

**I. Husbands / Wives
(18-19)**

Husbands Love

-Eph 5:25-33

-ἀγαπάω (agapaō)

-Sacrificial / selfless love: This is the most distinctively Christian word for love.

-In Greco-Roman society it was recognized that wives had obligations to their husbands, but not vice versa.

**II. Parents / Child
(20-21)**

**III. Master / Servant
(3:22-4:1)**

Why Slavery?

-Paul is dealing with the reality of the world of that time.

-This does not imply either approval or disapproval of slavery.

-The mission of the Church is NOT to overthrow human institutions, no matter how shameful.

-Rom 13:1-7

Titus 3:1 (ESV)

"Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work"

1Pe 2:13-17 (ESV)

"Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution..."

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Picks up on the general principle from v.17

18 Wives submit to your husbands, as *is fitting in the Lord*.

Eph 5:22 -> "...as to the Lord."

i.e. do not abuse your authority

19 Husbands love your wives, and *do not be harsh* with them.

Eph 5:25 -> "...as Christ loved the church."

Eph 5:28 -> "...as their own bodies."

20 Children obey your parents *in everything*, for this pleases the Lord.

Eph 6:1 -> "...for this is right."

i.e. do not abuse your authority

21 Fathers do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Eph 6:4 -> "but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

22 Bondservants obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <- Eph 6:5-6

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <- Eph 6:7

How does this apply to us today?

24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.

[Eph 6:8; 1Co 7:22; Gal 3:28]

i.e. do not abuse your authority

Masters treat your bondservants *justly and fairly*, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

[Eph 6:9]

Compare to...

Eph 5:22 - 6:9

Wives Submit

-Eph 5:22-24

-Everything Paul says is within the context of a Christian marriage. He is not implying that women are inferior to men or that all women should be subject to men.

-The submission is voluntary, not forced.

-The Christian wife who promises to obey does so because her vow is "in the Lord."

Slaves & Masters

-1Co 7:20-24

-Eph 6:5-9

-Tit 2:9-11

-Philemon

**Jesus Was NOT a
Political Revolutionary**

Matt 22:15-22 (ESV)

"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"

Matt 26:47-56 (ESV)

"Friend, do what you came to do."

John 18:33-38 (ESV)

"My kingdom is not of this world."

John 19:10-11 (ESV)

"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."

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Compare To

Ephesians 5:22–6:9 (ESV)

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Husbands Love

26 ἀγαπάω (*agapaō*): vb.; ≡ DBLHebr 170; Str 25; TDNT 1.21—1. LN 25.43 **love**, (Jn 13:34–35); **2**. LN 25.44 **show love**, demonstrate love (1Jn 3:17); **3**. LN 25.104 **take pleasure in**, to love based on its regarded value (Jn 12:43)¹

25. ἀγαπάω *agapaō*; of unc. or.; *to love*:—beloved(8), felt a love for(1), love(1), love(75), loved(38), loves(20).²

¹ Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

² Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

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Slaves and Masters

1 Corinthians 7:20–24 (ESV)

²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) ²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. ²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

Titus 2:9–11 (ESV)

⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

Philemon (ESV)

¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,
To Philemon our beloved fellow worker ² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

⁸ Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus— ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. ¹¹ (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) ¹² I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, ¹⁴ but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, ¹⁶ no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. ¹⁸ If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it—to say nothing of your owing me even your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ.

²¹ Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. ²² At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, ²⁴ and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers.

²⁵ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

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Be Subject to Authorities:

Romans 13:1–7 (ESV)

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Titus 3:1 (ESV)

¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work,

1 Peter 2:13–17 (ESV)

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Jesus Was NOT a Political Revolutionary:

Christ never led a riot, organized an underground, criticized the government, or took the part of the Jews against Rome. He did not offer himself as an advocate against society on behalf of any so-called victim of social injustice; and, once, he even refused to aid a man who claimed that he had been robbed of his inheritance (Luke 12:13). Jesus Christ was not a revolutionary in any sense of that word today. Although it is true that his holy teachings had the profoundest influence upon the course of history, it was always as leaven and not as dynamite that his influence worked.³

Matthew 22:15–22 (ESV)

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his words. ¹⁶ And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show

³ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Romans 13:1". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". "http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=ro&chapter=013". Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

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me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” ²¹ They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” ²² When they heard it, they marveled. And they left him and went away.

