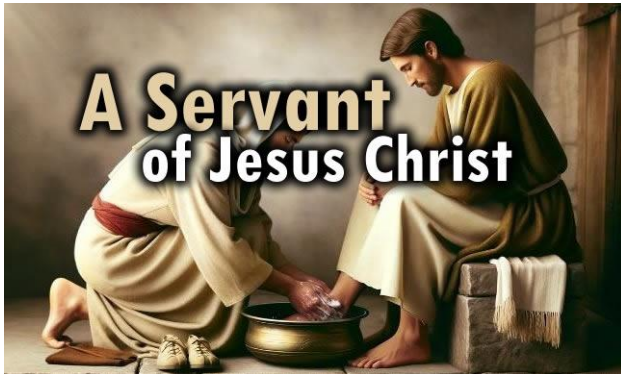


A SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

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There are some words and expressions which, by their very frequent use in God's Word, make little impression upon us. We are so familiar with them that we read them and speak of them as a matter of course, without truly understanding their import and meaning for our lives. One such expression is that which begins the epistle to the Romans, "*Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.*" Other of Paul's epistles, and also Peter's, James' and Jude's, begin in the same way.

Romans 1:1 ...'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.'

Philippians 1:1 ...'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ.'

2 Peter 1:1 ...'Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.'

James 1:1 ...'James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.'

Jude 1:1 ...'Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ.'

The prophets also, and Old Testament worthies, such as Moses, Joshua, etc., are called servants of the LORD (Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 24:29). That this is more than a mere catch phrase, and that it is of the deepest significance, will be apparent as we study it.

The Greek word "*doulos*" which is translated "servant" means properly "*a bondman, or slave.*" It was the regular Greek word for a slave. We can accept the word "slave," therefore, as the one which the apostles used to show the completeness of their subjection to Christ. We therefore only need to study the condition of a slave, to know how we who profess to be Christians should be living.

A slave is one who is the entire property of another, bought by his master. He cannot dispose of his time nor his actions as he will, but only as his master directs. The whole life, each and every day of the slave was consumed in doing his master's will. Now compare this with what we find in the Scriptures as the proper condition of Christians, who are **servants of Christ**. Says the apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ...'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.'

Notice the **completeness of the subjection**. We are not our own, and therefore we cannot have a word to say as to what we shall do. The will of God, and his glory, is to direct us in **everything**. As the apostle says; "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Of course, we are not "slaves" of Christ in the same manner as an earthly slave his master, because through Christ we become 'adopted sons and heirs of the promise,' whereas the earthly slave received nothing from their master, apart from food to sustain life. Also, the earthly master does not love his slave, neither thinks for his best. Whereas our Master loves us completely and thinks always for our best. **But the same principle of ownership and who the slave spends his time living and working for applies.**

Someone who has been bought as a slave, simply changes from living for himself, to living for his master - working for himself, to working for his master - owning his own and using it for his own will, to his master owning it all and it being used for the master.

Do you see the lesson taught? In Christ, we no longer own ourselves or our possessions. Through His redemption, He has purchased us, which means we can no longer serve and live for self. Everything we have and do now belongs to Jesus Christ, and therefore, everything we have and do should be used for the glory of God and for the building up of His kingdom on earth, just as the earthly slave did everything for the building up of his master's business or 'empire.' The difference is, one is forced subjection and slavery, while the other is willing, loving subjection and service.

Now another thought suggested by the word "slave," as applied to Christians, is that they have been reduced to servitude from a previous condition of rebellion. Although the Greek word for slave signifies "*a born bondman*," it is a fact that by natural birth no person is a servant of God. By nature we are all the children of wrath. Paul classed himself with us when he said: "*For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another*" (Titus 3:3). And in another place he thus contrasts the different kinds of servitude in which men may live:-

*Romans 6:16-18 ...'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves **servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the **servants of righteousness.**'*

Before any man becomes the "born bondman" of Christ, he has to be born again. But this new birth implies, first of all, a death, and that death is the death of our old lives of living for self, just like the earthly slave dies to his former life and lives a new life bound to his master. Galatians 2:20 tells of us being "*crucified with Christ.*" Now crucifixion was a form of punishment inflicted on only the worst class of men, and its use applied to those of us who become Christ's, shows a previous condition of rebellion which requires crucifixion - "*The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7).

From this rebellious state we are brought into the condition of servants. We capitulate, turning from our rebellion and accept the terms of peace. We become subject to God. The word 'subject' or 'subjection' carries with it also the relation which we should sustain to God.

It comes from two Latin words meaning "*under the yoke*," and is derived from the Roman custom of erecting a yoke and causing those whom they had conquered in battle to pass under it, as a token of their complete surrender. This ancient custom also explains the act of David, in putting the men of Rabbah "*under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln*" (2 Samuel 12:31). It was the same as making them pass under the yoke, as a token of their being his servants. So Christ calls us to "*take my yoke upon you*" (Matt. 11:29).

Taking the yoke of Christ upon us is to yield ourselves completely to Him, for Christ henceforth to rule every act and every thought. As Paul expresses it, it is "*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The phrase "*bringing into captivity*" means literally to lead someone into captivity, ie., a **slave!** Do you see the connection?

