**From Slaves to Friends, Pt 1**

*John 15:12-17*

**Context**

The bible calls those who know and love the Lord Jesus by many names and titles. In this section of scripture, Jesus identifies those who fit that description as slaves that are intimate friends. That may seem odd to us, until we genuinely understand the biblical construct.

Friendship with the eternal God results in “*joy inexpressible and full of glory*” (**1 Peter 1:8**). The opposite of that is a friendship with the world and it is “*hostility toward God. Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*“(**James 4:4**).

4 characteristics of biblical friendship

1. **Genuine love for one another**

***John 15:12-13****—“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.****13****Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

**John 15:17***—This I command you, that you love one another.*

1. This is not the first time that He’s given this command

***John 13:34****—A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

1. Love is the fulfillment of the commands

**John 15:9-10**—*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.****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.*

**Romans 13:*8-10****—Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.****9****For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”****10****Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

1. Only as one abides in Him can one love in this way

**Romans 5:5**—… *and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

**Galatians 5:22**—*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness…*

**1 Thessalonians 4:9**—*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another*

1. We are not only loved by Christ; He is the standard of love
   * 1. He loved limitlessly (**13:1**)

**Ephesians 5:2**—*and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

**v13—***Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*

* + 1. The love of believers should be selfless devotion to other’s needs

**John 13:35**—*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

* + 1. In so doing, we glorify Christ and exhibit to the world we are His

**Romans 5:6-8***—For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.****7****For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.****8****But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

**2 Corinthians 5:21***—He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

**1 Peter 3:18***—For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*

**1 John 3:16-18***—We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* ***17****But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?****18****Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

1. **True obedience to Jesus as Lord**

**John 15:14***—You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

1. Does it seem odd that to be a friend of anyone means you do everything they tell you to do?
2. On a human level, that is odd. On a divine level, anything outside of His commands are evil and sinful rebellion against God

**1 Samuel 15:22-23**—*Samuel said, “Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.* ***23****“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king.”*

1. Jesus is Lord!

**Romans 10:9-10—***that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;****10****for with the heart a person believes resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*

**1 Corinthians 12:3**—*Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*

* + 1. *Lord* (*kurios*)—one who has power, ownership, and absolute authority; sovereign ruler  
       - 1. Used 750 times in the NT
         2. Synonym: *despotés*, absolute ruler

**Jude 4***—For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master [despotés] and Lord [kurios], Jesus Christ.*

* + 1. The NT primarily identifies Jesus as Lord (94 times in Acts alone)—absolute ruler and dominion  
       - 1. The theology isn’t hard to prove; however…
         2. The practical disowning of Christ as absolute sovereign Lord is prolific in our culture today (sadly within the “church”)

**Luke 9:23-24**—*And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.****24****For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.*

* + 1. If you have a Lord, you axiomatically have a slave

**Luke 6:46**—*Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?*

* + 1. Obedience is not the means of salvation; it is the inevitable result

**Romans 3:20**—*because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.*

**Philippians 3:9***—and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*

* + 1. Good works save no one

**James 2:14***—What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?*

**Ephesians 2:10***—For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

1. By definition, if Jesus is Lord, His followers are slaves
   * + 1. Nowhere in the scriptures is slavery condoned
       2. It doesn’t establish it; it doesn’t condemn it
       3. It recognizes it as a social construct
       4. The Scripture does condemn every unrighteous abuse in every kind of relationship
2. As a slave, one is bought and owned (a servant works for another)

*Slaves (doulos*)—it means “slave” (position); it relates more to the position and not a function (i.e. “servant”); used 127 times in the NT

The meaning is so unequivocal and self-contained that it is superfluous to give examples and trace its history.[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. They were cared for
2. They were provided for
3. They were protected
4. They were rewarded and loved
5. There was security in it
6. We find “servant” more palatable than “slave” because of a bias
7. The reality is that we are more than simply servants of Christ, we are slaves  
   * 1. Our freedoms are defined by Christ
     2. Our duties are defined by Christ
     3. Our words are defined by Christ
     4. Our actions are defined by Christ
     5. Our relationships are defined by Christ
     6. Everything in our lives is defined by Christ
8. Christ purchased us from the slave market of sin

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20***—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?****20****For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

**2 Peter 2:1***—But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.*

**Revelation 5:9***—And they \*sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

**2 Corinthians 4:*5****—For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants [doulos] for Jesus’ sake.*(NASB 95)

*For we do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for the sake of Jesus.* (LSB)

1. This is not an easy concept
   * 1. The tendency to be superficial about Christianity
     2. Jesus wants to “come into your heart” and “fix your problems”
     3. He wants to make you happy
     4. He wants to give you your best life now

**Acts 2:17-18**—‘*And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;* ***18****Even on My male slaves and female slaves, I will in those days pour out My Spirit And they shall prophesy. (LSB)*

**Acts 4:29**—*And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your slaves may speak Your word with all confidence (LSB)*

**Colossians 1:7**—*just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf (LSB)*

**Revelation 22:3, 6***—And there will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him … And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His slaves the things which must soon take place. (LSB)*

1. **Correct understanding of the truth**

**John 15:15***—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.(LSB)*

* + 1. We are elevated to the status of “friends”
       1. Friends who have been told everything
       2. Everything the Father has revealed to the Son has been communicated to them
    2. Slaves who have become intimate friends
    3. This is so clearly modeled in Christ
       1. He emptied Himself because of the Father’s will
       2. He was a slave to His Father—He only did the will of His Father

**Philippians 2:5-11***—Have this way of thinking in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,****6****who, although existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,****7****but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a slave, by being made in the likeness of men.****8****Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.****9****Therefore, God also highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,****10****so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,****11****and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (LSB)*

**Revelation 2:17***—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’ (LSB)*

**Matthew 25:21***—His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ (LSB)*

**Luke 17:7-10***—“But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’?****8****But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and, clothing yourself properly, serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’?****9****Is he grateful to the slave because he did the things which were commanded?****10****In this way, you also, when you do all the things which are commanded of you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’” (LSB)*

1. **Called and Chosen by God**

**John 15:16**—*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. (LSB)*

**Conclusion**

The understanding of such a status as slaves who are friends of the King of kings and Lord of lords is an incredible privilege. It is critical that we have a right understanding of Him as well as a clear biblical view of ourselves. Because of His incredible goodness, mercy and grace, we have been chosen and purchased by Him for His good pleasure—which inherently is filled with unspeakable joy.

**1 Peter 1:1-2***—Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as exiles, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen****2****according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of His blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (LSB)*

**1 Peter 1:8-9**—*And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,****9****receiving as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (LSB)*

1. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Kittel  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)