

Is Slavery Immoral?

by Wayne Goff

While the unthinking person might immediately answer “Yes!”, we should not be so quick to dismiss this question. Consider the following...

Christianity Regulates Slavery

Ephesians 6:5-8 says “*Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.*”

How could the apostle Paul write this if all slavery were wrong? His instructions are clearly given to Christians who were servants to a fleshly master. Christian slaves were to obey their masters sincerely, as though they were serving the Lord, and with good will and good service.

This is not to say that such bondage is **preferable** to freedom, for it is not! Paul wrote elsewhere “*Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it*” (1 Cor. 7:21). Paul encourages those who **can** be free to use such freedom to the glory of God. But one could not go against Christ and the gospel in order to become free.

Similarly, Paul wrote to Christian slave owners: “*And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him*” (Eph. 6:9). They were not to mistreat their servants but were to treat them as they would have our heavenly Father treat them!

THE POINT IS THIS: If all ownership of slaves by masters were immoral, then God would not condone it by regulating it as Paul does in the book of Ephesians! Read similar instructions by Paul in Colossians 3:22-25 and 4:1.

Likewise, in the Old Testament, men were known to have slaves and to sometimes become indentured servants themselves (see Ex. 21:26-27; Lev. 25:39-43; Deut. 15:12-15). God regulated those relationships as well, thus we cannot conclude they were inherently evil.

Why Ask The Question?

Some of you may be confused as to why this question was posed in the first place. In the first place, we need not to **assume** something is wrong or evil inherently simply because we have a distaste for it. None of us in America today would want to be a servant, an indentured servant, or a slave **period!** But that doesn't mean that Christianity's moral standard affirms that personal dislike. Be careful how you handle the Scriptures.

In the second place, we see people today manipulating the Scriptures in order to make them appear *politically correct*, when God has never concerned Himself with such things! Our view of things can get quite skewed if we are not careful. For example, the Bible still teaches that wives are to be in submission to their husbands with all due respect (Eph. 5:22-24). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that women are not to teach *over the man* in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Not only are many so-called “*Christian*” denominations now teaching otherwise, the latest version of the NIV has even *softened the language in the text* to make room for women to teach over a man so long as the man does not object! The Bible teaches no such thing, and the following verses 13-15 explains why God has placed men and women in positions of rank toward each other. It is not to say men are superior to women because they are not. Men and women are both humans, made in God's image, and potential heirs of eternal life. But God has given them varying *responsibilities* and *ranks* for reasons known and unknown.

Finally, be careful how you read and study God's Word. It is alone *infallible, absolute*, and society's mores do not affect it!

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