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**So You
Want to
Be a Slave
(Part 2)**

1304-A
Series: The Mind of Christ

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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(Part 2)

The sermon had been impressive. The music was superb. The atmosphere was one of hushed intensity. As the choir sang, “Wherever He leads, I’ll go,” the Pastor stood at the front of the church and encouraged young people to commit themselves to full-time Christian service. As a tide of emotion swept through the congregation, several young men and women moved towards the front to signify their response to this call. It was a touching service, indeed.

The only problem was, it shouldn’t have been necessary. There should not have needed to be a crescendo of emotions and a fervent plea to motivate these youths to go “wherever He leads”. The truth of the matter is that we have programmed into the minds of many of today’s Christians that God has a series of echelons of commitment, and every time you “surrender” to a new level, you need to make some kind of an emotional response, the final one being to “surrender” to Christian service. We’re all in Christian service, Beloved. Full-time service. Some are earning their living other ways, some are earning their living through their vocational Christian calling, and both are Scriptural. But realistically, there is no such a thing as a part-time Christian.

Can’t you just picture the master of a group of slaves holding a “happy time” camp meeting to conjure up the right atmosphere to see if one or two of his 600 slaves might not “feel led” to give his all? Can’t you just picture him giving an “invitation” to see how many will “come forward” and offer to do what they’ve already been told to do? I don’t think so. I think that issue should have been settled the day they became a slave. A slave is owned property. He does whatever he is told, whenever he is told, and goes wherever he is told, and we trust he does it joyfully. And hopefully, he does it humbly, as well. The less fanfare, the better. The less attention called to him, the better. His job is to transparently do the master’s bidding.

Why? Because the music moved him? Because the master’s message just happened to “hit the spot”? No, he does it because he is a slave. He has relinquished all of his rights to be noble and call attention to himself. He has given up the right to do anything other

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

than what his master asks, so why should he make a production out of doing what he is expected to do?

The problem is that most of us forget we're slaves. We don't like the stigma that goes with that term, and we don't like the fact that we might not have anything to say about our assignments. So we make a big deal out of every act of commitment we make. We call our friends and tell them we're going to give more. We tell the pastor we want to be more faithful in Sunday School. We make public announcements, give public testimonies, and make public declarations about our newfound "surrender". I wonder if Satan isn't gleefully sitting on the sidelines rolling in laughter?

You see, if he can make us forget we're slaves, and have us thinking we're doing God a favor by "giving our all", he's won a major victory. If he can get us to pat ourselves on the back for doing what's expected of us as servants of the Most High, he has us sharing God's glory, and he has us acting out a charade of religious performance that defies the very nature of our calling. Slaves don't need to be invited to obey, and then applauded if they deem to make public their intent to obey. They are expected to obey. And it ought not to be a major production when they do.

Young people should understand that total surrender to whatever God wants to do with their lives is assumed. We ought not to pass out medals if one answers a call to some special task. We ought to pray for them. We may want to commission them to show our support. But they are not to be lifted into some super-spiritual club of those who "surrendered all". We're all in the "surrender club," whether we understand it or not. It goes with the territory. It was clearly spelled out in the contract we signed when we traded in our worn-out useless lives of flesh for the privilege of being bondslaves of Jesus Christ.

We have been working our way through the rich treasures of Philippians, chapter two. There the Apostle Paul has given us a seven step illustration of how Jesus Christ defined the Christian life. That seven step portrait has been our guide through these opening six studies. In our last two lessons, we looked at the issue of servanthood or slavery from God's vantage point, and came to the conclusion that a "doulos" or slave of Jesus Christ is one who has, by virtue of receiving Him as Savior, willingly, joyfully given up his or her rights to run their life in exchange for the provisions and protection and promises that await a slave of God's.

