

Slaves and Friends of Jesus, Part 1

Scripture: John 15:12–17

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We have been in the 15th chapter of John, so let's return there. John, chapter 15, we drew to a conclusion the opening 11 verses of this chapter, and we now come to verses 12 through 17, verses 12 through 17. This is a marvelous portion of Scripture. It is full of significant instruction for us.

While you're sort of settling into that particular text, and before I read it to you, what would you think if someone came to you and said, "You can be my friend. You can be my friend. I want to invite you to be my friend, but there's one condition. In order to be my friend, you have to do everything I ask you to do." "Really?" You can't even imagine anybody trying to initiate a friendship with a comment like that.

When we think of friendship, we think of equality. We think of sort of face-to-face communication. We don't think of hierarchy. We don't think of demands and commands, and submission and authority. We don't think of friendship that way. But that rather strange reality of "you can be my friend if you do everything I say to you" is exactly what Jesus says in this passage. "I want you to be My friend. But if you expect to be My friend, then you must do everything I ask you." Let's look at the text in verse 12.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another." It seems strange in calling people friends to keep repeating to them commands, but that's exactly what our Lord does.

Now just so you know where we are in this particular text, we find ourselves again on a night like no other. It is Thursday night of the final week of our Lord's life. Friday He will die on the cross; this is Thursday. The whole evening has been spent with the disciples. They were all there at the beginning, all twelve of them, for the Passover meal in the upper room. Now that meal has ended, Judas has been dismissed; Satan having entered into him, he is now gone to gather together the force that will come to the garden, arrest Jesus, and put Him on the cross the next day. The eleven remain. They have left the upper room where they were starting in chapter 13, and they are now walking through the darkness headed for the garden where He will spend some time in prayer and then be arrested.

It's an amazing night. It was the last official, legitimate, authorized Passover meal. The night was fraught with the horrible reality of Satan and Judas. But beyond that, our Lord has for all the hours as

recorded in chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16, been making amazing astonishing promises to His disciples. He's been giving them some warnings along the way; but primarily, these are words of great, great promise. As they walk, the Lord, one more time, gives them an amazing promise: "If you what I say, you can be My friends."

There's really one reality that dominates this whole night. It's recorded in chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16; and then His prayer that night in 17. So it's a huge chunk of the New Testament that features this one night. But what really dominates this night is love. It's really a night of incomparable, unparalleled love that culminates the next day in the greatest act of love, the Lord giving up His life for His own. And He said it, didn't He: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man would lay his life for his friends." It's really a night of love.

If you go back to chapter 13 where it all started, they arrived in that upper room. "And Jesus knew that His hour had come – " the hour of His death " – that He would departing out of the world to the Father - " it says in verse 1, "- having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the limits."

He loved them to the max. He loved them, if you will, to the limit of God's capacity to love, which is limitless. It's about love. And love then becomes the underlying reality in all of His promises, in all of His warnings. Love is what is featured here.

Down in verse 23, John even identifies himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." And in that 13th chapter over in verse 34, we read our Lord said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you're My disciples, if you have love for one another."

And then in chapter 14, again in verse 21, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." And again verse 23: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." And again in verse 28: "If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father." It's all about love.

Then in chapter 15, do you remember verse 9: "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." In verse 10: "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

And our Lord then, in chapter 17, prays this prayer that "God the Father will fulfill all the promises He has made," and He wraps it up at the end of 17 in verses 25 and 26 with this final statement: "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

This is a night of love. This is a night of love like no other night ever. This is where the love of God is promised through Christ to all who belong to Him. Love is behind all the promises. Love is behind all the warnings. Love is behind all the commandments. He shared His love by washing their dirty feet in a humble way. He shared His love by lavishing on them the promise of eternal life, peace, joy, divine presence forever, righteousness, answered prayer, assurance – everything they would ever need.

His focus is on love.

But love hits high point in the verses that I read, 12 to 17; and the high point, of course, is verse 13: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." In this paragraph that we just read, the Lord expresses His love and commands His disciples to love Him and to love others, to live in love. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father. The Father and the Son love us. We are to love them and love each other. Love defines this relationship.

