

Free to be a Slave

By Mary Kane

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I have been a teacher for over twenty years and one of my favorite subjects to teach is history, especially American History. Reading about the brave men and women who founded our nation and gave their lives for our country never fails to inspire me. Not all of our national history is admirable however. I was so disappointed to learn that this great nation, founded on the precepts of freedom and liberty, was tainted by the institution of slavery from the establishment of its first colony, Jamestown. Slavery with all of its hideous practices was permitted in the United States for many decades until Abraham Lincoln freed the southern slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. Though having been freed from bondage, the plight of the slaves was far from over. African-Americans continued to suffer brutal persecution and oppression until the mid-twentieth century when brave people such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks took courageous stands to right a terrible wrong.

Strangely enough, the Bible often refers to the disciples of Christ as slaves. In fact, many New Testament Christians used the term *slave* to describe themselves. Why would any free person want to label themselves as a slave? For most people, the concept of slavery is extremely negative. When I think of slavery I think of suffering, whippings, chains, families torn asunder, brutal masters, oppression and death. How could something as terrible as slavery have anything to do with God or being a follower of Christ?

A few years ago, on a radio broadcast, I heard Bill Bright and his wife dedicate themselves to Christ as His slaves. At first I was completely "put off" by the designation "slave of Christ." In fact, my heart rebelled strongly against the idea of living expressly for the will of another. I had things I wanted to do MYSELF.

For a long time I lived my Christian life that way—completely according to my will. I did what I pleased without much thought to doing what pleased God. After several years, I realized that living for myself was a very empty and unsatisfying pursuit, and I gave up the control of my life and (gulp) asked God to take charge. That's when everything began to change for the better. I was still was uncomfortable with the concept of being a slave

however until recently. By studying the concept of slavery according to the truth of Scripture, God has been revealing to me what it truly means to be a slave of Christ.

At this point in time, how do you feel about identifying yourself as a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Before we begin our study for today, please take a moment to go before God in prayer. Ask Him to forgive you of any known sin and to open your eyes to the truth of His Word.

Now, please read Deuteronomy 10:17 in the version listed below:

*"For the **LORD** your God is God of gods and **Lord** of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe."*
NKJV

In English, it appears that two different names for God are used in this verse: *God* and *Lord*. But in the original Hebrew there are actually four different words used for *God* or *Lord* in Deuteronomy 10:17.

Please go back and circle *Lord* the second time it occurs in this verse.

The first time that the word *Lord* (highlighted in yellow) is used in this verse it transliterates as *Yahweh*, and is always written in all capital letters; the *L* being a larger capital letter than the rest of the other three smaller capital letters. To the people of Israel *Yahweh* is known as the *tetragrammaton*—the

great unspeakable covenant name of God. The second word for *Lord* (highlighted in blue) used in verse 17 transliterates as *adonai* which translates as “my Lord; my Lord and God; my great master.” The actual Hebrew phrase for “Lord of lords” is “Adonai ha-Adonim.” In the Old Testament *Adonai* is used over three hundred times. *Adonai* is actually the plural possessive form of *adon*. When a plural form of a word is applied to a name for God, it indicates “force or strength” similar to adding an -er or -est suffix to an English word; the suffix intensifies the word it is attached to. Adonai...My Great Master.

As Christians, if God is Adonai, “my Great Master,” what must we be?

We must be His slaves. Does this concept seem far-fetched to you? Actually, the Bible is full of verses that equate the relationship of a born-again believer and God to that of a slave and master.

Please look up the following verses and write down who wrote each verse and how they referred to themselves:

Philippians 1:1

Titus 1:1

James 1:1

2 Peter 1:1

Jude 1:

Simon Peter, Jude, James, Paul, and Timothy, all great men of the faith, referred to themselves as slaves of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The word used as *slave* in all of these passages is *doulos*. Often in modern translations the word *doulos* is translated as *servant* rather than the more accurate *slave*. The translators, possibly hoping to avoid the negative connotations of the word *slave* opted to translate *doulos* as *servant*. While perhaps a more politically correct choice, *servant* does not accurately portray the meaning of the original Greek word *doulos*. A servant was someone who was hired to work within a household but still retained his freedom. A *slave* received no wages for the work he rendered and he was the property of his master; a slave had no personal freedom.

In the original Greek, *doulos* means “a slave, a bondman, a man of servile condition, one who disregards his own interests and lives expressly to do the will of another.” *Doulos* is derived from the root word *deo* which means “to be bound by chains, to tie, to fasten; to be bound to one as a husband is to a wife.” *Deo* is a word used to describe the true worshipers of God; those who are devoted to living for Christ alone.