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

So no longer are we our own. We have been bought with a price. From the moment we trusted Him with our lives or “entrusted” Him with our lives, we forfeited the title deed and all of the rights that go with it. We no longer need to “give up our rights” at regular intervals. We don’t have any rights to give up. What we have are joyous privileges a God of mercy and grace has freely offered us. We ought to praise Him daily for each and every one. And if He takes away something we thought we had to have? We ought to praise Him for that, too, because as His slaves, we are totally His. Job was correct at this stage of his testing. “Our Lord gives and our Lord “akes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord”.¹

The issue for us is simple, then. It is whether or not we are willing to be the slaves we are. The tests Satan throws at us are designed to have us rebel at the concept of being under authority, and so we chafe at the restrictions placed upon us by a Holy God. “We can’t eat of that tree? Why not?” “I can’t have that job. Why not?” “I have to go through that trial? Why?” Our tests are not so much designed to see whether or not we can endure difficulties. Our tests are designed to see whether or not we can accept difficulties as the sovereign right of our loving Master. That was Satan’s argument with God in Job, chapter one. He said, “If you’ll just take all Job’s benefits away from him, he’ll curse the day he ever said he would be your slave.” So Satan was allowed to test him by taking from him the physical, tangible evidences that God loved him. The question was whether or not God had the right to do that.

At first, Job had the right response, but as the trial dragged on and on, it began to take its toll. Job began arguing with God over what a good boy he’d been. He began to take exception with God’s right to take away those things in the light of what a neat guy he perceived himself to be. It was only when Job spent enough time in the presence of God to find out who was the Master and who was the slave that he finally repented in dust and ashes.

So life’s tests are really tests of our relationship as slaves with our Master. If we accept that relationship for what it is, it doesn’t matter what happens to us. Our Master has the right to do anything He wants. He can allow Satan whatever access He chooses. In Job’s case, he had access to his family, to his money, and to his health. Any one of those would be tough. Losing all three of those at one time will do one of two things: it will make you bitter and angry, or it will make you totally dependent. Satan always wants the former

¹ Job 1:21c (paraphrase)

response. God always desires the latter.

How ought a slave to respond to life? If we're to have the "Mind of Christ" and to appropriate the kind of humility that Jesus demonstrated, how do we behave? How will we know when Christ in us is being Himself through us? We're going to examine some of the attributes of a slave, and we're going to see from the Scriptures, how they apply to us. For this lesson, we will only look at three.

WHATEVER YOU DO...

The first and foremost mark of a slave, and certainly of a slave of God's is a sense of wholeheartedness, which allows he or she to do the most menial of tasks with a sense of divine purpose. In Ephesians, chapter six, just before the Holy Spirit opens up to us His beautiful description of the armor of God, He talks to us about the relationship that exists between a master and a bondslave, using the backdrop of a real bondslave, many of whom still existed in Jesus' day.

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ.

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.

Knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he be a slave or free.

(Ephesians 6:5-8 NKJV)

This gives all of life a different meaning. Paul was writing to those who were still slaves, but his analogy had to do with the concept of slavery and a man's relationship with Christ. He basically said that nothing in life that we do comes outside the sphere of our relationship with God. So conclusive was it, that he made the assumption that what you do for someone else on earth to demonstrate your servanthood, in essence, is an act of worship to God Himself.

The parallel passage in Colossians reads like this:

Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.

(Colossians 3:22-24 NKJV)

Look at the list of imperatives that flow from this passage:

1- Obey in all things. Perhaps this is the most inclusive of all the statements Paul makes in this passage. It means that God's assignments for obedience are without exception. We live in a world that is impressed with partial obedience; a world that views absolutes as non-existent. We think if God wants us to, for instance, in everything give thanks, that we are exemplary believers if we on some occasions are thankful. That makes God to be a liar. It makes the "alls" and the "everys" and the "nevers" in the Bible to be a joke. It's interesting that most of the great revivals in history seem to have centered around a return to the kind of holiness and awe at the absolutes of God that drew men and women to their knees in repentance. Things they had justified as acceptable disappeared in an ocean of conviction. Men and women were stricken in their souls over compromises that they had begun to take for granted.

