

CHRISTIAN BASICS, CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Romans 1:1

I. INTRODUCTION-

- a. Today we continue our study of the basics of the Christian life... by looking at what the Bible says... about Christian service.

II. SLAVES OF CHRIST-

- a. Servants and slaves were commonplace in the ancient world... by the time Jesus was born... there were literally millions of slaves in the Roman Empire.
- b. The Apostle Paul never referred to himself as a Christian... he never called himself a follower or a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- c. While Paul did call himself an Apostle of Jesus Christ when he felt it was necessary to reinforce his spiritual authority... he most often referred to himself... as a slave of Jesus Christ.
- d. When used by Paul and others in the Bible to describe their relationship with Christ ... many modern translations soften the word for slave and translate it servant.
- e. But other translations like the Holman Standard translation of the Bible... more accurately translate the word slave in these instances... as slave.
- f. *Romans 1:1 (HCSB) "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and singled out for God's good news."*
- g. *Galatians 1:10 (HCSB) "For am I now trying to win the favor of people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ."*
- h. In 2 Peter 1:1... Peter calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ.

- i. In Jude 1:1... Jude who was the half-brother of Jesus... a son born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus was born...called himself... not the brother of Jesus... but a slave of Jesus Christ.
- j. In the opening verses of Revelation... John referred to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ.
- k. Even more accurately... the word translated slave in all of these verses refers to a bond-slave.
- l. In the ancient Roman world there were different category of slaves ... not all slaves in that day wore a ball and chain.
- m. Some slaves were trained professionals like doctors, teachers, and stewards... who played a vital part in the lives of their masters.
- n. But the lowest of the low of all the slaves of the ancient world... were bond-slaves.
- o. Bond-slaves were often treated like slaves...even by other slaves.
- p. Bond-slaves were under the complete control of their masters... they had absolutely no rights... they had no right to run their own life.
- q. Bond-slaves were the ones...who were given the dirtiest jobs.
- r. It was the bond-slave who washed the dirty feet of their master... and their master's family.
- s. It was the bond-slave who did the ancient equivalent of cleaning the toilets... of mucking the stalls... and every other dirty... grimy... ugly... disgusting job that you can think of.
- t. Yet it was this word... the word for bond-slave... that Paul and others in the New Testament used to describe their relationship with Jesus Christ.

- u. When it came to their position in Christ... Paul and the others knew that in Christ... all believers have been elevated to spiritual heights by God's grace.
- v. They knew that because of Christ... all Christians are the children of God... all Christians are joint heirs with Jesus... all Christians have been saved out of the miry clay and the misery of sin... all Christians have an eternal home in Heaven.
- w. But when it comes to living for God in this world... when it comes to serving Christ in this world... Paul and the others knew... that all Christians are to see themselves... as bond-slaves of Jesus Christ.
- x. As ones who have surrendered the right to run their own life... to the Lord Jesus.
- y. Let me ask you... when it comes to living for God in this world... do you see yourself as a slave of Jesus?... are you more concerned with being served... than serving others in the name of Jesus Christ?

III. CALLED TO BE A SERVANT-

- a. The New Testament makes it clear that all Christians... have been saved and called to serve.
- b. The 12 disciples of Jesus had an ongoing argument as to who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God... who would have the honor and prestige of sitting on the thrones beside Jesus... who would have the honor of being served in the kingdom.
- c. They even had such a discussion on the way to the Upper Room ... on the night before Jesus would go to the cross.
- d. The fact that the disciples tried to hide these arguments from Jesus ... revealed that they knew what they were arguing about was not right... but they could not help themselves... they saw themselves in visions of grandeur in the heavenly kingdom of God.

- e. Of course... the disciples could not hide all of this from Jesus... and the Lord often confronted the disciples about their wrong-headed and wrong-hearted pursuit of kingdom greatness.
- f. Luke records one of these occasions... in *Luke 9:46-48* “*Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."*
- g. Luke records another such occasion... in *Luke 22:24-27 (NLT2)* “*Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves."*
- h. Of course... the greatest lesson on servanthood that Jesus taught His disciples was on the night He before He would go to the cross... in the Upper Room.
- i. The roads of Palestine were always dusty... often muddy... and often potted with animal and human garbage and refuse.
- j. The sandals the Jewish people wore in those days... provided little comfort and little defense from what they walked through during the day.
- k. By the end of the day... the feet of the Jewish people would be hot... tired... filthy... and smelly.

