or the other and

there is no middle ground whatever serves me that is best now what is best for me may not necessarily be what I like most at that moment it may give me great pleasure for example to spend all my money on a fast car or an expensive hotel for a very short period of time but at the end of the day I'll have nothing left so it might be better for me to eke out a bit more frugal existence and have a bit more for a little one that might be better for me might not be so pleasurable but what's good for me will it be what serves me in the short term or what serves me longer term and what will give me a bit more stability there's all this conflicting force of what's for my good how will I decide what will

I do we cannot be our own masters we do not know right from wrong good from evil except as we define it by God on the one hand and the devil on the other there is God who is good and there is the devil who is evil there is God's word which is truth and there is everything else which some of it will be in line with God's word and to the extent that it is in line with God's word there will be that much good in it but everything else departs to a greater or greater extent from what God has revealed to that extent it is sin to that extent it is evil there is no neutrality there is no power to stand alone when we stand outside of God we effectively stand with the devil when Adam is cast out of the garden he doesn't say well off I am now to my brave you world of neutrality he is cast out of the garden why because now having been in a state of blessing he is in a state of sin and in that state of sin he is cast out of the garden and he is now what he is not his own master he is now the slave of sin he is now under bondage to sin we will always be under bondage to either one or the other good or evil

God or the devil and if we are in bondage to Christ as Paul says elsewhere you know God's slave is effectively a free man because to be in bondage to Christ is to be truly free the son shall make you free free from the devil you shall be free indeed now at last you are free to choose what is good now at last you are free to do that which is righteousness you are free to walk out of your cell which you were not until he sprung it open until he paid the price and the ransom and opened the cell door there is a sense in which we freely choose but not because we have power the devil had power over us before and the extent of which we were in our little cell we can choose whether to lie in our bunk we can choose whether to walk around the cell we can choose whether to touch the ceiling we can choose whether to sit on the floor we can choose whether to look through the bars or just to look down at the floor we have a certain amount of freedom of exercise and choice within the confines of the cell but we are not free once we are free in Christ the devil will say no look you're not free now you've got no roof over your head you've got no bunk you've got no nice solid floor you've got all this glass under your wheels wide open space here you are exposed to the elements gosh the sun's going to go down soon it's going to get dark then where will you be oh feel the wind on your face that's not so good remember when you're in a nice cozy cell and you're protected from the elements and of course he will present the goodness and freedom of the Lord as though it were negative that's what he does that we yield ourselves to the

Lord's opportunity of grace who has opened the cell door who has set us free and to whom we yield we become the service some of you may in the past perhaps used to smoke and you know how difficult it's supposed to be to give up smoking and sometimes if you give it up you think oh well I can just go back I can just have one and that'll be fine I'll just have one and maybe you have one and before you know it you're chain smoking again or maybe somebody has tried to free themselves from drinking and of course the line with alcoholics and ornaments of course is total abstinence well you can reward yourself in a wee dram at the end of the week if you've been sober the whole week you know it's complete abstinence I've nothing to do with it before and the minute you go back I think I can reward myself I can just have a wee bit now and then that'll be fine before you know it you're back down the plug hole where you were before if you yield yourself servants to obey the old ways the old urges the old poo before you know it you will be in its grip and its thrall and its power again to yield ourselves unto Christ who already has purchased freedom for us is to enter into true freedom the wages of sin is death you earn that you deserve that you and I we both deserve it we all deserve it the wages we've earned them but the gift of

God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord do you not know whom you yield yourselves servants to obey his servants his slaves you are but God be thanked you were the servants of sin that you have obeyed in the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered you in which you were cast being then made free from sin you became the servants the slaves in a sense of righteousness we should be content we should be delighted to be the slaves of righteousness that there is a compulsion to righteousness that the believer when he or she is wondering about which way to go

should think not only what would Jesus do but what would Jesus direct me to his word I seek him in his word I find the direction that I need yes I know what I once was Paul wrote to the Ephesians you will be quick and drawn alive who were dead in trespasses and sins when it in time past you walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air the devil the power of us the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our own conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature the children of wrath even as others but

[ 35 : 20 ] God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins have quickened that is brought a line quicken us together with Christ by grace you saved and have raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace of his free gift in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus for by grace you save through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works as many man should boast that's why it can't be down to us that's why we can't say well I have to choose for myself to do righteousness I have to be free to choose myself you are never free if you think you are free it means you're in bondage to the devil unless you're free in Christ because you choose to sin we all choose to sin that is our nature to be against the Lord to think I myself know best I can rule myself I can be my own master the oldest heresy of the book remember what the serpent said to you you shall be as gods you don't have to do what he says you decide what you want you make your own choice for yourself you make an idol you make a false god you break the second commandment and you break the first and before you know it you're taking the

Lord's name and day there goes the third you defy his holy days laws and commands there goes the fourth you dishonor any other authority over you whether it's your parents whether it's the government whoever it may be there goes the fifth you think nothing or perhaps killing anything or anybody that might not be in your way and you think about it and Jesus says thinking about it is as bad as doing it there goes the sixth you're quite happy to look on that which is not your own whether it be a possession whether it be a woman or a man who's not your husband or wife there goes the second and so on through the commandments one by one going down like dominoes because first and foremost we put ourselves in the place of God we have not set ourselves free we have yielded ourselves to the people of one we will be mastered by one or the other we will be mastered by the Lord or be mastered by the devil we will be free in Christ to whom to be the slave of whom is to be free indeed if the sun shall make you free you shall be free indeed

God be thanked you were the servants of sin the slaves of sin but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you why are we able to obey from the heart because we've been given a new heart because we have been restored because we have been redeemed because we have been saved because we have been born again it takes that complete internal revolution to make this change you cannot do it in your own strength you will not be able to do it just by resolving and deciding oh well it's time I turn my life around you haven't got the strength you haven't got the opportunity you haven't got the ability you haven't got the time the only person who can set you free is Christ you must ask him you must plead with him that he would come and set you free you must plead with him that he would open yourself lower because you cannot open it yourself on the inside you must beg of him to change your heart to turn your life around to come into your heart to give you a new heart to cause you to begin again to cause you to be born again Jesus says ask and it shall be given seek and you shall find knock and it shall be opened unto you doesn't say you'll be able to do it yourself but if you ask you'll receive if you seek you'll find if you knock the cell door will open and you will have that freedom which only the Lord can give for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity even so now yield your members servants to righteousness and to holiness we become under a compulsion to obey the Lord to follow him and to be free indeed the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord throne Universe you you you you you you