A good master expects total obedience. That leaves the lines of communication between master and slave open and clear. The master doesn't have to wonder and worry about if and to what degree the slave will do what he has been asked to do. Until we as believers reestablish a concept of how slaves of God treat the commandments of God, we will be continually establishing "acceptable" levels of obedience based on what other Christians are doing, rather than on what the Word of God says.

2- Obedience must come from the heart. Your obedience must not be with "eyeservice" or as "menpleasers" wrote Paul. In other words, obedience that is designed to impress those around you as to your spirituality does not impress the Living God. Nor does obedience that is intentionally done at a time and place where it will be noticed. A true slave is unmindful of who is watching. As a servant of his master, he is expected to obey. Rather, Paul said, the key is that what you do is in sincerity of heart, fearing God. If you are convinced that God wants you to give more, that is admirable. But that giving must be done in secret, not to attract the approval of others, and not to generate an image of how generous you are. A good test of your heart is how much you do in Christian service that nobody else knows about. If you cannot consider serving unless you are noticed, you are not serving your master, you are serving yourself.

3- Whatever you do, do it wholeheartedly, for you are doing it for God. (Colossians 3:23) The truth of the matter is that everything you do is spiritual. Bathing the baby is a spiritual ministry. Do you do it grudgingly? Then you are saying to your Master, "I deserve better than this." Opening the mail is a spiritual exercise. Cleaning the house is a spiritual activity. It's God's house. And if you can't do it cheerfully and excitedly, and most of all, wholeheartedly, (which means enthusiastically and exceptionally well) then you are not a good slave. So the first rule of slavery is that a good slave does everything he is told to do, without compromise, without hypocrisy, and without recognition. An obedient slave doesn't need continuous approval. His acceptance is not based on the accolades he receives, but rather on the inner joy that he is pleasing his master, who loves him enough to give him responsibilities. We need to change our mentality of what is spiritual and what isn't.

To Jesus, whatsoever ye do is spiritual. Mowing the grass is spiritual. Grocery shopping is spiritual. Hanging up your clothes is spiritual. Peeling potatoes for supper is spiritual. Washing the dishes is a spiritual exercise. How you do that tells God more about your heart than how you perform at church when all your Christian friends are looking, and there are accolades for a job well done.

Whatsoever you do, you are to do it wholeheartedly. The faithfulness of a slave is not measured by how well he performs when he is given a job to do at the master's house in front of all the master's friends. What counts is how well he cleans the barn or tends the flock or scrubs the floor when nobody is looking. Is he cutting corners, to get through more quickly? Is he mumbling and grumbling to himself that a slave as important as he is shouldn't have to do such menial things? If the master were standing by watching, and he knew it, would his attitude or his activity be different? Wholeheartedly means with all your heart. It means that you are just as intent on excellence and a joyful spirit when you wash the car as you are when you play golf or prepare a message that will be heard by all your friends. Jesus told us that "He that is faithful in the little things will be made ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:23 paraphrase). What had they been faithful in doing? They had faithfully tended to whatever the Lord entrusted to them. Some had been given more responsibility than others, but the rewards were based on what they had done with what they had been given to do.

Some of us need to re-think our concept of what makes a person

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

spiritual. If you teach a Sunday School class, and do it well, but then go home and are slothful or temperamental or unmanageable at home, your teaching hasn't made you more spiritual, it has made you more accountable. James said it clearly,

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.
(James 3:1 NIV)

So the things we do that attract the awe of others do not necessarily make us more eligible for first-class citizenship in the Kingdom. They make us more accountable to be the people we claim to be. What God is judging on, primarily, is how faithful we are in the day-to-day details of life. Whatever we do, mending the kids' clothes, changing the oil in the car, paying the bills, visiting the neighbor, we are to do wholeheartedly, if we are the slaves we claim to be.