But it is a very unique kind of love. And there is a rather strange way in which this relationships is described here because in verse 14, we read, "You are My friends." But in verse 15, it says, "No longer do I merely call you, or only call you slaves, for the slave doesn't know what his master is doing. But I've called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." He identifies the disciples as slaves who are also friends.

Now, this might seem a bit bizarre to you because we don't have any slaves in America; and in the modern world, slavery is heinous kind of reality that we reject. We're not used to that kind of concept or that kind of social structure. We know about friends; and friends typically in our society are people who have some kind of usually somewhat silly and frivolous relationship. Sometimes it deepens into something beyond that. But this is a new dynamic reality: slaves who are also friends.

By the way, the Bible nowhere condemns slavery as a social structure – nowhere. It condemns every abuse of it as it condemns every abuse of every social structure. Every sin, every wrongdoing, every maltreatment is condemned. But slavery in itself, not only is it not condemned, it is elevated as a spiritual structure in which to understand our relationship to the Lord. We are slaves who have become friends.

Now you say, "Well, how in the world can that be?" Well, let me help you. In the Roman courts and in the Eastern courts as well in the ancient world, slavery was common. It didn't have to be bad. For some people, slavery was the best of all possibilities because they were cared for along with their family for the whole of their life. Many of them were so loved and well-cared for that they would go to their master and say, "I want to serve you for life." In the Old Testament pictures, they would put up their ear against a post and an awl would poke a hole in the ear, and that would indicate that this was a willing slave for life.

Well, at the court of Roman emperors, let's say, there were many, many slaves. There were as many as 12 million slaves – and that may be a low number – in the ancient world. And slaves did everything. They didn't just do menial tasks, they did everything. Every profession, every skill, every craft, every everything could be done by slaves. They were literally strewn throughout all the levels of society in terms of function. They were unique in that they were owned. But there were some slaves who had risen very high, and they had become friends of the king, friends of the emperor, friends of Caesar. Everybody understood that.

Look, kings need slaves. There were slaves who had access to the king because they were so trusted, because they were so faithful. They had so much fidelity; they were so dutiful. They were so concerned to do what they were told to do, they had risen through the social ranks until they were trusted enough to be made the intimate friends of the king. We read about these slaves that they had the right to enter the king's bed chamber so that they were the last ones to see him at night and the

first ones to see him in the morning. They cared for his most intimate needs at a very personal level. They were so well-acquainted with him that they literally were trusted with his life, with his life. They had become protectors of his life. They would know his fears because they were intimately acquainted with him in all informal situations. They would know his thoughts. They would know his hopes, his joys, his ambitions.

Very likely, they would know his plans. They would know far more about this king than anybody who met him on a formal level. Any statesman, any politician, any noble, or any general wouldn't know what these intimate friends of the king knew. These slaves who took his sandals off and put on his bedclothes, and were there in the morning to bring him out of bed, to help him prepare for the day. They knew more than his wives knew, because marriage was a convenience, and concubines were only for sexual pleasure, and children were not necessarily given the attention of their important fathers anyway.

One could say that these were the intimate people in the life of a monarch. They were the closest, most personal, private people in his world; and they had to be trusted. They had to be trusted with his life. They had to be trusted with his thoughts. They had to be trusted with his plans. They had to be trusted with his goals and objectives. And if you were a friend to the king, if you were a slave who was a friend, you were of all men most specially favored; and you can understand why.

By the way, the word "friend" in the Greek is *philos*. It's from the Greek verb *phile* which means "to love, to love, to have affection for." Jesus says, "You are My friends – slaves who are loved. You are slaves who know Me most intimately."

Go back to verse 15: "I call you friends even though you're slaves because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. There are no secrets. There are no secrets. I'll tell you everything. Everything the Father has revealed, I pass on to you. You know Me better than anyone knows Me. You know Me most intimately."

It's a magnificent picture of the believer who is a slave, but elevated to an intimate level of being uniquely loved and trusted. And to us, the Lord has given us everything that the Father has told Him. He holds no secrets from us. What an amazing way to understand our Christian lives.

You say, "Wait a minute: there are no secrets?" No. You have the mind of Christ; He's revealed it all here; nothing held back. How blessed am I to be able to say, "I'm a friend of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and He has no secrets that He's kept from me." "All that the Father has revealed, He has given Me." How privileged am I: this is real friendship. This is true relationship.

