

Enslaved to God

If you drive away from Midway toward Bath along highway 92, you may notice a sign sitting on the left-hand side of the road. On this sign there is a question that asks “Who or What is your master?” Perhaps you have never noticed the sign. It has been there long enough that it has become part of the scenery and blends in with other sights slide past our peripheral vision as we head home. Perhaps, we have so much on our minds as we drive by that we don’t notice signs like this. However, this sign asks a very definite question that, at some point, we will answer. The idea of masters and ownership conjure darker times in our nations history and we prefer not to revisit those times. After all, we appear to want any reference to those times removed from our sight and conversations.

We (as a nation) are not alone in this desire to not remember history. In John the 8th chapter, Jesus has increased His following and tells them something that is still used today by many people. You may remember that catchy phrase about knowing the truth and the truth making you free.

So, Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free?’” (John 8:31-33 NASB)

We are Abraham’s descendants and have never yet been enslaved. Apparently, they forgot that for 430 years they were enslaved in Egypt. That happened more than 1400 years prior to this conversation. They too had forgotten their history. Jesus wasn’t overly concerned about teaching them history because His response to their indignant we **never yet been enslaved**; is found in the next verse.

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. (John 8:34NASB)

There we are. If we sin, then we are enslaved to sin. These are the words of Jesus. Those red-letter words that are often used to reflect the words of Jesus.

At this point, I share a story for you to think about as we read through our main scripture for today. The story is about a bazaar in a village in India. A farmer had brought in a covey of quail. Each bird had a string tied around its foot with the other end tied to a ring on an upright stick. The quail walked around and around in a circle, held captive by that string. No one wanted to buy any quail until a devout Hindu came along. His religious respect for all life and his compassion for these birds led him to ask the price of the quail. Then he said to the merchant, “I want to buy them all.” After he paid the money, he ordered the merchant, “Now, set them all free.” The merchant was surprised, but the Brahman insisted: “Cut the strings and set them all free.”

The farmer cut the strings, but the quail kept marching around and around in a circle. Finally, he had to shoo them off. But even then, they landed a short distance away and resumed marching in a circle, as they had done when they were tied to the stick.

The point of this story to remember is that God didn’t free us from sin so that we would keep going in circles as if we were still bound to it. He freed us from sin so that we would become a slave of obedience to Him, resulting in righteousness.

If you have your Bibles, open them to the 6th chapter of Romans. We will be reading the last half of this chapter beginning with verse 12.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. (Romans 6:12-14 NASB)

In the first half of this chapter, Paul talks about putting the old self to death and being buried with Christ in baptism and rising up to walk a new life (Romans 6:4). In this death, burial, and resurrection analogy, Paul introduces the idea of slavery to sin (Romans 6:6).

We will pick up at verse 15. Notice as we read through this section the word slave appears at least 7 times and enslaved once.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore, what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:15-23 NASB)

The idea of slavery in today's world is not a popular idea. We prefer hearing about liberation.

The concept of buying an individual is repugnant. For a human to buy another human and then claim ownership is abhorrent. However, there have been times when people were purchased for the purpose of liberating them. Buying a person for the purpose of liberating them may be based on the reality that Jesus bought us. We are told several times in scripture that we have been bought, redeemed, or ransomed.

One time is found in 1 Corinthians where Paul is telling the readers not to become embroiled in sexual sins. So, we read in the 6th chapter of 1 Corinthians: **Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NASB)**

Then Peter tells us that we are that our behavior should not be like it was before we were saved when he mentions that we were led by lust. We should be ready to do the things required of us as obedient children.

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (1 Peter 1:13-16 NASB)

Peter goes on to tell us that we have been redeemed or ransomed. With this redemption, we became an owned person (think slave).

knowing that you were not redeemed (with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*. (1 Peter 1:18-19 NASB)

Our purchase price was far greater than any earthly treasure. It was the blood of Christ.

Paul uses the image of our being purchased and owned by God. Again, these are the attributes of a slave. Slaves are purchased and become the property of the one who purchased them. We read in Titus the 2nd chapter the following: **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:11-14 NASB)**

The Biblical reality is that we are all slaves. The Bible tells us there are only two masters. Our decision is which one of these masters do we choose? Matthew 6:24 tells us we cannot serve them both. Jesus has paid for us but we must choose to follow Him. Remember the birds freed from the stick. They were purchased and freed yet they continued to circle the stick.

Our decision is a binary choice. There are only two options. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:13-14 there are two gates and we choose.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14 NASB)

We started this morning talking about a sign that asked us “Who or what is your master?” The Bible leaves us with the same question. Jesus has paid the price to own us. Yet, it is up to us if we will commit to Him.