Matthew 26:47–56 (ESV)

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.” ⁴⁹ And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” ⁵⁵ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶ But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left him and fled.

John 18:33–38 (ESV)

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.

John 19:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

Bondservant or Free

Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

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Appendix A

Slavery - *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*

The practice of one person owning another as property, or one person owing a debt to another and repaying that debt via their labor. Found in the ancient Near East, the Graeco-Roman world, and the Old and New Testaments. Slavery is never clearly condemned in the Bible—it is accepted and regulated. Slave imagery is often used with positive connotations, as a metaphor for a relationship with God. No single description of slavery fits the various forms it took in the ancient world. However, it was quite different from the slavery practiced in the West during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Slavery in the Ancient World

Slavery existed in most cultures in the ancient world and in all the cultures surrounding the land of Israel during biblical times. A slave could be owned by the state—such as the publicly owned slaves in Athens who served as a police force—or by individuals. The majority of slaves were prisoners of war that were sold into slavery.

Slavery could take the form of debt slavery, in which people sold themselves or their children to clear their debts, punishment for crime, the birth of children to slaves, and the enslavement of victims of piracy or war. Slaves in state-owned mines worked under inhumane conditions and had a short life expectancy. Many household slaves, on the other hand, fared better.

Slavery does not seem to have been seriously questioned during antiquity. No movement for abolition was instigated, and slaves were more interested in becoming free slave owners themselves—owning a slave was a mark of status—than in creating opposition (Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 237).

Ancient Near East. Many slaves in the ancient near east had been prisoners of war. Others sold themselves or their children into slavery in order to pay their debts. The state was seldom strong enough to effectively supervise large number of slaves. Thus, many were semi-free and worked as serfs on state and temple estates, or as domestic slaves in wealthier households. This required less supervision. Others were true slaves—often branded to be easily identified as such—and could be bought, sold, transferred by inheritance, etc.

In the ancient near east, few slaves and serfs worked as artisans. Such skills were passed down through the generations of free people, whereas slaves were used for simpler tasks. It was not uncommon that slaves escaped. Some slaves, especially debt-slaves, were able to redeem themselves or get manumitted. Household slaves were sometimes promised manumission with the stipulation that they served their master throughout his lifetime.

Graeco-Roman World. In the Graeco-Roman world, owning slaves was not limited to the rich; many households included at least one slave. The Greeks and Romans both employed a system in which slaves could own property, earn money, and buy their freedom. This system was probably implemented to keep slaves submissive.

Slavery provided labor for large portions of agriculture and handicraft. Those who wanted skilled workers often used slaves rather than free men. Thus, many slaves were more economically secure than many free wage-laborers.

Aristotle presents slavery as a part of the natural order: “It is manifest therefore that ... some are free men and others are slaves by nature” (*Pol.* 1255a1–2). However, this was not the only view of slavery in the Graeco-Roman world. Philo, for example, differentiates between

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bodily and moral slavery and states about conventional slaves that they “rank lower in fortune, but can lay claim to the same nature as their masters” (Spec. 3.137). On the other hand, in his view moral slavery is ordained by God and such slaves are better off as conventional slaves, controlled by an owner. Others declared that it was slavery itself that was against nature (Florentinus, *Dig.* 1.5.4.1).

Slavery in the Old Testament

Decrees that involve slavery are sensitive to the fact that the Israelites had been enslaved in Egypt. Slavery as such is not questioned. Instead, the relationship between the Israelites and God is described as a new slavery—one with positive connotations: “For the children of Israel are my slaves; they are my slaves whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev 25:55). God liberated the Israelites from slavery under so that they could serve Him.

The idea that some people are slaves by nature, expressed by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1254b16–21), might be found in the curse of Canaan (Gen 9:20–27). There, Noah says: “Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves he shall be to his brethren” and “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his slave.”

Concern is shown for the welfare of slaves, especially Israelite slaves—the Mosaic law promoted mild treatment of slaves (e.g., Exod 21:20; 21:26–27; Deut 5:14). An increasing concern for Israelites is also evident, and a distinction is thus made between Israelite and non-Israelite slaves. For example, Lev 25:39–41 states that an Israelite who sells himself into slavery due to poverty shall be released in the Year of Jubilee (while Exod 21:2–3 says that the manumission, or formal emancipation, should take place after six years of service). Lev 25:44–46 states that non-Israelite slaves could be held permanently and inherited by one’s children. There are also instructions to redeem Israelite slaves that are owned by non-Israelites (Lev 25:47–51).