Now, when we talk about slaves who are friends, we're entering into a concept that is alien to even the evangelical world. It was back in 2010 that I wrote a book, and the title of the book was *Slave*. Some of you've seen that book; maybe some of you have looked at it – *Slave*. I had a hard time getting the publisher to accept the title. I had an even harder time getting them to accept the fact that I was going to expose a cover-up, a long-standing cover-up – a cover-up of centuries, trying to cover up the fact that Christians are slaves. I wrote the book to expose the cover-up, the effort that had gone on for centuries to hide this essential reality that we as Christians are slaves of Christ – slaves who are very intimate friends of the King.

Now, let me help you to understand. I want to make two points this morning. It'll take me awhile, but I'm only going to make two. Point 1: "Jesus is Lord." Point 2: "You're His slave." That's all I want to say.

Point 1: Jesus is Lord. That is the substantial foundational confession of Christianity. If you say you're a Christian, then immediately you would say, "Jesus is Lord." That's what sets a Christian apart. Caesar is not Lord. And by the way, in the ancient world, everybody was confessing "Caesar is Lord, Caesar is Lord, Caesar is Lord." Along came these other people saying, "No, Caesar is not Lord. Jesus is Lord, and we are slaves of Jesus who are intimate friends of Him."

You can't even be a Christian unless you confess Jesus is Lord, Romans 10:9 and 10, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved," right? And you can't do that on your own. First Corinthians 12:3 says, "Nobody can confess 'Jesus is Lord' except by power of the Holy Spirit." That is an absolute reality. It is an essential required confession and belief, and it demands heart submission. You may not have understood that before, but let me help you with that.

The true reality of Christ's lordship has been all but obscured and eclipsed through the centuries by the translators of the New Testament, and even the Old, who have tampered with the word "slave." It really is an amazing cover-up – amazing, amazing. But let's start with "Jesus is Lord." That is the Christian confession. It is the word *kurios*, *kurios*. That's the word "lord." It means "one who has power, ownership, and absolute authority; one who has power, ownership, and absolute authority." That's a lord. It's used 750 times in the New Testament, and its meaning is not in question.

There is a synonym to *kurios*. The synonym is *despots*, *despots*, which means "absolute ruler," from which you get the English word "despot." We use it as an adjective. Somebody's a despotic ruler, we mean they are a unilateral dictator. That's what *despotés* means. Jesus, in the little book of Jude, is called "Master and Lord – " verse 4 " – *despotés* and *kurios*."

When the New Testament refers to Jesus, it primarily refers to Him as *Kurios*, Lord. For example, our Lord is referred to 94 times in the book of Acts; 92 of the 94, He is called Lord; 2 He is called *Str*, Savior. The lordship of Christ is clearly declared throughout the entire New Testament. He is *kurios*, sovereign ruler. He is *despotés*, absolute ruler. So when you say, "Jesus is Lord," you're not identifying Him merely as deity – although He is that. You're not identifying Him in some sort of abstract way as the most important religious figure. When you say "Lord," that's slave talk, that's slave talk. You are saying, "He is the Master with absolute power and absolute dominion." That word would be used to describe a slave owner: "He is Lord."

It's such a bizarre thing, as I look back over my life, to realize that I have been trying for decades to get evangelical Christians to understand that Jesus is Lord. For a long time, it was the theology of lordship; and I was writing books – *The Gospel According to Jesus*, *The Gospel According to the Apostles* – trying to show that theologically and biblically, Jesus is Lord.

But now the church is much more informal and less interested in theology; and practically speaking, evangelicalism – that's a very weak sense in which they confess Jesus as Lord. It's really about me. They've really sucked up the air of the culture. The church is an assembly of people who think they're there to tell God what He needs to do for them, what He needs to give to them. It's sort of

like, “I’m Lord and You’re the genie. I rub the magic lamp, You act.”

I don’t think there’s an effort to prove this scripturally, but there’s just an indifference toward theology. It’s a kind of practical disowning of Christ as absolute sovereign Lord. I mean Jesus said it this way: “Why do you call Me Lord and do not the things I say? This is ridiculous. You can’t call Me Lord and then not do what I tell you to do.”

