

EPHESIANS

A Slave Mentality

Ephesians 6:5-9

Modern Readers...

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Will often strip a passage such
as this of its legitimacy after
reading the first word:

“Slaves...”



16 Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

“Slave” in the NT

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δοῦλος (*doulos*) appears 124 times in the New Testament, and its compound form *syndoulos* (“fellow-slave”) 10 times.

NT writers employ this imagery again and again in describing their allegiance to Christ.

δοῦλος (*doulos*)

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- Romans 1:1 – “Paul, a *doulos* of Christ Jesus”
- 1 Corinthians 7:22 – “called in the Lord as a *doulos*”
- Galatians 1:10 – “*doulos* of Christ”
- Philippians 1:1 – “Paul and Timothy, *douloi* of Christ”
- Colossians 4:12 – “Epaphras...a *doulos* of Christ”
- Titus 1:1 – “Paul, a *doulos* of Christ”
- James 1:1 – “James, a *doulos* of Christ”
- 1 Peter 2:16 – “living as *douloi* of God”
- 2 Peter 1:1 – “Simon Peter, a *doulos*...of Jesus Christ”
- Jude 1 – “Jude, a *doulos* of Jesus Christ”
- Revelation 1:1 – “God gave him to show to his *douloi*”

Slavery in the 1st Century EPHESIANS

Slavery was a pervasive social structure in the 1st century Roman world, and it was so commonplace that its existence as an institution was never seriously questioned by anyone.

Slaves of all ages, genders, and ethnicities constituted a substantial socioeconomic class in ancient Rome.

How One Became a Slave

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- Military Conquests
- Born into Slavery
- Debt Repayment
- Citizenship

In Fact...

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Roughly one-fifth of the empire's population were slaves (some estimates say 60 million).

In larger cities, such as Rome, Corinth, or Ephesus, as many as one-third of the population were legally slaves and another one-third had been slaves earlier in life.

Slavery Affected All

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- Those in the church (perhaps even more so at Ephesus) fit in one of 4 categories:

1. Masters

2. Slaves

3. Former Slaves (Freedmen)

4. Potential Slaves

But One May Say...

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**By Not Condemning
It...**

**Is Paul condoning
slavery?**

Why Not Condemn It? EPHESIANS

1. He was more concerned with eternity; suffering in this life is nothing compared to the joy of eternity.
2. In Romans 13, he advocated obedience to government.
3. If Paul promoted the abolition of slavery, many slaves might have converted for the wrong reasons.

Harold Hoehner:

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“Christianity’s emphasis has always been on the transformation of individuals who will in turn influence society, not the transformation of society which will then transform individuals.”

2 Types of Slaves

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1. *Familia Urbana*

- Those who belonged to the city household
- These slaves often worked alongside their masters as part of the household.

2. *Familia Rustica*

- Those who belonged to the rural household
- These slaves lived far from their owners and worked under the supervision of a foreman.

One Historian said:

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“The only thing that slaves in the first century had in common was the fact that each of them had an owner. A person’s experience in slavery depended almost entirely upon the customs of the owner’s family, the business and the particular class of society to which the owner belonged, and the character of the owner himself.”

Slave Occupations

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- Teachers
- Cooks
- Shopkeepers
- Doctors
- Household Managers

From a glance on the street, it would have been difficult to distinguish between slaves and non-slaves; any line of work a free person might do, a slave might also do.

Helpful Context

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1. 5:22 – “**Wives**, be subject to your own husbands”
 2. 5:25 – “**Husbands**, love your wives”
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3. 6:1 – “**Children**, obey your parents”
 4. 6:4 – “**Fathers**, do not provoke your children to anger”
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5. 6:5 – “**Slaves**, be obedient to those who are your masters”
6. 6:9 – “**Masters**, do the same things to them”

Part of the Family

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- As members of the household, many slaves were intimately involved in every aspect of family life – from taking care of the master's children to managing his house or even administering business interests.
- A faithful slave could look forward to possibly receiving his freedom one day if he served his master well.

You May Be Thinking EPHESIANS

What Does This Have To
Do With The Believer In
2019?

The applications for us are both
practical and theological.