Jewish Attitudes to Slavery outside the Old Testament. In post-biblical times, it is uncertain if Old Testament slavery decrees were followed. The instructions to redeem Israelite slaves were complemented with the idea that a slave should not be redeemed at a cost higher than the original purchase price. It is also uncertain whether the laws on manumission were regularly followed, or if it was more common than in Graeco-Roman society (Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 385–87).

Some Jewish groups opposed slavery, but they were distanced from ordinary society. Josephus (*Ant.* 18.1.5 §21) reports that the Essenes did not buy slaves, and Philo (*Contempl.* 9 §70–71; *Prob.* 12 §79; *Hypoth.* 11.4) says that both the Essenes and the Therapeutae condemned slavery and did not partake in it. These sects were, however, fringe Jewish groups.

In Philo’s writings, the idea of natural slavery is discussed. He interpreted the enslavement of Canaan and Esau in Genesis as the account of how two kinds of people were created. One was the chosen people of God—naturally blessed—and the other was those who rejected God. They were naturally servile and, in Philo’s view, it was in their best interest to serve their superiors. Philo saw no moral dilemma in this (Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 241).

Slavery in the New Testament

There is no single or coherent attitude towards slavery in the New Testament, except that slavery is accepted as an institution—not endorsed, but accepted. Just as in the Old Testament, slavery is taken for granted and is not explicitly condemned in the New Testament. Both Jesus and Paul use slave imagery as metaphors with positive connotations. Jesus often uses slave imagery the most. For example, He portrays a true follower as a slave (Mark 10:42–44; Luke 17:7–10) and likens slavery to discipleship (Matt 10:24–25). He also tells many parables in which slaves are characters (e.g., Matt 13:24–30; 18:23–35; 24:45–51; Mark 13:34–36; Luke 12:37–48).

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In New Testament letters, instructions are given to both slaves and slave owners on their attitude and behavior. The picture portrayed is contradictory. On the one hand, slaves are admonished to submit: “be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable” (1 Pet 2:18–19 NKJV). On the other hand, slave traders are condemned (1 Tim 1:10; Rev 18:13).

Paul deals with slavery in several of his letters. His most explicit treatment is found in 1 Corinthians: “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called” (1 Cor 7:20–24 NKJV). Thus, Paul does not condemn slavery but rather confirms current practice and instills it with a religious meaning. In other places, he tells masters to treat their slaves in a fair and kind manner (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1).

Paul also uses slavery as a metaphor for devotion to others (e.g., 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 5:13; Phil 2:7). In these instances he sometimes calls himself a slave: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more” (1 Cor 9:19). He describes how Jesus—although He was God—humbled Himself and took the nature of a slave (Phil 2:5–8). He in turn identifies himself as a “slave of Christ Jesus” (Rom 1:1; Phil 1:1). Sometimes he uses slavery as a metaphor with negative connotations, for example, when he refers to life under the law as slavery and something to be avoided (Gal 4:24; 5:1).

It is unclear exactly what Paul counsels Philemon to do about Onesimus, who is probably a fugitive slave. He tells him to receive Onesimus as a “beloved brother” (Philemon 16), but this does not necessarily mean that Onesimus was to be freed. Paul may be implying that Philemon should liberate Onesimus (“you will do even more than I say,” Phlm 21 NKJV), but this is not stated clearly.

Christian Attitudes to Slavery outside the New Testament. Apostolic writings reflect the view of slavery found in the New Testament. In the patristic period, slavery continues to be regulated by Christian authors. The *Didache* admonishes slaves in a way that echoes 1 Peter: “And you slaves, subordinate yourselves to your masters in shame and fear, as to an image of God” (Did. 4.11). *Shepherd of Hermas*, on the other hand, presents guidance about manumitting slaves (Herm. Mand. 8.10; Herm. Sim. 1.8). Ignatius of Antioch gives advice to both slaves and masters (Ignatius, Pol. 4.3). Clement of Rome says that many Christians sold themselves into slavery in order to feed the poor or ransom other slaves (1 Clement 55.2). Many Christians used slavery as a metaphor for humanity’s relationship with God. Some stated that slavery was not a natural phenomenon (Augustine, Civ. 19.15; Basil, On the Holy Spirit 20), but did not question it further.