The reason is clear. We are doing it for our real Master, Jesus Christ. If the boss asks us to do something we don't think is necessary, the issue isn't "why do something extra for that guy?" The issue is your Master in heaven is speaking through your authority on earth, testing you to see if you will obey Him. For "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men."² You're not mowing the yard just to please your spouse. That may be one motivation. But as you mow, how you mow is a testimony to your opinion of your real Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He assigned you that task, and menial though it may be, you are doing it for Him.

TO WHOMEVER YOU ARE SENT...

The second mark of a bondslave of Christ is that not only is he faithful in doing whatever he is asked, he is willing to serve whoever he is asked to serve. That's not easy. Jesus said:

and whoever wants to be first, must be slave of all.
(Mark 10:44 NIV)

That means your response to that person who so takes advantage of you and maligns you and belittles you is as important to God as your response to your best friend. In reality, more important. We know that because Jesus said:

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only

² Colossians 3:23 (NKJV)

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?
(Matthew 5:46 NIV)

“Slave of all”. What an incriminating phrase. You are, by serving those who hate you, demonstrating the Mind of Christ, who “while we were yet sinners, died for us”. We were in utter rebellion to God when He went to Calvary. “Father, forgive them” is the byword of our faith. So we are to “love our enemies, pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us and say all manner of evil against us falsely for His sake.” The first mark of a slave is that you do whatever you are asked to do as though you are doing it as a personal gesture of gratitude for your master, for as a Christian, you are. The second mark of a slave is that you joyfully serve whoever you are sent to serve, and the less they appreciate it, or the less they love you, the more diligently you serve, because you are allowing the Mind of Christ to flow through you, and your response will draw others to Him.

WITHOUT MALICE OR BITTERNESS...

Thirdly, the slave of God serves without bitterness or anger or malice. If you are doing “great things for God” but doing them with a heart filled with self-pity or an angry spirit or a spirit of resentment towards another Christian, you are not doing them for the glory of God. You are not an effective slave. You may be accomplishing more than anyone else in the body of Christ, but in God’s eyes, you are not a real slave. A master doesn’t give the “slave of the year” award to the one who is always stirring up strife within the ranks or whispering negatives about the master when he’s not around or who can’t get along with the other servants. A true slave wants his master to be loved by all and his master’s other servants to be loved by all. Any offense against them, he is concerned about. Any offense against himself, he is unmindful of. Paul wrote these words:

Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

And the Lord’s servant does not quarrel. Instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

(II Timothy 2:23,24 NIV)

What a statement. The Lord’s doulos (bondslave) does not quarrel. You say, “Paul you’ve apparently never worked in a church or you wouldn’t say that.” Paul would answer, “Apparently you’ve never read this passage, or you wouldn’t do that.” We don’t measure

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

the truth of the Word by the behavior of the saints. We measure the behavior of the saints by the truth of the Word. And if the Scripture says “The Lord’s servant does not quarrel”, it means that the Lord’s servant, if he is being the slave he is called to be, will not be caught up in conflicts with other believers. He will keep short accounts. He will humble himself and assume the role of the offender rather than let the church body suffer from the disease of resentment.

That’s why Paul was so clear in I Timothy 2 and 3 when he described the character of church leadership. They must be “above reproach” (3:2), “self-controlled” (3:2), “not violent, but gentle” (3:3), “not quarrelsome” (3:3). To lead others, the believer must not be an agitator, or “a man who stirs up dissension among brothers” (Proverbs 6:19).

God’s slave is a peacemaker. The issue was clearly demonstrated in Matthew, chapter 18. We studied it recently, so we won’t go into detail here, but verses 21-35 tell a story about a king who had a servant who had been negligent in paying his debts. He wept before the king and asked forgiveness. You probably know the story well. The king forgave him, and wiped away his indebtedness as far as the east was from the west.

But the forgiven servant didn’t get the message. Another servant, who owed him a miniscule amount by comparison, asked for the same kind of mercy. This slave who had been forgiven so much, refused to extend the same mercy to one who had offended him. Listen to what happened when the master learned of it:

Then the master called the servant in, “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?”

In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from the heart.”