And that’s why in, for example, Luke 9 – you remember that familiar text; it also appears in Matthew, we look at it a lot. Luke 9:23, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself.”

You’re done with you. You’re not in charge anymore. Your ambitions, your schemes, your desires, your goals, your objectives, your possessions, your relationships all set aside. You deny yourself. May mean you hate your father, your mother, brother, sister; hate your own life. May mean abandoning your possessions.

It may mean forsaking everything. You can’t even perhaps go home and say goodbye to the family, go home and take care of all your things like the disciples in Luke wanted to do. You’d better count the cost. You’d better understand what He’s asking. You are saying, “You are Lord. That means You are absolute ruler of my life.” So the obvious meaning of following Christ is you must deny yourself.

Another way to say it is in verse 24 of Luke 9, “Whoever wishes to save his life will – ” what? “ – lose it.” You let go of all of it. You’re not in charge anymore. You’re not in control; that is most basic. Lord, *despotés* – master, lord, ruler. Very bold, very strong words. A master and a sovereign with absolute dominion; that is slave talk.

And by the way, wherever there was a *kurios*, there were slaves. Wherever there was a *despotés*, a master, there were slaves. If you were lord, then you were lord because you had slaves. And if you were a slave, you were a slave because you had a lord, or a master. One axiomatically implies the other.

No one is lord over nobody, and no one is a slave of no one. If Jesus is Lord and you call Him Lord, then He has a right to ask you the question of Luke 6:46, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord,’ and do not what I say?” because Lord means absolute monarch. So Point Number 1: Jesus is Lord, *Kurios* – 750 times again that is used in the New Testament. It is inescapable what it means. It means He’s in charge. That’s Point 1.

Point 2: Christians are slaves. Christians are slaves. We are slaves to our Lord. Again, I remind you, the Bible doesn’t condone slavery. It doesn’t establish slavery. It doesn’t condemn slavery. It recognizes that it is and has been a social construct, and it assaults every unrighteous abuse of every kind of relationship, including that one. But the recognition, however, that that may be, for some people, the best of all possible relationships because you are bought and owned, and cared for, and protected, and provided for, and rewarded, and loved. There’s a security in that that doesn’t exist outside of that. But in the case of the spiritual reality, Jesus is Lord *Kurios*.

We are slaves, *doulos*. Have you heard that, *doulos*? What does *doulos* mean? Slave. It’s all it means. Please, that’s all it means. *Doulos* means slave. It appears 130 times in the New Testament; 130 times the word “slave” appears in the New Testament.

Now, I know you're going to run to your New Testament, you're going to look for all 130. I want to warn you, you won't find them. You will not find them. You can get your concordance out and you're not going to find them. Why? Because almost all of those are translated by a different word. They are translated "servant" or "bondservant." Why? The word means "slave." That's all it means; that's all it's ever meant.

A slave is someone who is bought and owned. A slave was somebody who had no personal rights, no legal standing, couldn't go to court, couldn't own property – no freedom, no autonomy. That's very different than being a servant. A servant is someone who does something – serves. A slave is someone who is something.

There are six words in the Greek language for servant, and they describe all kinds of functions that people do. A non-slave could serve; a slave could serve. Service doesn't talk about the reality of your situation, it only talks about your function. But when you use *doulos*, if they wanted to translate servant in the New Testament in English Bibles or any other, they could translate servant six different ways because how the word is used kind of described its character.

One word for servant is *diaknos* which means "a table waiter." Another word for servant is *huprets* which means an under rower, somebody who pulled oars in a ship. It could be used metaphorically for people who served. But *doulos* does not describe any function, it describes a relationship.

Perhaps the most extensive and revered dictionary of Greek words is *Kittel*. It's about that thick on my shelf, about two feet of explanation of Greek words. This is what the article on *doulos* says: "The meaning is so unequivocal and self-contained that it is superfluous to give examples and trace its history."

Usually when there's a Greek word, they'll go on for 30 pages to describe all the nuances that feed into a settled definition. Not with *doulos*. Everybody's always known what it meant. What it meant is slave. A slave is somebody who is dependent, obligated, subject to an alien will other than his own. It is not the word "servant." Doesn't describe a function. But sad to say, I don't care what version you have – even up to the ESV, NAS, whatever – starting way back with the Geneva Bible, way back with the Geneva Bible, way back in the Middle Ages, there was a certain stigma about slavery. So translators sort of moved away from slave to servant; had less stigma.