But here it should be mentioned that true service to Christ is **willing service**. This is the difference between an earthly slave who gives service under force, and a slave of Christ who gives willing, loving service. We are Christ's bond-servants, brought into captivity to him, but it was **LOVE** that bought us, so that we gladly submit. The apostle Paul had been conquered and subdued by the power and love and truth of Christ. Not merely outwardly conquered, and still disposed to resist, like an earthly slave, but inwardly subdued by the love and power of God. Paul had become a **willing** instrument for executing the purposes of the Lord as an apostle.

So the word rendered "servant" is simply pointing to the completeness of the control which God has over those who are truly his servants, but it does not carry with it any idea of degradation. It makes a vast amount of difference to whom one is a servant. The servant of a wicked and cruel man would be a most abject creature. But to be a servant of the Most High God is the highest honor that any creature can have in the universe. Angels in Heaven, that excel in strength, do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word, and are glad to declare themselves "**fellow-servants**" with those who on earth are wholly devoted to Christ (Revelation 22:9).

The "slave" of Christ is the only, truly free man or woman in the world.

1 Corinthians 7:22,23 ...'He that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.'

We are either the servants of sin and self or the servants of righteousness and Christ. If we remain servants of sin and self, then as the wages of sin is death, that will be our lot. This is not freedom; and many in the world are deceived into thinking they are 'free' by doing as they please, when it leads to eternal death. Whereas becoming a servant of Christ leads us to life! Eternal life in glory! That is freedom.

But the Lord will not accept divided service. He will not go into partnership with the devil, each having an equal share in a servant. A man must be wholly the Lord's, or he is not the Lord's at all. Says Christ: "*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matthew 6:24). If, then, we have given ourselves to the Lord as his servants, but

at the same time seek to please ourselves in anything, we rob him of service which is his due. Our strength, both of mind and body, belongs to the Lord, for he says:

Luke 10:27-28 ...'And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with ALL thy heart, and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy strength, and with ALL thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.'

SEE OUR PAGE - [THE LESSON OF THE BURNT OFFERING](#) - for an important lesson on this.

Suppose we indulge a habit which destroys health of body and vigor of mind; we are not then the Lord's slave; we are the slaves of sinful indulgence. For example, someone may eat more than is good for them, more than they need, or something that is wholly bad for health. They do so, simply because the food tastes good, **to please themselves**. That extra quantity of food, or bad food, instead of imparting nutrients, giving energy and increasing strength, is instead a tax upon the body. Strength that we should have to devote to the Lord is then perverted to the service of self appetite. Now it matters not what our profession may be, if we serve our own self interests and passions, we are not the bond-servants of Christ. If we were, we would glorify God in eating and drinking, as well as in every other act of life (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Here is a test by which we may settle every question as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an act: **Will it glorify God?** If it will, it is not only lawful but necessary. The man who is honest with himself before God in this question can settle which things are unlawful for him, and how far he may go in things that are necessary, as in eating and drinking.

"But what a hardship," someone may say, *"to be obliged to rein ourselves up to such a test."* Well, that depends on whether or not we are really the slaves of Christ; whether or not we have willingly, gladly capitulated, accepting His terms, and yielding to His service. If we have, then it will not be a burdensome task to make a sacrifice for the glory of God. We yield to Christ because in His infinite love and mercy He has enabled us to see that there is more to be desired in His service than in our own; and we make His will our own. He makes us new creatures, giving us a new heart, and new purposes, so that when we do His will we are simply doing our own, for His will becomes ours, and our will becomes His.

A question may be asked: *"How can we always surrender our thoughts and actions captive to Christ?"*

We have no real power in ourselves, but Christ has all power, and can make us what he wishes, **if we keep submitting and surrendering**. Think of the earthly slave. If he continues to resist his master and live for himself, not focusing on his master's work and profit, then he will only come to trouble. But if that slave submits and surrenders to his master's will, then he will find peace. The difference is, that earthly master has no real power, apart from punishment to subdue the sinful tendencies of the slave. Whereas Jesus Christ has *"all power in heaven and earth"* to subdue our sinful nature, if we will learn to continue submitting and surrendering our lives to Him. And here is the encouragement of the thought that we serve a mighty Master, one against whom all the powers of earth and hell combined can do nothing. So when the fierce temptation arises, when the infirmity of the flesh would cause us to fall, if

we flee to Christ for strength, His strength will do what our weakness cannot, and we are set free from sin.

What comfort is in the thought that the whole thing is comprised in simple **submission to God**. *"Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God"* (Romans 6:13). God wants us to live holy lives; He has shown the strength of his desire for us to be delivered from evil, by giving His Son to die for us. And since God has such an infinite longing for us to be free from sin, and has such infinite power to accomplish His desires, what can hinder the accomplishment of those desires, if we but yield ourselves to him? No matter how fully we may have been the servants of sin, we now, having become servants to God, are made free from sin, having our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Romans 6:22).

No wonder that Paul was able to accomplish such wonderful things. He was the Lord's slave, wholly and without reserve, and the Lord simply worked through him. Even while being conscious of his own weakness, he could say: *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13).

God is not partial; He is no respecter of persons. He is as ready to strengthen us with all might, according to His glorious power, as He was the apostle Paul. And so it matters not what our inherited or acquired weakness may be, we may be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and when that salvation is revealed, we may be sealed as His servants, to see His face, and stand before His throne, serving Him day and night in His temple. Glorious service! Who would not prefer that to the poor, miserable service of self?