

Theme: As with other entrenched injustices in this fallen world, the New Testament does not directly abolish slavery, but calls Christians to live in a way that honors and submits to God, focuses on Christ, promotes the Gospel, and looks to our eternal reward.

I. Finishing Unchained - Philemon

- A. I hope you have found the series informative
- B. I have certainly found it challenging to my own life
- C. But a major question - why not just say "No slavery!"???
- D. What does the NT teach on slavery?
- E. How would that speak to us today?

II. The New Testament and Slavery

- A. The New Testament does not command slavery to end
Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.
¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. Philemon 1:15–17
 - 1. Paul is certainly making a challenging request here
 - 2. But there no command to set Onesimus free
 - 3. Even worse - many sections on slavery in the NT
 - 4. No section ever commands slavery to end
Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ....⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is

in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.
Ephesians 6:5–9

- a. Slaves - obey masters - what????
- b. Masters - treat slaves well - WHAT????

B. The New Testament and Slavery

- 1. There is a lot about slavery in the NT
 - a. Ephesians 6:5-9
 - b. 1 Peter 2:18-21
 - c. Titus 2:9-10
 - d. 1 Timothy 6:1-3
 - e. Colossians 3:17-24
 - f. 1 Corinthians 7:20-24
- 2. It never says - "Let all slaves go free"
- 3. Why not just command for slavery to end?
- 4. Certainly it was not like slavery in America, but it was still one human owning another
- 5. Why did the NT church not go on mission against slavery?

C. Practical reasons for not going on mission against slavery

- 1. There were massive numbers of slaves in the Empire - and no where for them to go.
- 2. Setting all slaves free would have actually made it worse for many slaves - no way to care for themselves

3. Christians were a tiny minority in the Roman Empire
4. Christians had no political power to actually change laws or economics to alter this
5. The NT was not a philosophical treatise - it was dealing with real situations in this fallen world

III. The New Testament Focus and Call

- A. We are to have a focus on obeying God's will & call
- Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 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.** Ephesians 6:5–6
1. Focus is not our circumstances, but the will of God
 2. We may not be able to understand or change the circumstances - but we can obey God
 3. We do this, not grudgingly, but from the heart
- Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. ²¹ Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. ²² For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. ²⁴ Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. 1 Corinthians 7:20–24
1. Our primary focus is the call of God - not our circumstances
 2. But if you can get free - do so - that is even better!

3. But nothing can stop us from obeying God - but us!

- B. We are to have a focus on Christ
- Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, **just as you would obey Christ.** 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. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, **as if you were serving the Lord,** not people, ⁸ because you know that **the Lord will reward each one** for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, **since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.** Ephesians 6:5–9
1. Notice all of these references to Christ!
 2. Everything we do is to be for Christ - slave or free
 3. The focus is serving Christ - no matter who the person is
- And **whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus,** giving thanks to God the Father through him...²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and **reverence for the Lord.** ²³ **Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,** ²⁴ **since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord** as a reward. **It is the Lord Christ you are serving.** Colossians 3:17, 22–24
1. Everything is about Jesus - not my circumstances
 2. It is Christ I am serving - not a human master
- C. We are to focus on promoting the Gospel

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰ and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, **so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.**

Titus 2:9–10

1. Slaves obey your masters - to promote the Gospel
2. The focus is the Gospel - not my personal needs
3. EVERYTHING is subservient to the cause of the Gospel
4. Many today in the church take up other causes - and hurt the Gospel - THIS IS WRONG!!!!

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, **so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered.** 1 Timothy 6:1

1. Again - promoting the Gospel is central
2. Even if my own circumstances suffer!
3. This is what it means to be centered on the Gospel!

D. We are to focus on eternity - not this fading age

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ **because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.** ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, **since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.** Ephesians 6:7–9

1. Slaves obey your masters - Jesus will reward you
2. Masters treat slaves well - Jesus is watching
3. All things will be judged - in eternity

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ **since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.** It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ **Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.** ^{4:1} Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, **because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.**

Colossians 3:23–4:1

1. Work now - for an inheritance later
2. The judge is watching - and all will be settled
3. Slaves and masters - live in light of eternity

IV. Unchained To Apply the Word

- A. Do I accept the Scripture - or change it to my taste?
1. I would prefer for the NT to simply say - “no slaves”!
 2. But I am not free to change God's Word
 3. Many Christians today want to change what we do not like - we can not give in to this!
 - a. Sexual ethics to match the age
 - b. Run church like a business instead of flock/family
 - c. Make Scripture support democracy & capitalism
 4. Do I judge Scripture - or does it judge me?
- B. Do I have my focus where Scripture does?
1. We are so man centered - but Scripture is God centered

2. We are current issues focused - Scripture is Gospel focused
3. We are focused on this age - Scripture calls to focus on eternity
4. When we don't alter Scripture - it addresses these deeper issues
5. Where is my focus?
6. What drives my life?
7. Other things come and go; opinions change - God's will & Word remain
8. Let's be unchained from this passing age

C. Prayer and On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand

Unchained - The New Testament and Slavery

Philemon 1:15-21; Ephesians 6:5-9

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Prayer & On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. ¹⁸ If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹ I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back—not to mention that you owe me your very self. ²⁰ I do wish, brother, that I may have some benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask.

Philemon 1:15-21

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 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. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Ephesians 6:5-9