One very interesting article in a theological journal back in 1966 says this: "By the end of the 13th century, slavery disappeared from northwestern Europe. Slavery, therefore, was known to the 17th century Englishmen, at least at the beginning of that century, not as an intimate accepted institution, but rather as a remote phenomenon. Slavery in their minds evoked the extreme case of a captive in fetters or chains, so they doubtless wanted to avoid the implication of cruelty inherent in that imagery. But in so doing, they have unwittingly diminished the force of the actual biblical term."

So they decided to play fast and loose with a word that means slave, and you will find *doulos* translated slave as we found it in John 15 because here, it is referring to an actual slave as an illustration. Whenever it refers to an actual slave, or an illustration of a slave, or an inanimate kind of slavery - like slavery to sin or slavery to God, Romans 6 – they'll translate it "slave."

Whenever it refers to a believer, there's an equivocation on that and it ends up being usually some form of servant. Sometimes, some have translated it bond-slave, but it's all arbitrary. So what has happened is you read through your New Testament and you get the idea that we are servants of God, we are servants of the Lord, we are servants of the Lord – that's how we think.

Truth is, we are what? Slaves, slaves. I did my very best with a long, drawn out plea with the translators of the ESV, the newest translation, to please translate *doulos* "slave," plain and simple.

To show you how embedded this idea is in the Old Testament, which is Hebrew, there's a Hebrew word *ebed*. It is a word for slave. It appears 800 times in the Old Testament, 800 times. In the King James Version, once translated slave. There's just this running away from the reality of the idea of slavery. But slavery is what God wanted to communicate through those words because it describes our relationship to Christ.

I'm not free under Christ, am I? My freedoms are defined by Him. My duties are defined by Him. My convictions are defined by Him. My words are defined by Him. My actions are defined by Him. My relationships are defined by Him. Everything in my life is defined by Him. I have yielded up – when I said, "Jesus is Lord," I have yielded up unqualified submission to the control and commands of the Lord.

A servant works for someone, a slave is owned; and I'm owned, and so are you if you're a Christian. You're owned because you were chosen off the slave market of sin, and then you were bought with the price of His precious blood. It's what it means to follow Christ. And you have to see it that way. Anything less than that gives you way too much latitude for controlling your own life. You need to be completely yielded up to the one who is your Master. This is why it's hard to enter the kingdom. This is why Jesus said it's hard. It's hard because you have to deny yourself.

First Corinthians 6, Paul says, "You're not your own, you're bought with a price." Acts 20, he says again, "the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." It's all through Scripture. Second Peter 2 refers to "the Master who bought them, the Master who bought them."

I love what it says in Revelation 5 when we see that picture of worship in heaven when the Son of God, the Lamb comes and takes the book and every creature in heaven falls down before the Lamb and they sing a new song in verse 9: "Worthy are You to take the book and break its seal; for You were slain and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." You bought us. You bought us. This is not an easy thing to communicate.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus is Lord, and ourselves as slaves." Not only His, but you're slaves. We are slaves.

And imagine that you're a Christian in Jerusalem and you've want to preach the gospel. So you go to the Jews who don't have slaves and you say, "You know that Jesus that your nation rejected and the Romans executed on the cross? You need to confess Him as Lord. You need to confess Him as Lord, and you need to confess that you are His slave. You need to confess that He is the absolute sovereign Master of your life. Set aside all your own will, your own desires, your own possessions, your own relationships, and follow Him; give up absolutely everything and yield yourself totally to the One who died on a cross to pay for your sins."

“What? I’m supposed to do that for somebody that the nation rejected and the Romans executed? And, oh, by the way, He’s God?” And imagine that you’re now given the responsibility to go along with the apostles into the Gentile world; and everywhere you go where slavery is recognized, but where there’s a stigma nonetheless to slavery among free men; and many slaves want their freedom, that’s why there were slave rebellions because there was so much oppression. There were people who wanted nothing but freedom, and so your message is, “I’m calling you to be slaves to a crucified Jew, executed by the Romans, and rejected by His people.”