Justin Martyr

“Our Lord urged us by patience and meekness to lead all from shame and the lusts of evil, and this we have to show in the case of many who have come into contact with us who were overcome and changed from violent and tyrannical characters, either from having watched the constancy of their Christian neighbors...or from doing business with Christians.”

Thesis for Today

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If you cannot submit as a
slave to an earthly master,
you will find it nearly
impossible to submit as a
slave to your heavenly
Master.

A Christological Issue

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5 Slaves, be obedient...as to **Christ**;

6 ...as slaves of **Christ**...

7 With good will render service, as to the **Lord**...

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does,
this he will receive back from the **Lord**...

9 And masters, do the same...knowing that both
their **Master** and yours is in heaven, and there is
no partiality with **Him**.

Ephesians 6:5-7

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5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; **6** not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. **7** With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men

Socially Revolutionary EPHESIANS

- Slaves were not normally addressed in household codes.
- Masters may have been given instruction on how to treat their slaves, but Paul treats all believers – men, women, children, and slaves – as ethically responsible and equal members of the body of Christ.

What Paul Does *Not* Say EPHESIANS

- He does not tell them to rebel.
- He does not tell them to make the best of it.
- He does not tell them to ask for better conditions or wages.
- He does not tell them to employ the power of positive thinking!

The Christian faith does not promote a release from present circumstances but gives the believer power to endure those circumstances.



4 Behavior Principles EPHESIANS

Slaves were to Obey and Serve their
masters (6:5-7):

1. Respectfully
2. Sincerely
3. Conscientiously
4. Pleasantly

1. Respectfully

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5a Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling

This is not servile respect or obsequious fawning.

The truth is that the slave's master is probably not a believer, and furthermore, in many cases, the slave may be more intelligent than his master.

1 Timothy 6:1

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1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.



On the Other Hand: EPHESIANS

What if both slave and master were followers of Jesus Christ?

What if the slave was a teacher in the church?

Why might this be a challenge in a household?

1 Timothy 6:2

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2 Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

2. Sincerely

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5b in the sincerity of your heart, as to
Christ

Sincerity (haplotēs) literally means
“singleness, simplicity, free from
pretense.”

The key to success in this area is at the
end of the verse: “as to Christ.”

Sound Familiar?

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- Colossians 3:23 –

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men”

- 1 Corinthians 10:31 –

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

This is Primarily:

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**An Issue of Trust
and Recognition
of God's
Sovereignty**

26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

3. Conscientiously

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6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Paul's Question is:

Why do you do what you do?



Matthew 25:14-29
The Parable of the Talents



The true test of a man's
character is what he does
when no one is watching

John Wooden



4. Pleasantly

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7 With good will render service,
as to the Lord, and not to men

This seems so simple, but...

Are you pleasant to be around?

What about when others aren't
so pleasant?

Why Are We Pleasant? EPHESIANS

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

We have a supernatural motivation to have a pleasant demeanor and attitude.



Future Rewards

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- Paul reminded faithful slaves that they would receive a reward from Jesus Christ in the future whether their masters on earth acknowledged their good service or not.
- This principle of reward for faithful service applies to all who serve the Lord, whether slave or free.

Jesus sums up the position of those who desire immediate rewards and fulfillment in this life with the following statement:

“Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.”

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Ephesians 6:9

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9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

A Revolutionary Ethic EPHESIANS

“And masters, do the same things to them”

This is truly revolutionary.

Think about this: Paul is commanding those in a position of basically absolute power to humble themselves in dealing with their slaves.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

A Golden Rule

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- In other words, masters:
 - If you want respect, show respect.
 - If you want sincerity, be sincere.
 - If you want conscientiousness, do the same.
 - If you want pleasantness, model pleasantness.

And Furthermore

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“and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

The master most certainly holds superior authority in this relationship, however, before God the slave and the master stand on equal ground.

The Relationship

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Is reciprocal but not symmetrical.

Just as it is with husbands and
wives.

Just like it is with fathers and
children.

We Obey and Serve

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- Because we know that as professing Christians, we carry the name of our Savior.
- Because others will want to learn more about our Lord when we are different.
- Because we do not work for earthly treasures.
- Because we are commanded to do all that we do in love to the glory of our Lord.

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