How does your life show that you live for Christ alone?

If the pillars of the Christian faith, the writers of the New Testament and the brother of Christ (James) identified themselves as slaves of God, perhaps we should as well.

Why do you think these men identified themselves as “slaves of Christ”?

I think it was because they devoted their lives to living for the will of another—Jesus Christ.

Now please look up Philippians 2:7 and record the name of one more person who identified himself as a slave:

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, identified Himself as a slave of our Great Master. Like every other slave, Jesus was devoted to doing the will of His Master as illustrated in John 5:30, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." Jesus came to die for us and to show us how to live our lives while upon this earth. The example that He left us to emulate is that of a *doulos*—a slave—one who is completely devoted to the will of another.

Please record what you've learned through books or documentaries about how masters usually treated their slaves:

The Bible, however, gives us a very different picture of how the Great Master, Adonai, treats His slaves. Please read the following verses and list after each verse the things that the Great Master does for His slaves.

- **Acts 2:18**
- **Acts 4:29**
- **Ephesians 1:5**
- **Romans 8:28**
- **1 Thessalonians 5:23**
- **Colossians 1:13**
- **Rev. 19:5**
- **Colossians 4:12**
- **Psalms 116:16**
- **Matthew 11:28-30**
- **Isaiah 53:5**

As our Great Master, God will:

Pour out His spirit upon us, give us boldness to speak His Word, enable us to please Him and praise Him, send others to pray for us, loose our bonds, work all things for our good and give us rest. The verses listed above are just a few samples of the many things that our Great Master does for us, His slaves. He also redeems, restores, defends, heals, feeds, leads, provides, protects, disciplines, loves and forgives us. He was spit upon, bruised, whipped, wounded, cursed and crucified—He took the beating, yet we are the slaves and He is the Master. Please pause a moment, go to your knees and thank Adonai, Our Great Master, for all that He does for us.

Now we know a little about the responsibilities of the Great Master for His slaves, but what about the responsibilities of the slaves? How are we supposed to conduct ourselves on a daily basis? Please match the following verses with a responsibility:

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|-------------------------|--|
| 2 Timothy 2:24 | Go and make disciples of all nations. |
| Galatians 1:10 | Do not repay evil for evil. Live in peace |
| Matthew 28:19-20 | with others. Live to please God not man. |
| Romans 12:17-18 | Do not quarrel, but be gentle to everyone. |
| Ephesians 4:32 | Trust in the Lord whole-heartedly. |
| Proverbs 3:5 | Be kind and forgiving to everyone. |

Thinking now in general terms, whether good or evil, how did a master obtain a slave and what did he supply for his slaves?

A master had to purchase his slaves and provide food, clothing and shelter for them.

Please read Matthew 6:31-33. What has God promised to do for us?

According to 1 Corinthians 6:20 how did God acquire us?

Site many examples as to how our relationship with Christ is a perfect picture of a slave/master relationship.

As we near the end of this study how do you feel about being a slave of Christ and/or how have your feelings changed about the label "slave of Christ"?

Ironically as I was writing this study I found an inscription I penned in my Bible several years ago. Next to Isaiah 44:5 in the margin of my Bible, I recorded the date April, 2004 and my personal commitment to God to follow Him as His slave. If at this time you are willing to do the same thing please record and date your commitment to God in the space below:

If you are not ready at this time, do not fret or worry. Please ask God to help your heart to be made ready to live completely for Him.

In closing, the word *slave* may seem offensive but I know that the life I lived B.C. (before Christ), when I was living in "freedom" was the fast track to destruction. The life I now live as a *doulos* of Christ is a life of peace, fulfillment, and purpose. Romans 6:16-19 states that we have two choices: slavery to Satan or slavery to God. The choice is easy. Once we become slaves of God we will be freed from the tyranny of sin and death. It's when we have dedicated our lives to being a slave of Christ that we will find true freedom. Isn't interesting that it is as slaves, the forgotten and ill-used people of society that we will do the will of God, find fulfillment and purpose, and live out the calling that God has upon our lives. Be blessed.

What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed?

For the end of those things [is] death.

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.

Romans 6:21-22

If you wish to study this concept further read John MacArthur's amazing book [Slave](#). Click on the link to purchase the book now from Christianbook.com

http://www.christianbook.com/slave-hidden-truth-about-identity-christ/john-macarthur/9781400202072/pd/202070/1273480389?item_code=WW&netp_id=833687&event=AFF&view=details

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