

Ephesians

Week 17 – The Gospel of Slavery

Transition: The past two weeks we've looked at two of the three relationships that commonly existed in households in the apostle Paul's day (the marriage relationship and the parenting relationship). Through Christians in either or both of these foundational relationships faithfully applying what Paul taught, over time, societies were radically transformed because the bedrock of society (the household) was now under the leadership of the one true Lord.

Context: This week we are looking at the last of the common household relationships of that era, namely, the one between a slave and his or her master. In our day, we (rightfully) condemn slavery and view it as a despicable and wicked practice. Nonetheless, because it was normative in Paul's day, we need to do be open to understanding his teaching on this relationship, and even more, to what it can teach us about our relationship with the Lord.

Opening Questions:

- When you think of Jesus as Lord, what does that mean to you?
- Why do you think God did not directly prohibit slavery (one human being the owner or property of another)?

Scripture/Storying: 6:5-9

Discipleship Questions:

- FYI...the word translated as servant or bondservant is best translated as slave, because it refers to someone who is owned by another person. Why does Paul address slaves before he addresses masters? Why is this significant?
- What directions does Paul give to slaves? Imagine that you are a slave in that day hearing this for the very first time. What's going on in your heart and mind?
- Why does Paul remind the slaves "...knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free." (v8)? How does this encourage you in your own walk in the Lord?
- When Paul tells the masters (lords), "do the same to them," to what is "the same" referring? In what ways might this directive (when followed) change a household dynamic?
- Imagine that you're an owner of slaves at that time, what is your struggle? How will you overcome it?
- What biblical principle(s) carries into other relationships where there is an authority and subordinates? What are some relationships where you can apply the principles that Paul teaches? How will you apply the principles he teaches both as the one who has authority and the one who answers to the one in authority?
- How does the human-to-human relationship of slave and master help you (personally) to understand your slave/master relationship with the Lord?

Prayer time: This week we are praying for Horizon Missions Ukraine; a ministry Providence supports.

- Pray for David & Katya Snead as they share the Gospel with unchurched college students. Pray that the college students will have hearts open to receiving the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for David & Katya's safety as the war is still taking place around them while they are reaching those who have not heard the Gospel.