- l. The first thing Jewish people did when they got home for the day was wash and clean their feet... for comfort... for hygiene... and for the benefit of others.
- m. If a Jewish home hosted a gathering...protocol said that the host was to provide a servant... or someone ... to do the dirty job of meeting the guests at the door... removing their sandals... and washing and drying their feet.
- n. That was a job no one wanted... on the night the disciples gathered in the Upper Room to eat the Passover... none of the disciples volunteered to wash the feet of the other disciples.
- o. Knowing that on their way to the Upper Room... the disciples had again argued about who was the greatest among them.
- p. At one point in the evening...Jesus got up from the table... put a towel around His waist... took a bowl of water and began one by one to take the place of the servant ...wash the feet of His disciples.
- q. This display of humility and servanthood by Jesus... shocked and shamed the disciples.
- r. When Jesus finished washing the feet of His disciples... He explained why He had done so.
- s. *John 13:12-16 (NLT2) "After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message."*

- t. The lesson Jesus taught was this... the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven is not the one who tries to lord it over others... the greatest in the kingdom is the one who humbly serves others.
- u. The greatest rewards in Heaven will not be given to those who wanted others to serve them... the greatest rewards in Heaven will be given to those who humbly served others in Christ's name.
- v. A servant's heart cannot be produced through self-effort ... a servant's heart is produced by God in the heart of one who loves Him and is walking with Him.
- w. How can you know if you are walking with God as you should?... do you have a servant's heart?... are you willing to serve others.

IV. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS-

- a. The greatest example of servanthood in the Bible... and in human history... is when the Creator of all that there is... came into this world... not as the King and the Lord that He is... but as a servant.
- b. *Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV) "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though He was and is fully God, did not consider He equal place with God in eternity something to be held on to at all cost. Instead, He made Himself of no reputation, He took on the form of a slave and He came into the world in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."*
- c. Do you want to know what servanthood looks like?... look at Jesus.
- d. Jesus left the glories of Heaven... and came into this world... not as the King and Lord that He is... but as a slave.
- e. He humbled Himself... He allowed Himself to be mistreated and rejected by evil men... and then the King of glory... went to the cross to died for the sins of the world.

- f. The Bible says... let the mind of Christ be your mind... let His attitude be your attitude... let His servant's heart be your heart.
- g. And if you do... as Jesus was exalted and rewarded so will you be.
- h. *Philippians 2:9-11 (NKJV) "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*
- i. Don't forget... the King of Glory... did what He did for you and me.
- j. Now... as He served us by dying on the cross for our sins... so let us serve others.

V. CONCLUSION-

- a. What does a servant's heart look like in real time? ... you can find a million examples of simple, loving service... performed by Christians around the world every day.
- b. Those acts of service may not get headlines on earth... but I promise you that they do get headlines in Heaven.
- c. I know that I have told you this story before... but the greatest example of a servant's heart that I have witnessed... came from my father... one summer many years ago.
- d. One summer... a farmer neighbor in our community had a daughter who became desperately and dangerously ill... the illness struck this man's daughter at harvest time for watermelons and cantaloupes... an important money crop for all of us.
- e. Because this man could not and would not leave the hospital and his wife's and his daughter's side ... my father and my uncle told him not to worry about his crops... they would take care of them.

- f. That summer my father and my uncle... and all of us workers... gathered that man's crops and sold them at market... just like we did our own.
- g. By the time the harvest season was over... our neighbor's daughter had recovered from her illness... and my dad called our neighbor to come by our house... when our neighbor got to our home... my dad took the proceeds from this man's harvest... thousands of dollars stuffed in a cardboard cigar box... every dime of his profit... and gave it to our neighbor... my dad took nothing out for expenses or anything.
- h. Our neighbor began to cry... my dad began to cry... I began to cry... we all began to cry... and when that man tried to pay my dad for our work... my dad refused to take a penny.
- i. No... my dad said... I only did what the Lord wanted me to do... I will not take a dime.
- j. That day... my dad showed me a servant's heart... I have not always followed his example... but I want to.
- k. Not all acts of service are so dramatic or extreme... most every day acts of service are not... but God sees them all... and He will reward them all... *Matthew 10:42 (NKJV) "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*
- l. May God give us a servant's heart for each other... and for everyone.
- m. Jesus... the King of Glory... became a servant... a slave for you... will you come to Him?