Etymology

The most common terms for slaves in Hebrew and Greek refer to both slaves and servants. A frequent term for slave in Hebrew is derived from the verb “to work” or “to serve.” This term does not seem to convey the negative and derogatory association that it does in Greek usage outside the Bible.

In Hebrew, no distinction is made between an Israelite and a non-Israelite slave, as the same term is used to describe both of them. The two groups are distinguished in Old Testament regulations of slavery, however. This is often emphasized in English translations—“slave” is used for non-Israelites, and “servant” for Israelites.

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DAN NÄSSELQVIST⁴

⁴ Nässelqvist, D. (2012). Slavery. (J. D. Barry & L. Wentz, Eds.) *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

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Appendix B

Slavery in the First Century - Faithlife Study Bible

In the Roman Empire, people were either slaves or they were free. These two statuses were central to the social and the legal fabric of the Roman world. Unlike in recent history, slavery in Rome was not based on race or ethnicity; anyone could become a slave and any slave could become free. Consequently, the Roman world was composed of these two groups of people who lived and worked together and were distinguishable by their social status of “slave” or “free.”

Becoming a Slave

Prior to the first century AD, the majority of slaves in the Mediterranean world were prisoners of war. By the first century, however, the primary source was through birth into the slave system. A child born to a female slave was also a slave, regardless of the status of the father. A freeborn child could also be enslaved: exposure of newborns was a practiced form of post-birth control, and these infants, who were left exposed to the elements to die, were often gathered by slave traders and sold as slaves. Children were also sometimes sold by their fathers due to the pressures of poverty.

Penal slavery was used to punish crimes committed against the state, such as evading a census, taxes, or military service. A judgment against a debtor could force a free person into slavery. Masters had a tremendous amount of control over slaves and there was no law guaranteeing that the master would live up to the agreement.

Living as a Slave

Slavery meant the complete loss of rights. It terminated marriage, family ties, business partnerships, and any public or private offices previously held. Slaves could neither act as debtors or creditors, nor was their testimony admissible in court unless it was gained through torture; they could be sold or loaned out at the will of the owner.

The treatment slaves received depended on their owner. Sexual abuse was not uncommon. Punishments, often cruel, included: flogging, shackling, branding of the face and forehead, iron collars, and dismemberment or maiming. There were few restraints placed upon the owner in the punishment he was allowed to inflict upon his property.

Roman laws did afford slaves some protection. Temples and statues of the emperor legally provided a place of asylum from unusually cruel masters. There was also the possibility of a personal appeal to the emperor, though it is uncertain how often slaves found opportunity for such appeals.

Under good conditions, slavery could offer security. In theory, all of a slave’s needs were provided for by his or her owner (i.e., food, clothing, shelter, medical care). Slaves were allowed a *peculium*, but since they did not have the right to possess property, the *peculium* belonged to the owner. Retirement, for those who survived, was usually at age 60; those who died while enslaved were buried at the expense of the owner.

Becoming Free

Slavery in the Roman world was not necessarily a permanent state. Emancipation was possible under certain legal stipulations. Owners were prevented, however, from releasing a slave from service directly. Both the slave and the owner were required to appear before a magistrate in a ceremony where a “freedom tax” was paid to the magistrate on top of the price already being paid for freedom.

Study of Colossians – Colossians 3:18 – 4:1
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Becoming a freedperson meant acquiring certain social and economic advantages. Former slaves owned by Roman citizens could, under certain requirements, become citizens. This new status placed them in a social level above slaves and free noncitizens, but restricted their status below that of freeborn citizens. Former slaves who remained attached to their masters' house could receive economic and political boosts not normally available to poor free persons. Former slaves may have learned a skill that enabled them to open a business—some entered freedom with money saved.

Newly-acquired freedom also had its drawbacks. Even after freedom had been granted, a former master controlled aspects of a former slave's life and finances. In addition to various social obligations, freedpersons were required to work for their former master a set number of days each year. In contrast to the slave, however, the freedperson gained certain rights. The former master was required to allow the freedperson sufficient time to earn an income. Obligations of service could be reduced due to health complications, or if the former slave had reached a social position that was not fitting for such services. These rights, and a variety of others, protected the freedperson from being re-enslaved.

JOHN BYRON⁵

⁵ Barry, J. D., Grigoni, M. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Mangum, D., & Whitehead, M. M. (2012). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.