

SLAVES OF CHRIST

ROMANS 6:15-23

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

OPEN IN PRAYER

The doctrinal pillars featured in this passage should not be understated: sin, righteousness, redemption, grace, obedience, holiness, death, and everlasting life.

INTRODUCTION

- In the way of a preamble, I would like for us to consider the various conditions of people who might be here today
- There are two categories of mankind that matter: those who are saved and who who are not. To put it another way, those who are counted as righteous, and those who are dead in their sin
- One of these categories is at peace with God, and other is in opposition
- For those who are saved, there are two sub-categories worth distinguishing: those whom Jesus is their Savior, and those who have made Him their *Lord* and *Savior*
- Not everyone here this morning is saved, and you know who you are
- For those who are saved, not all are disciples of Christ, and you know who you are

To fully understand this morning's text, we need to discuss the condition: man before salvation.

THE CONDITION OF THE UNSAVED MAN

- We were in need of a Savior; we were dead in our sins
- Mankind is endowed with a disposition towards sin — this fallen state is courtesy of the imputed sin of Adam
- Before the work of Christ, we were not at peace with God
- We were not in right standing with the God of the universe, the Creator

- We were enemies of God
- Ponder that devastating reality

PSALMS 7:11

God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

ROMANS 1:18

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

- The holiness of God and man's sin is a problem
- The wages of man's sin is death
- Apart from Christ, it is a hopeless, sobering destiny for the unregenerate man

HEBREWS 10:31

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- Because God is holy and man is sinful, God's perfect justice must act against man to charge him as guilty, under the penalty of sin, with a debt to pay, and a sentence to serve
- We were in a dire situation with no way to save ourselves; we were slaves to sin

HOW ARE WE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD?

The Bible tell us that we have been redeemed. This is at the heart of the Gospel message.

In our opening text in verse 23, it says: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Redemption: the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt.

ROMANS 5:8-11

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

The word *redeem* means "to buy out." The term was used specifically in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom.

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

- We are at peace with God
- The imputed righteousness of Christ has been credited to us
- We are owned
- We are paid for
- We are God's possession
- *Redemption* is the method embedded into the salvific process, making it effectual
- God purchased us because of His love for us
- Redemption transfers us from one master to another; from being a slave to sin to a being a slave of Christ

GALATIANS 3:13(A)

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.

- Jesus satisfied God's wrath against sinners on the cross
- To placate the wrath of God (Latin—*Iram Dei placare*)

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19-20

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

We are not our own. We have been purchased at a price, and Jesus Christ has the deed on our lives.

ANALYSIS OF THE WORD SLAVE:

- The most immediate word that should stand out in the passage is the word "slave"
- In these eight verses we just read, the word "slave" is used eight times
- Scriptural curiosity should cause us to press into this text
- After a brief survey on this word "slave," we can begin to understand more clearly the implication of the language

The Greek word for "slave" is "doulos."

DOULOS

A slave, bondman, man of servile condition

- a) A slave

- b) Devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT - GERHARD KITTEL
DOULOS EXCLUSIVELY MEANS *"EITHER TO DESCRIBE THE STATUS OF A SLAVE OR AN ATTITUDE CORRESPONDING TO THAT OF A SLAVE"*.

WORD USAGE - 141

bond-servant (11) bond-servants (12), bondslave (3), bondslaves (8), both men and women(8), servants (1), slave (58), slave's (1), slaves (39)

VERSE COUNT - 120

Matthew (30), Mark (5), Luke (27), John (9), Acts (3), Romans (5), 1 Corinthians (4), 2 Corinthians (1), Galatians (4), Ephesians (3), Philippians (2), Colossians (4), 1 Timothy (1), 2 Timothy (1), Titus (2), Philemon (1), James (1), 1 Peter (1), 2 Peter (2), Jude (1), Revelation (13)

The New Testament's use of the Greek word, "doulos" refers to physical slavery. However, it is also applied to believers — denoting their relationship to God — at least 40 times. The Hebrew word for "slave," (ebed), which refers to literal slavery, is used metaphorically to describe believers more than 250 times, again denoting their duty and privilege to obey the heavenly Lord.

The word "slave" has been replaced with more palatable, user-friendly words, such as "servant" or "bondservant." In the way of example, many of the apostles referred to themselves as slaves: James, Jude, Paul, Peter, and Timothy.

JUDE 1:1

Jude, a **bondservant (doulos)** of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

JAMES 1:1

James, a **bondservant (doulos)** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

2 PETER 1:1

Simon Peter, a **bondservant (doulos)** and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 1:1

Paul, a **bondservant (doulos)** of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.

TITUS 1:1

Paul, a **bondservant (doulos)** of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,

PHILIPPIANS 1:1

Paul and Timothy, **bondservants (doulos)** of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

MATTHEW 6:24

"No one can **serve (doulos)** two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

REVELATION 1:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His **servants (doulos)**—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.

ACTS 2:18

And on My **menservants (doulos)** and on My **maidservants (doulos)** I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

Is it a difference without distinction? Does it really matter? So what if the word "slave" has been replaced with more palatable words? Are we any worse off for it?

It does matter. Why? Because slaves and servants are different.

Obviously the responsibilities of a servant and a slave overlap. However, the nuance in their definitions create a very different tone, and the implication of those differences matter. Namely, servants are hired, whereas slaves are owned. Servants retain a level of freedom and maintain some level of self-autonomy and rights. Slaves, on the other hand, have no freedom, autonomy, or rights.

