

God's Possession

John 8:31-36 "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed"

Good morning everyone. I would like to continue this morning with the subject I spoke about couple of weeks ago but perhaps go into a little more detail.

If you remember I spoke on how we are **Gods possession**. That we were bought at a price and that price was the **blood of Christ**.

I was saying this is a critical truth; we are **owned by God** and if we could only grasp this fact it would change our lives. I do believe that a failure to understand what really happened to us at our conversion, when we became Christians, is the source of so many of our problems. And because of that we don't live out our real identity in Christ.

If you remember, I said last time that the Bible refers to us as '**slaves of God**' (now it refers to our identity in other ways as well - like; 'sons', 'friends' 'child of God' but perhaps surprisingly, the overriding description used of a serving Christian is a 'slave'. In fact there are 150 instances of this Greek word 'Doulous' translated accurately as slave in the NT.

I was saying due to the negative connotations that come with the word slave our modern Bible translations have translated the word slave in nearly every instance to servant and in doing so it has lost its real value and meaning.

That is because there is a key difference between the term servant and slave. A servant serves someone, they are paid a wage for their services and can quit at anytime but that is not this case for a slave - a slave is totally subject to the will of another and is without any ownership rights of their own.

Can I say though, this term slave is used with the *highest dignity* in the NT – namely, of believers who willingly live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers. It is an

unfortunate contrast however to how we would see and understand this term used today.

Firstly lets go back to our conversion, a number of life changing and fundamental changes took place to us, like we were 'born again' (1 Peter 1:2-4) we were given a 'new nature' (Eph 4:22-24)) became a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17) we moved from the 'kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light' (col 1:13)

But another vital change took place at conversion; **our ownership changed from one master to another** (you may say - well I was never owned by anyone!)

However the truth told by the scripture is; everyone in this world is owned by someone! everyone is a slave to something and someone. There are no exceptions. And there are only 2 possible masters; there are also only 2 possible things you serve, there are no other options and each of us has to choose one or the other.

Jesus said this;

Luke 16:13-15 *"You cannot serve two masters at the same time. You will hate one master and love the other. Or you will be loyal to one and not care about the other. You cannot serve God and Money at the same time."*

Paul says this in Romans 6 ¹⁵ *"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?"*

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness".

And so going back to our conversion what happened was; **we changed ownership** we were 'slaves of sin' our master was the devil. We couldn't help but sin it came naturally to us but when God purchased us, He rescued us from that dominion of Satan and our new master now is God and because of that change we have become 'slaves to righteousness'.

You could say we moved from one type of slavery to another, but there is an incredible difference from living under the bondage of sin and a cruel taskmaster the devil to living for holiness and serving wonderful master our Lord Jesus.

This may be a hard truth to grasp but it is important that we do so because it will lead to freedom.

And it's from that basis, this morning I want to briefly touch on 3 areas regarding what it means to be God's possession, under His ownership. What it means to be a slave of God.

Before I do so however I have to throw in a disclaimer! And it is; I'm not there yet! I'm still a 'work in progress' (like us all) so when I say these things, don't get the impression 'I've arrived' because I haven't, I'm in the same boat as you, just trying to grasp these marvellous Spiritual truths and make them a reality in my own life.

So firstly to be God's possession, to be under His ownership means; - **it's not about me anymore - the big I takes 2nd place**. We live and serve another, not ourselves.

Jesus says my 'food is to do the will of him who sent me' (John 4:34) likewise our greatest desire should be to do His will not our own. Jesus also says 'he who would come after me let him first **Deny himself** take up his cross and follow me' (Luke 9:23)

This is in complete contrast to much of today's 'modern Christianity' its not at all about denying yourself, in fact it's the opposite, the mantra is; 'what can Jesus do for me, how can he fulfil my ambitions, my wants and desires'. Many sadly are in Christianity for what they can get out of it - not what they can put into it - a type of self fulfilment. Rather than pleasing God and humbly serving others.

But a slave of Christ gives up his own rights and takes 2nd place and abandons himself to God. Jesus gives an interesting story of this in Luke 17:-

"Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? ⁸ Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'?"

Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰ So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

And the battle we all have as Christians is to **deny ourselves** and that battle is a **daily battle**. Paul says 'I die daily' (1 Corinthians 15:31) so firstly being a slave is to deny oneself and to put God & others first.

Secondly being His possession, under His ownership and being a willing slave of Christ means **we acknowledge Him in all things**

A good slave or servant never does anything in the dark! We have no secrets; we can't do anything without His seal of approval - who ever heard of a slave not informing his master what he was doing?

That doesn't mean we get tied up in knots and never move until we hear an audible voice of God tell us what to do! But what it does mean is; 'we acknowledge him in all our ways and he will make your paths straight' (Prov 3:6)

Do you think it is right to eat a meal without first thanking God for it? Acknowledging His goodness and provision? Or making holiday plans before at least laying it down at His feet and praying about it? Don't be so unwise.

Scripture says 'in **all your ways** acknowledge Me', '**in everything** by prayer and petition make your request known to God'.

Gods want to be included in everything we do from the most ordinary of things in our daily routine. I was thinking of changing my car recently and whereas before I may well have 'bombed ahead' and just gone out and purchased one with little or no inclusion of God.

However this time I prayed; 'what you want me to do Lord?' 'Is this just my own desire or are you in it?'

It may be the little things - like a drive to the shops, or talking to a friend on the phone – but acknowledge He is with you at least. Commit things into His hands. That's all He wants, inclusion in our lives.

Thirdly; **a slave is totally dependent on his master for all his needs**

We live in a crazy world, we need a protector, a good and kind master, Jesus is just that master like the 'kinsman redeemer' in the book of Ruth (2:20) He is the one that redeems us, who always protects, who will 'never leave us or forsake us'.

It's very easy to get into 'striving' in the Christian life, what we can do for God, that's not a bad thing in the right way. But importantly we have to remember always; **He is keeping us**. Even when we let him down 'He remains faithful' (2 Timothy 2:13)

I read this passage from JC Ryle this week; I was stressed at the time, thinking if I was doing enough for God. These few short words spoke to me and shows are dependence on God is fully satisfied.

JC Ryle ('Practical Religion').

“They that learn **that Christ’s love towards us, and not our love towards Christ** -- is the true ground of expectation, and the true foundation of hope. Blessed are all those who are taught likewise! To look inward to our love towards Christ – is painfully unsatisfying. To look outward to Christ’s love towards us – is peace”

So in conclusion;

I would encourage you to begin everyday with these words ‘Jesus you own me, I belong to you, here’s my life, take me, use me today as you will, help me to deny my own desires for self gratification and give me a heart that wants’ to please you and you only.’

Christ’s slaves render their service voluntary not under compulsion they are sure that Christ has taken hold of them (Phil 3.12) but they serve Him by their own choice, grateful He has set them free. They have committed themselves to Him for all their life, totally and unconditionally

It is one thing to sing ‘Jesus is Lord’ it is another to bow the knee before the crucified Lord and receive the ‘piercing of the ear’ - it is a commitment to a lifetime service that manifests itself everyday in the choices we make, but if we do so to the best of our ability, when we stand in His presence at the conclusion of our lives we will hear the congratulations ‘well done good and faithful slave’.

Amen

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