What kind of message is that? That’s why if you go to the Circus Maximus in Rome – I’ve been there a few times – you’ll find a little kind of statue, and the letters are fading away. But if you go up to it and look at it, you’ll see basically the carving of basically a man with the head of a jackass. And then bowing down to the man with the head of a jackass is a guy worshipping, and the sign says, “Alexamenos worships his god.” This is the idiocy of Christianity: “Who would worship crucified man? It’s like worshipping a donkey.” That was a hard sell in the world, in the world of Rome, and the message was not received with favor – and you know the story.

And we talk so superficially about Christianity: “What does it mean to be a Christian? Oh, Jesus wants to come into your life, fix everything – make you happy, give you what you want. You can have what you want. You can live your best life now. You can do what you want. God’s your genie. He jumps and says, ‘I’ll give you everything you want, everything you hope for, everything you dream.’”

That is an absolute lie. That’s the same thing the devil promises to people. That’s the devil talking. The message of the cross is, “Jesus is Lord and Master; and if you want to follow Him and receive forgiveness of sin and salvation, you confess Him as Lord, and you become His slave.” And there couldn’t be any more wonderful life than the life of a slave chosen, purchased, cared for, loved, protected, provided for, secured, rewarded by a perfect master.

So what the early church was doing was basically making invitations to slavery. That’s what was going on in the book of Acts. As the very beginning as Peter preached his first sermon on Pentecost, he quotes from Joel about the Holy Spirit being poured out on all mankind, Acts 2:17, “Your sons, your daughters will prophesy. Young men see visions, old men dream dreams. Even on my slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth My Spirit.”

Even in the Old Testament, believers were slaves of God. And as they preached the gospel, it was always that kind of slave language: “Jesus is Lord; we are His slaves.” Acts 4:29, “And now take note of their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your word with all confidence.” And that’s what you find in the epistles.

As the apostle Paul and the other writers wrote the epistles, they talked about people like “Epaphras, our beloved slave, who’s also a servant of Christ.” Timothy talks about being a slave. Peter talks about being a slave. The book of Revelation calls believers slaves, all the way from beginning 1:1 – John, slave – all the way to chapter 22, the very end of Revelation, which is basically what we’re going to be doing in heaven – and I want you to get this.

Listen to Revelation 22:3. This is heaven. This is the eternal state, we’re all there, and it says this: “There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will

serve Him.” We’re never going to be anything but slaves. We’re going to be perfect slaves, we’re going to be in perfect obedience and perfect worship to a perfect Lord in the most perfect situation where He provides everything for us.

Verse 6: “‘These words are faithful and true,’ and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent to His angel to show His slaves the things which must soon take place.” So the book of Revelation was written to slaves in the 1st century who will still be slaves in the eternity everlastingly.

When Paul wrote his letters – Romans, Philippians, Titus: “Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ. Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ.” James write: “James, the brother of our Lord. James.” He doesn’t say the Lord’s brother, he says, “A slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter says, “A slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude: “A slave.” John, Revelation 1, “A slave.”

Again, I remind you, this is all slave language. The whole New Testament is based on it. We are chosen. Do you see what He said in verse 16: “You didn’t choose Me, I chose you. I went into the slave market of sin. I chose you. I bought you. I own you. I care for you. You’re dependent on me. I discipline you, I reward you, I protect you, and you obey Me, and you obey Me so willingly because your heart has been changed, that you’re not just slaves, you’re also – ” what? “ – friends. And I haven’t held anything back from you. I haven’t kept anything from you. Everything the Father has revealed to Me, I have given to you. No secrets.” Wow.

I mean isn’t it sort of basic? Doesn’t Jesus say in Matthew 10, “A slave is not above his master.” Do you think you’re supposed to tell God what to do? You’re supposed to tell the Lord what to do? That’s the devil.

All this nonsense could be easily understood if everybody’s Bible said slave where it should. You can take the 20 English – take 20, 22, 23 English translations; there’s only 2 that translate *doulos* slave. One is the *Holman Standard Christian Bible* - Southern Baptist produced recently – and the other’s an old one called *Goodspeed Translation*. All the rest muddy the water. When you understand *kurios* and *doulos*, then you understand what a lie the prosperity gospel is, what a lie the name it and claim it stuff is, what a lie the market-driven philosophy is that you come with whatever you want and Jesus meets your needs. All such notions are alien to the biblical concept of confessing Jesus as Lord.

