

Who's Your Master?

I suppose we all know of the commercial of a credit card company that asks the question: “**What Card Is In Your Wallet**” **Capitol One – VISA Card**



Well, the question for our time is: Who's Your Master?

Rom 1:1, 1Cor 7:21-23, Gal 1:10, Phil 1:1

Paul identifies himself as a “**slave** or **bondservant** of Jesus Christ.”

Rom 1:1 – “This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.”

1Cor 7:21-23 “Are you a slave? Don’t let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. ²² And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. **If you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ.** ²³ God paid a high price for you, so don’t be enslaved by the world.”

Gal 1:10 – “Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.”

Phil 1:1 – “This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders.”

During the time of Jesus and the first-century church, as much as one third of the Roman population were slaves, and another third had been slaves earlier in life.

Five characteristics of a servant/slave of God are:

1. Humility

- **Yielded to God's Will:** A servant of God surrenders their own will and desires, allowing God to shape their heart and actions.
- **Doesn't Seek Recognition:** A humble servant is not focused on personal gain or worldly praise but on doing God's work for His glory.
- **Respectful:** Humility fosters respect for other people and recognizes the established spiritual hierarchy.

2. Love

- **Love for God:** A deep, passionate love for God is central to a servant's motivation and actions, inspiring them to know and make Him known to others.
- **Love for Others:** This love extends to other people, especially those in need and other believers, leading to empathetic and helpful behavior.

3. Faithfulness

- **Trustworthy:** A servant of God is trustworthy and reliable, their word is true, and their actions are consistent.
- **Dedicated to God's Purposes:** They are committed to serving God's purposes, and their loyalty is a constant in their lives.

4. Obedience

- **Follows God's Direction:** A servant obeys God's specific commands, serving in the places He directs and taking on the tasks He assigns.
- **Respects Authority:** Obedience also includes respecting legitimate spiritual leaders and the commands of God within the church.

5. Service

- **Action-Oriented:** A true servant of God demonstrates their faith through actions rather than just words.
- **Goes Where Needed:** They are willing to serve wherever needed, even when it requires suffering or stepping out of their comfort zone.

To be a "slave of Jesus Christ" (or bondservant) means to wholeheartedly belong to Christ, submitting one's will to His, prioritizing His desires, and serving others out of love.

- Derived from the Greek word ***doulos*** used in the New Testament, signifies a complete devotion and ownership by Christ, freeing one from self-rule and sin to live in joyful obedience to His commands and to God's glory.

Key Aspects of Being a "Slave" of Christ

- Ownership by Christ:

Believers are not their own but are bought by Christ and belong to Him completely:

1Cor 6:19-20 “Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself,²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body.”

1Peter 1:18-19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed/purchased from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.”

- **Submission to God's Will:**

The slave's will is aligned with God's will, leading to obedience to His Word.

Matthew 12:50 “For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Romans 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Ephesians 6:6 “Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Matt 7:21 “Not everyone who calls out to Me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of My Father in heaven will enter.”

- **Service to Others:**

As Christ was a servant, His followers are called to humble themselves and serve one another, not seeking status.

Phil 2:5-8 “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...”

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

John 13:14 “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”

- **Freedom from Sin:**

Being a "slave" to Christ is true freedom, delivering believers from the bondage of sin and the self.

1 Corinthians 7:22 “For he who is called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord.”

- **Living for Christ's Honor:**

Every action is performed for Christ, seeking to please Him and glorify God.

Col 3:23 - “Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.”

Ecclesiastes 9:10 – “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are headed.”

Ephesians 6:7 – “With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

Galatians 6:9 – “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not.”

Hebrews 6:10 – “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

Matt 5:16 - “In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Why the Term "Slave" is Used

Biblical Context:

The term **doulos** in the Greek New Testament specifically means slave or bondservant, an important distinction that is often softened to "servant" in English translations.

- **A Contrast to Modern Ideas of Freedom:**

The current society is focused on self-fulfillment, so the metaphor of a "slave" challenges the idea that freedom is the ability to do whatever one wishes.

True freedom is found in aligning with God's will – Matt 16:25 – “If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake, you will save it.”

“Servant” is a translation of the Greek word **doulos**, which means more literally “a slave or bondservant, someone who sets aside all rights of his own to serve another.”

Phil 2:3-4 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking only to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

What is a Bond Slave/Servant?

In ancient times, slaves were purchased or born into a slave family and served the master until they died or until the master decided to free them.

- Some slaves had developed such a close and loving relationship with the master's family that they wanted to continue serving, even when they could go free.
- That's the idea Paul was conveying when he referred to Christians as servants/bond servants of Christ.
- The Lord has bought us with a high price (1 Corinthians 6:20), and those who come to know Him desire to abandon all rights to Him and choose to serve Him faithfully.
- A servant of Christ is one who has voluntarily set aside his or her personal rights in order to love, serve, and obey the will of God in Christ Jesus.
- Servants of Christ die daily to sin and fleshly desires, allowing Christ's life to flow through them (Galatians 2:20).

This means we must die to ourselves (Luke 9:23), renounce our right to direct our own lives (Luke 6:46), and seek ways to bring our Master pleasure (Psalms 37:23; Proverbs 11:20).

- Just as a master in ancient times took on the responsibility of caring for his bondservants, so our Lord says that He will provide all we need when we seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19).

Our Master, Jesus, has given us instructions in His Word and expects those who profess His name to live them.

- Servants of Christ put into practice all they learn about pleasing their Lord.
- While He has specific jobs for each of us according to the gifts and opportunities He provides, some requirements are universal for anyone called to be a servant of Christ:
 - Continue in faith.
 - Destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God.
 - Take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).
 - Pursue holy living (1 Peter 1:14–16).
 - Daily crucify the lusts of the flesh (Romans 6:1–6).
 - Love brothers and sisters in the faith (1 John 3:14–15).
 - Store up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19–20).

- Eagerly await the Lord's return (Revelation 22:20; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Servants of Christ consider their lives on earth as a time of preparation for eternity. The hardships and struggles we must face while in the flesh will be far outmatched by the glory and reward awaiting us (2 Corinthians 4:17).

“For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!”

The Hebrew word for “**bondservant**,” *‘ebed*, had a similar connotation.

The Mosaic Law allowed an indentured servant to become a bondservant voluntarily: “If the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” – Exodus 21:5-6).

Throughout the New Testament, the word *bondservant*, *slave*, or *servant* is applied to someone absolutely devoted to Jesus.

Believers today should still consider themselves bondservants/slaves of Christ:

1 Corinthians 7:22 “For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person.”

Ephesians 6:6 “Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.”

He is our Lord, and our allegiance is due to Him alone.

As bondservants, we renounce other masters Matthew 6:24 “Can't serve two masters”, and give ourselves totally to Him –

Matthew 16:24 “Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be My disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me.”

Being a bondservant of Christ is not drudgery.

His “burden is light” Matthew 11:30.

We have this promise:

Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life” Romans 6:22.