

The Bible and Slavery

July 12, 2020

Note: Paul's instructions to slaves and masters is not an endorsement of slavery, but rather a pragmatic approach to the realities of depraved man and an evil culture.

Ephesians 6:5-9 NASB

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

slaves - (doulos) a slave, bondman, man of servile condition, one who gives himself up to another's will, devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

- *In Ancient Greece and Rome, servitude was a means of:*
 - *obtaining citizenship*
 - *paying off debt*
 - *escaping imprisonment*
 - *stable employment*

5 Things Become Amazingly Clear In The Extremes Of This Passage

- *Surrender to God's sovereignty can often seem harder than surrender to His commandments.*

Mark 4:16-17 KJV

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

- *Paul was so convinced of the sovereignty of God ordering our steps in life, that to be a slave in the will of God was far better than being a freeman outside of God's will.*

Psalms 16:5-6 ESV

5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold (tamak) to grasp, hold, support, take hold of) my lot.

6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

1 Corinthians 7:17 ESV

17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

- God's grace, provision and care in His sovereign plan is abundant, good and freely given.

Psalms 37:23,24 NASB

23 The steps of a man are established by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

24 When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand.

- There are eternal treasures and rewards for faithful and cheerful surrender to God's plan.
- Paul and Peter understood that they could not change the evils of society and the world system.

Colossians 3:22-25 NASB

22 Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

- If you do what is right before the Lord, in your present circumstances, God will provide, sustain, honor and promote you, in His time and His way.

1 Timothy 6:1-6 ESV

1 Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

2 Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things.

3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness,

4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions,

5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

- Those who rebel, resist and fight against God's sovereign plan for their life are "puffed up with conceit" and "understand nothing."
- They are those who quarrel, produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions and constant friction.

2 Peter 2:9-10 ESV

9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,

10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.

1 Peter 2:18-21 ESV

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.

19 For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.

20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.

21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 ESV

1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 ESV

8 If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

- *The whole system of man's government is corrupt from top to bottom. When you understand man's depravity, why does that surprise you? Were you expecting a different result?*

Titus 2:9-13 CSB

9 Slaves are to submit to their masters in everything, and to be well-pleasing, not talking back

10 or stealing, but demonstrating utter faithfulness, so that they may adorn the teaching of God our Savior in everything.

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

12 instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age,

13 while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

- *Faithful surrender to God's sovereign plan for your life is paramount to be ready for Jesus' return.*

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 ESV

17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.

18 Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision.

19 For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.

23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.

24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

Philemon 1:8-19 ESV

8 Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,

9 yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you--I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus--

10 I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

11 (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.)

12 I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

13 I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel,

14 but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord.

15 For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever,

16 no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother--especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me.

18 If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

19 I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it--to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.