(Matthew 18:32 NIV)

Ouch! Your Master has forgiven you of all your sins. Every wrong you have ever committed has been washed in His own blood. He went to the court of justice in your place, and when the jury returned a “guilty” verdict, He personally stood before the Judge and said, “He is my bondsman. I will bear responsibility for what he

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

has done. Place the sentence on my account.” What mercy! What love! What forgiveness!

“Now”, Jesus is saying, “if your Master has been willing to do that for you, and you were guilty as charged, how can you hold anything against anyone? If you don’t forgive them, I will have to fail to forgive you until you come to your senses. Therefore, any time you hold a grudge or spread a rumor or destroy the reputation of another Christian, or any time you use any standard of forgiveness that is different than the standard God used with you, you are not a faithful slave.

And the standard God used to forgive you was this: Whatever you have done, I forgive you. Not only will I forgive you, I will assume the responsibility for the estrangement as though it were mine, and I will pay the penalty for you. Any other measuring stick will not do. If you want to be a bondsman of Jesus Christ, you must not be at odds with other Christians. If you don’t get your way, then you don’t need your way. It isn’t a slave’s job to determine if the master has been fair in meting out the labor and the rewards. The parable of the workers in the vineyard³ confirms that. The only concern you and I ought to have is whether or not we are doing everything we are doing as unto God. That means we will do anything He asks, cheerfully. We will serve any one He asks us to, joyfully. And we will humble ourselves in order to make peace with all other believers, as much as is within our power, knowing that as we do, we are pleasing our Master. If the other person will not forgive, that’s between him and his Lord. If we don’t make ourselves vulnerable and assume the role of the offender, that’s between us and our Lord.

I beg you, if there is an unsettled account between you and someone else, don’t let the sun go down tonight without making an effort to make it right. You are a bondsman of God’s. He bought you with a precious price. And when He did, He wiped clean the slate against you, and every single offense you had ever committed was washed away. You were guilty. Now you are forgiven. How dare you, then, take up rights you do not have. How dare you say, “But he’s wrong, he won’t give me my way,” or “She’s wrong, she won’t do things my way” or “They’re wrong, they haven’t treated me with love.” If God has forgiven you of all those things you did, how can you even see the petty offenses of those who have wronged you? Remove the beam from your eye before you go looking for the

³ Matthew 20:1-16

So You Want to Be a Slave (Part 2)

specks in your brother's eyes. Your Master is an eye specialist. He'll take care of your brother's blind spots. You make things right. You say, "But that will be humiliating". More humiliating than God dying on a Cross? I think not.

Only when the Master's servants are in harmony can the Master's work be done well. When the world sees Christians quarreling or backbiting, they conclude that we must not have a very forgiving Master, if we can't forgive the slight offenses of our brothers in the faith. That's why Jesus said, "By this will all men know that ye are my disciples: by the love you have for one another."

So you want to be slave? Then live like one. Go out this week, and knowing that the power is not yours but God's, allow Him, moment by moment to live a life of loving excellence in you this week. That means you will count every thing you have to do as a personal assignment from your Master, and you will do it, no matter how menial, for your Master's glory, as though He were standing by you watching (which He is). And even if and especially if no one is watching, you will do it heartily.

And whoever God sends you to, consider them as those God sent you to humble yourself before and serve. If they are your worst enemies, praise Him the more. It will take more grace to serve them, and more grace means more of Christ will fill you and flood you.

Finally, remember: a true slave is not at odds with the Master's other slaves. To love them is to love Him. To forgive them is to honor the forgiveness the Master has extended to you. To do otherwise is to reject your Master's love, defy your Master's name, and destroy your Master's reputation. And after all He's done for you.

So the Lord's servant does not quarrel. He is a peacemaker. She is one who binds up wounds, rather than creating them. The cost may be high. The humiliation may be great. But, oh, the reward of hearing your Master say,

"Well done, my good and faithful servant [doulos], enter into the joy of the Lord."
(Matthew 25:21 paraphrase)

Enter in, indeed!

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