

Titus 2:9-10; Rom. 6:20-23; Slaves for the LORD I. The Slave's Identity II. The Slaves Character

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, slavery is a hot button issue that has been thrust upon the front pages these past 2 years. Since the death of George Floyd in 2020 and the largescale embrace of the 1619 Project, it seems that slavery and racism motivate every person in every decision they make! For example, in the 1619 Project it is argued that the development of our nation can only be viewed through the lens of slavery. Now this is not a fair or true assessment, but it is true that chattel slavery is a part of our nation's history. It has also been asserted that the Bible defends this kind of slavery! So is that true? Does the Bible defend and condone slavery? In speaking about slavery this morning we need to be clear exactly what kind of slavey is being referred to. But as we will see, slavery is more than just a social standing. So this evening we see that Jesus Christ sets the slave free so that they might become obedient to a new master.

I. The Slave's Identity

In our first point we will consider the identity of the slave in v. 9- a bondservant. Now we need to be clear at the start, slavery in the Bible is not the same thing as slavery in the deep South years ago. The plantation or chattel slavery prevalent in the southern states before the civil war is not the same thing that we would find during the Biblical times. When our passage refers to slaves, it is using this word to describe what is more like indentured servitude. So the slavery in our passage was normally a position that became necessary due to financial hardship. Either by your own financial mismanagement, because of the death of the wage earner, or even because of unforeseen event, financial ruin had come to a family. Slavery was a means to pay your outstanding debts. So in some ways, slavery was self-imposed. This form of slavery was normally temporary- when you paid your debt you would be released. Or at the latest, after serving for 6 years you would be set free. There was no such thing as filing for bankruptcy in those days- you would be held accountable for your debts. However, if you grew to love your master and you wanted to remain with him- there was a way for a slave to become a permanent member of the household. As Dt. 15:16 makes clear- the ear of the servant would be pierced and that servant would remain with that household forever. Again, this was by choice! So this kind of slave in our

passage is not the same as the slavery in the Americas before the civil war. Silvery in the US was a forced slavery- where people were bought and sold against their will. Often, they were stolen from their homes and sold to the highest bidder. We only need to read Dt. 24:7 to find out that this form of slavery is a sin- in fact- if you stole a person and sold that person- you would forfeit your own life! Death was the consequence for those who sold other people for a profit. And added to this fact, there is only once race- the human race! To exalt one person and enslave another based on the color of their skin a great evil- a sin that God hates- because He made man- all mankind- in his own image! We are equal in His sight- fellow image bearers.

So this need to be kept in mind- the Bible does not defend slavery as we know it happened in the US. But, when we take a step back we do find that slavery is a redemptive theme that applies to all of God's people! As Dt. 15:15 says, you should have pity on the slaves because you yourself were slaves in the land of Egypt! Or as we read in the 10 commandments- I am the LORD your God who brought you out of land of slavery. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and I liberated you. This redemptive theme is carried in the NT- where our slavery is not in Egypt but slavery to sin! And these chains of bondage have been broken by Jesus Christ! Remember what we read in Rom. 6:20- you once were slaves to sin, but now you have become slaves of God! Paul refers to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ in Rom. 1. So as a child of God, we see our identity as former slaves to sin who have been set free! But more than that- having been purchased by Jesus Christ we are slaves to Him and righteousness! Regardless of our external position- slave or free- we are all bondservants of Christ! So it could be said that we are all slaves who serve at the pleasure of our master- Jesus!

II. The Slaves Character

Now that we understand the position of slaves in the Bible- and how we are all slaves to Jesus- in our second point we will consider the character of those who are slaves. So v. 9 continues, slaves are to be submissive to their masters in all things. Now submission is to be subject- to be humble and obedient. Instead of rebelling, you bow the neck to their yoke if you will. Also note, in all things. This is a lifestyle- in every situation and at all

times- to submit to those who are over you. The fact is, we are all under the authority of another- there is no one here who is supreme. In the home - in the church- in the workplace- and in society as a whole there is order. We all are under people who have greater authority. Who have a higher position. We are called to respect, honor and obey those whom God has placed over us. To do what they ask and obey in all things lawful. Although not strictly a master/ slave relationship, we can apply this concept to the workforce. Those who are employed are to be submissive in all things- doing what is asked of them. But note that as v. 9 continues- this applies even to the way in which we are to obey. We are to aim at being well pleasing- that our work would be acceptable! To be trustworthy and dependable- doing good work- so that we would be a delight to those under whom we serve. I could say it is almost like a calling to be the employee of the month every month- working hard and in a pleasing manner so that our master would be satisfied with our work. And in a general way- we all serve at the pleasure of our master- our Lord Jesus! We seek to obey God over all- to be pleasing to our master Jesus- knowing that even as we work on earth we are serving- working- as unto the Lord. As Col. 3:23 says, whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, for you are serving the Lord Christ! So positively, the work of servants will be done with submissive and obedient hearts- in a manner that pleases the master. And negatively- as v. 9 concludes, they will not be argumentative. For those under authority, the desire to be abrasive or insubordinate must be curbed. So servants do not talk back to or speak against those God has placed over them. Now this is important- particularly today. It is so common for those under authority to despise, slander and mock those who are over them. To complain and grumble. But respect is something that the leaders and masters deserve- it is their God given right! If God is the one who places masters over us- then how we speak should reflect this. For example, just consider the current political context. Although our leaders are not our masters strictly speaking, they are over us in their position and authority. However, have you ever heard someone say- well, I didn't vote for this person, so I don't have to respect, submit to or obey them! But that is not how it works- God puts masters and leaders over us so we must not be insubordinate. Nor are we to be pilfering- we should not waste the time or resources of our masters. To shoplift, steal or waste. Now this one

applies to those who work for others as well. When on the job, it is tempting to swipe things that you could use at home. Or to be dishonest in our use of time while at work. But good servants are trustworthy- good stewards of their master's resources. And that fact applies to us all- we are all stewards of our master's resources. What do we have that we have not received? So we will be trustworthy- showing that we are faithful. And finally, at the end of v. 10 we find the payoff. Why is it so important for us to act a certain way in our relationship to those over us? Servants to their masters, employees to their employer, citizens to their governors. Why must we be submissive and well pleasing? Because in doing so, our work adorns the gospel! Remember, how we live is not the gospel! Our actions- our lives- do not take the place of doctrine. We are not the gospel. However, our works can be an ornament- adorning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! When we profess to be a Christian- how we live either agrees with or disagrees with that profession. When we live in humility and submission, our works become as good fruit visible on a good tree adorns the tree! So faithful slaves honor their master's house! Like a Christmas tree adorned with ornaments- our lives make the gospel appealing! Adorning it – make it beautiful and pleasant- as a fitting decoration. Taking the bare walls and making them attractive! So a trustworthy servant makes the gospel attractive! So then, how does your work reflect your confession? Are you honorable and trustworthy in your master's work? How does your life reflect that you are a slave of your master, Jesus Christ? Does your life adorn the gospel- making it winsome and attractive?

To conclude, understanding the relationship between master and slave points us in the right direction for application. Rightly understood, we are all slaves of Jesus our master to whom obedience, submission and honor is due. We are, in Christ, to give honor to those whom He has placed over us. We do not serve men to be eye pleasers- but rather we serve God who is over all and sees all! As Eph. 6:7 puts it, we are to serve with good will, not as eye pleases, but as servants of Jesus Christ. And the Lord will reward you for whatever good you do- whether you are a slave or free. We are all purchased by Christ- slaves to our masters and bound to a life of righteousness! Jesus Christ sets the slave free so that they might become obedient to a new master.