A servant (six Greek words represented) is defined by having a function or a task; a slave (doulos) isn't connected to a function, it is connected to an identity. Why did the New Testament writers use slavery as a metaphor?

SLAVERY IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

- The social climate of the first century contributes to the drama and emphasis of the metaphor of a slave
- Slavery was a pervasive social structure in the first-century Roman empire
- The Roman economy was very dependent on the slavery infrastructure
- Approximately one out of five people was a slave
- The Jewish audience had a profound understanding of slavery, as they were a people who had escaped slavery under the rule of Pharaoh

- The backdrop behind these New Testament writings clarifies the use of language describing slavery
- The Bible is not endorsing slavery; rather, it is borrowing in the way of a spiritual parallel from the existing slave infrastructure of the day.

Why does the Bible use slavery as its primary illustration of the Christian life?

WE ARE SPIRITUAL SLAVES

- Slavery is a New Testament metaphor for a total devotion to Christ
- We are to be spiritual slaves
- Everyone is a slave, one way or another ([Romans 6:15-23](#))
- The Bible is replete with Scripture referring believers as slaves of God, slaves of Christ, and slaves of righteousness

THE LIFE OF THE FIRST CENTURY SLAVE / THE LIFE DEVOTED TO CHRIST:

- 1) Ownership: The master has purchased the slave
 - 2) Submission: The master has authority over the slave
 - 3) Devotion: The slave is committed to the master's affairs
 - 4) Dependence: The slave relies on the master's provision
 - 5) Accountability: The slave must perform his/her duties
- Slaves are subject to their master
 - The primary obligation of the slave is to obey
 - Your life doesn't belong to you
 - You are a purchased possession of God
 - We need to reframe our mindset, attitude, and approach to our relationship with God.

In Roman times, one's experience as a slave was almost entirely dependent on the nature of one's master. Let's take a look at our Master.

THE PERFECT MASTER

JOHN MACARTHUR

To be a slave of Jesus Christ is the greatest benediction imaginable. Not only is He a kind and gracious Lord, but He is also the God of the universe. His character is perfect; His love is infinite; His power, matchless; His wisdom, unsearchable; and His goodness, beyond compare. 23 It is no wonder, then, that our relationship to Him as our Master brings us great benefit and honor.

JOHN 15:14-15

14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

We are not just slaves, but friends. We have been set free unto slavery, unto a perfect master.

MATTHEW 11:30

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

We have been freed unto slavery.

Disclaimer: Let's not lose sight that slavery is a metaphor, and as a metaphor, it has some limitations.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CHRISTIAN?

JOHN 20:28

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

When believers refer to Jesus as Lord, it is often in a broad sense (e.g. Jesus is Lord of all, Lord of the physical and moral universe, Lord of the living and the dead); however, a disconnect becomes prevalent in regards to Jesus being Lord of our lives.

I remember when I was young, when referencing God, I felt uncomfortable saying "the Lord." As we begin to recognize that we are slaves of Christ, Jesus may take His rightful place in your life as Lord. Slavery and lordship are correlatives.

LUKE 6:46

"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"

- To whom do you yield obedience to?
- To be a Christian, in the truest sense of the term, is to be a whole-hearted follower of Jesus Christ. As the Lord Himself said in [John 10:27](#): "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"
- There is sharp contrast between Christians who are wholeheartedly pursuing and living for God, and those who are secure in the work of his salvation while flirting with the things of this world
- Becoming a disciple of Christ comes at a cost
- [Romans 12](#) stresses this injunction, using old covenant language "to be a living sacrifice"
- There are too many believers in this culture and generation who are missing out on the fullness of God's work in their lives
- What must be discussed and overlaid in our minds is the issue of sin, repentance, and discontinuing our relationship with sin

1 PETER 2:16 (ESV)

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.

GALATIANS 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Slavery is exclusive. We are owned by one master — not a timeshare to be enjoyed by other masters. Today's text opens with a provocative rhetorical question: *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"*

We must pursue holiness, we must remove sin, we must become slaves to righteousnesses. With absolute humility, we must submit to the ordinances and the precepts of God. We are under His authority.

Consider the sphere of your life: your marriage, your work, your thought life, your time, your finances, your friendships, etc. You function and exist in those areas as slaves. Your contribution and rights within those areas shift when you acknowledge God not only as your Redeemer but as your Lord.

WHY WE SHOULD EMBRACE HIS LORDSHIP?

- He is Lord. He is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings (Revelation 17:14)
- We are owned by Him
- We are submitting to His love and perfect mastership
- We are most complete and satisfied under His authority

CONCLUSION

I was slightly reticent to teach around this illustration of slavery this morning. When I consider that this nation was established, escaping the tyranny of King George III, coupled with the atrocities of 17th and 18th century slavery, for which we feel the shame of.

The apex of this morning's message is that we are *slaves* of *King* Jesus. It is not a commitment or a promise of effort — save that for your gym membership — this is about a change of identity and position.

Salvation isn't a thing you received. You weren't issued salvation and you don't possess salvation; however, Jesus Christ possesses you. You are saved as a result of your paid debt. Maybe it's just semantics, but it changes the paradigm.

TITUS 2:14

[Jesus Christ] Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:22-23

22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

CLOSE IN PRAYER