



June 26, 2016
Elevation · 11:00 am
Pastor Eric Wakeling

Slaves of Christ Alone Ephesians 6:5-9

Historical Background

- **Slavery in the first century**
 - Different than African slavery in the USA - not based on skin color, some chose to be slaves and only for a certain amount of time, in rare instances could become free.
 - Roman law did consider them persons but they were also called tools or instruments. They were property and were sold and traded.
 - Slave owners were known to threaten beatings, sexual harassment, or selling male slaves away from the households with the result that they would be parted from their loved ones forever. Some ancient writings show instances where they had hands cut off, legs broken, whippings, beatings, chained, etc.
 - Seneca wrote in "Epistulae Morales" a proverbial statement that "all slaves are enemies."
- **Seven Levels in the Roman Empire Social Structure:**
 1. Emperor
 2. Senators
 3. Equestrians
 4. Decurions
 5. The free born
 6. The freed men
 7. The slaves - up to 25% of population in Ephesus
- **Household Code**

"And now that it is clear what are the component parts of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management; for every state is composed of households. Household management falls into departments corresponding to the parts of which the household in its turn is composed; and the household in its perfect form consists of slaves and freemen. The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships." - Aristotle, 350BC, Household Code; Aristotle, Politics 1.1253b
- **Additional quotes from Politics by Aristotle**

"And also the usefulness of slaves diverges little from that of animals"

"The intention of nature therefore is to make the bodies also of freemen and of slaves different—the latter strong for necessary service, the former erect and unserviceable for such occupations, but serviceable for a life of citizenship"

"the slave is serviceable for the mere necessities of life, so that clearly he needs only a small amount of virtue, in fact just enough to prevent him from failing in his tasks owing to intemperance and cowardice."

Jesus changes everything for everyone – slaves or masters.

Galatians 3:28 – “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”

Colossians 3:11 – “a renewal in which there is not distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all and in all”

- **Three Levels of Moral Discourse (according to how well you know someone)**

Tychicus and Onesimus delivered the letters to Colossae, Ephesus and Philemon. They carried three letters. Onesimus actually delivered the letter to Philemon.

- **Paul Has Never Met – Colossians 3:22-4:1**

Colossians 3:22-25: “Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”

His command to masters is much less intense here.

- **He knows Ephesians as a group and he tells masters to “do the same things.”**

- **Then to an individual he knows well. Paul’s letter to Philemon is much more direct.**

Philemon 15-18: “For perhaps he was for this reason separated from you for a while, that you would have him back forever, no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me. But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account”

Whatever your position in the world, serve others like you would serve Jesus.

“With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.” Ephesians 6:7-8

At times we are servants, workers and students, but we are also business owners, teachers, and supervisors served by businesses and public servants. We submit to and honor all those we work with, who we work for and those who work for us.

- **A word to slaves – vs. 5-8**

- Be obedient to those you work for with sincerity and not just faking it.
- Consider your work as work unto the Lord.
- Do the will of God from the heart in your service.

- **A word to masters – vs. 9**

- And masters, do the same things!
- Consider God’s eye upon you as you lead those who work for you
- Don’t show favoritism or partiality.
- Treat people who serve you in public and private with dignity, respect and love.

- **Bend the knee**

- Always have the heart of a servant.
- Barakh – בָּרַךְ – to kneel or bend the knee, bless, praise, serve

LifeGroup Discussion:

1. How has this message changed your understanding of slavery and servanthood as it is discussed in the Bible?
2. In what areas of your life do you resonate more with the “master” and how can you change your actions to reflect Christ and the words of Paul in this passage?
3. In what areas of your life do you resonate with the “slave” and how can you change your actions to reflect Christ and the words of Paul in this passage?

Next Steps:

1. As we worship, turn around and get on your knees in a posture of submission and pray for the heart of a servant of Christ.
2. Write down ways that you can serve people who would normally serve you.
3. Reflect on the entire Household Code of Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and how you can be more submissive to others in each of your roles- whether you are husband or wife, child or parent, servant or master. Spend some time journaling on what submission looks like in your life.