I’m happy, blessed beyond description to be His slave; to be chosen, bought, owned, provided for, all my needs protected from all harm, and one day – listen. One day, I will be more than a friend; I will be a son with full inheritance. I will be a joint heir. Revelation says I’ll be in heaven, sitting on the throne with Christ, my brother, and inheriting everything that God has.

You say, “You know, this is kind of a blow against human dignity.” Really? Really? What does man have to be dignified about anyway? Let me help you with that. Turn to Philippians 2.

You say, “This bothers me. This is beneath me.” Philippians 2, verse 5: “Have this attitude in yourselves.” Do you have a problem with this? “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”

You need to be more like Christ. If this bothers you, you need to be more like Christ. “What do you mean?” “Although He existed in the *morphe* of God, He had equality with God. He didn’t see that or

regard that as something to be grasped that He wouldn't let go of, but emptied Himself, emptied Himself, taking the form of a – "guess what" – slave, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Whoa.

You are a slave who became a son; He is a son who became a slave. You are a slave who will receive all the glories of heaven when your sonship is realized. He was a son who possessed all the glories of heaven and emptied Himself of them to become a slave.

What defined His slavery? "He emptied Himself," verse 7, all personal aspects. He says throughout His whole life, "I do what the Father shows Me to do. I do what the Father wills Me to do. I do what the Father tells Me to do. I always obey the Father."

He was a slave of God in His incarnation. He shows us what that slavery is: "Not My will, but Thine be done, all the way to the cross; if it means death." That's taking up your cross, isn't it? "Empty yourself, deny yourself, take your cross, follow Me all the way to death."

Christ showed us what that slavery looks like, and as a result – I love this – verse 9: "God highly – " what? " – exalted Him, bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." That's the name Lord. That's the name Lord. So He elevated Him. Because He was a faithful slave, He elevated Him and gave Him a new name, "Lord."

Just an interesting word from tonight: for those of us who become slaves of Christ, Revelation 2 says, "When we are exalted to heaven, we too will be given a new name – a name of honor, a name that belongs only to us, a name that we can't even know now." We will be eternal slaves, but we will then be so deeply connected to the eternal God as friends of God in such perfection that we will literally have a personal name that God gives us in our exalted condition. Really, all you should want at the end of your life is to hear this, Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful slave. Well done, good and faithful slave."

Now, if this is beneath you, it shouldn't be. It wasn't beneath Christ. You say, "Well, no, I actually feel pretty important now. You've elevated me. I'm on the inside group. I am a friend of the King. I am an intimate of the King. I have complete access to Him. He doesn't have any secrets with me. We are so close. This is wonderfully elevating, this responsibility, this privilege."

That's good. But listen to this, Luke 17, verse 7: "Which of you, having a slave plowing and tending sheep, will say to him when he's come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? No. What he'll say to him is, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward, you may eat and drink.' He doesn't thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does He? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say this: 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" Just in case you were prone to get a little elevated by the way we've described your slavery: when you've done everything that you've been asked to do, when you've obeyed every command, you have only done what you ought to have done; and you are still an unworthy slave experiencing the eternal love and grace of God.

Father, we thank You again for the power and clarity of Your truth. We're so grateful for every new

reality that bursts upon our understanding; captures our hearts. We need to see ourselves for who we are. This is essential for defining how we live. What can we say? We're overwhelmed that You have chosen, paid in-full, the price for our sins, bought us and made us Your own. You will protect us, provide for us, and use us to Your glory forever and ever; and one day, make us into perfect slaves of our perfect Lord.

But now we confess, we are unworthy, and we are in awe of Your mercy toward us, which elicits from our hearts gratitude and worship. May there never be a question about our slavery because we are faithfully obedient to all that You have so generously revealed to us. Thank You that we have Your mind; we know Your will. May we do it so that we become even closer and closer and closer friends, and more faithful sons and daughters.

Lord, help us now to be faithful friends, slaves – joyful slaves, grateful slaves – where You have plucked us out of the slave market of sin. You chose us who are so unworthy. Fill us with gratitude that shows up in obedience, we pray in our Savior's Name. Amen.

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