

PHILEMON

Lesson 12: SLAVERY

17 March, 2016

Two lessons learned from Philemon:

1. The New Testament Church should not waste time trying to right the perceived wrongs in our society. We need to be conscious of eternal souls and their destination. Temporal conditions that are out of order will be corrected by Jesus Christ upon His return.
2. Many of our personal beliefs are a result of what our culture or our secular education has taught us. We should always allow the Bible to correct our viewpoints when we see that our views are in opposition to Bible facts.

The word “slave” appears two times in the Bible (Jer. 2:14, Rev. 18:13). “Servant” or “bondservant” are the most common terms used in the Bible used to describe servitude. Biblical servitude was not a system of cruelty, but had many benefits to both the masters and the servants, as we’ll see in this study.

NINE SCRIPTURAL WAYS TO ACQUIRE A SLAVE

1. **THEY MAY BE PURCHASED (Leviticus 25:39-48).** A man could sell himself or his children (Exodus 21:7, Nehemiah 5:5) into slavery for a specified time period as a way of paying his debts.
 - a. This provides a man with an honest and honorable way of paying his debt.
 - b. Bankruptcy is not a biblical way of paying debts. In fact it is a form of theft where one man is given legal permission to not pay his debts to another man or to a business. Thou shalt not steal. Christians should never file for bankruptcy.
 - c. Free money given by the government (welfare) is not biblical. Welfare is not a merciful system. It promotes idleness and carelessness that ends up destroying your society. It is more merciful to provide a person with a way to EARN the money they need.
 - d. Slavery provided a way for surviving family members to pay the remaining debts of a man after he died (2 Kings 4:1). The debt didn’t go away just because the man died. Consideration was given to the family of the one who was owed money.

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2. **THEY MAY BE OBTAINED BY EXCHANGE (Leviticus 25:39-48).** Non-Hebrew slaves could be traded for other slaves, for cattle, or for provisions.

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3. **SATISFACTION OF DEBT (Lev 25:39-48).** A debtor who is unable to pay could offer himself in payment.

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4. **A GIFT (Genesis 29:24).** Zilpah was given to Leah as a wedding gift from her father Laban. Zilpah enjoyed many benefits from this relationship.
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5. **CAPTURE IN WAR (Numbers 31, Deut. 21).** A heathen taken captive in war could benefit as a slave by being taken out of the cruel heathen idolatrous practices—and then being taught to serve the True and Living God of the Hebrews. Another benefit is deliverance from poverty. The only other option was to die the death of an enemy.

6. **INHERITANCE (Leviticus 25:46).**

7. **VOLUNTARY SURRENDER (Exodus 21:2-6).** Sometimes freedom is worse than slavery because of the lack of opportunity to earn a living as a free person. As a slave, you have food, a place to live, protection, etc.

8. **ARRESTED FOR THEFT (Exodus 22:2-3).** Many people benefit in this case. The person robbed gets full restitution (paid back in full). The insurance company doesn't have to pay and premiums are lower. Taxpayers don't have to pay to feed, clothe, and house the criminal in prison. If the criminal knows he will have to pay for it all, there will be less crime.

9. **BY BIRTH (Exodus 21:4).** The children of slaves born in a master's house belong to the master.

Book Review:

“A South-side View of Slavery—or Three Months at the South in 1854.” Written by Nehemiah Adams.

An American pastor from Northern U.S. in 1854 travelled to Southern U.S. to observe the differences in how slaves were treated there as compared to the north. He was surprised to find that the southern servants were highly regarded, cared for, well treated, protected, respected, at liberty to dress nicely for church, well mannered, attending church services together with white people, very spiritual, and moral. They were under control, but to their own benefit. They did not feel they were under restraint or cruel bondage. In fact, those attending the church services appeared to be quite happy. They were very attentive as they listened to the sermon; never bored.

This northern visitor concluded that peoples' opinions of slavery would be much improved if they would actually go and see it for themselves.