

It's interesting how sermons develop in my mind, sometimes. For a long time I've been thinking about this election coming up in November, and I was wondering how great our nation would be if all Christians would vote with Christ. If every one of us would vote like Christ would vote, I think our nation would turn around and become a great nation again. Then I noticed I was on for the sermon today, and I began researching Scriptures to prove my thought, and my research led me to passages about our relationships to Jesus, which is really my subject today. This is not a political speech. During this research, I kept hearing this commercial on television by the NRA, the National Rifle Association, and it got my attention because in this commercial the NRA uses several different people to deliver their message and these people simply stand up in front of the screen and they tell you what they believe, but they all end with the same message. "I am the National Rifle Association of America, and I am freedom's safest place." Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clark makes the point that we are under attack in America by terrorists. He makes the point that freedom to bear arms is the best protection against terrorism in today's world. Another spokesman is a mom and she states that the best protection for home invasion is a gun. A black woman who lives in government high-rise is afraid to leave her apartment because of the criminal element that surrounds her home, and she owns a gun for personal protection. This man was born in Greece in 1939; he lived through the Nazi war and witnessed executions in the streets. He came to America and became a citizen because of the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, especially the second amendment, the freedom to bear arms. A black man living in Chicago is bemoaning the fact that we already have laws to protect us and to control guns, but the lawmakers don't enforce those laws. That is why Chicago where he lives has one of the highest crime rates in the country. All of these people end their segment with "I am the National Rifle Association of America and I'm freedom's safest place."

For me, the ad is more than just a message about gun rights. This ad represents people who are willing to stand up for what they believe. They are willing to take criticism and condemnation from people who don't believe like they believe about guns. They have the courage to speak out about their freedom to own a gun and that is really my subject today. How courageous are we to stand up for Jesus? The answer is in understanding your relationship to Jesus. I would just ask you to finish that phrase-- I am. . . How would you answer that? Oh, I'm a banker, teacher, I'm an engineer. That phrase may change--the answer, the continuation of that phrase may change-- based on the subject topic, but if it just came out of the blue-- somebody says finish that sentence for me. Would "I am a Christian" be the first thing that comes to your mind? Are you willing to take a position, to take a stand? Are you strong enough to handle the criticism and condemnation that will come from some people? Are you willing to let people know that you are a believer in Jesus Christ? I want to challenge your own perception of who you are when you say "I am" today. Simply stated, my subject is I am a slave to Christ.

As I researched the Bible for Scriptures regarding our relationship with Jesus, I looked in Strong's concordance and found the original word *doulos*. The meaning of *doulos* is to be a slave, someone who belongs to another, being in subjection to another. The word "slave" has developed a real negative connotation in our society today, so I don't

think many of us are going to walk around telling people that we're a slave, but the word *doulos* is written 130 times in the New Testament, and with the variations in the form of that word, it comes up to a total of 150 times slaves are mentioned in the New Testament. And it describes our relationship to Jesus. If you read the New Testament in its original Greek text and compare that with more than 20 modern translations we have today, you would come away stunned at how different the original Greek text is from any modern translation that you're holding in your hand right now. Almost all the modern translations have changed the meaning of *doulos* and substituted "servant." Well, the real translation is "slave." One example of how these translations are wrong when answered servant in the place of slave is in Matthew 6:24. The original Greek reads: "No man can be a *doulos* [a slave] to two masters." What does your Bible say? Does it read no man can "serve" two masters? This misleading translation is unfortunate since service and slavery are two distinct, different things.

No man can serve two masters is not a true statement. It is incorrect. Most of us have served more than one master. When I turned 16, I started working various jobs, and I had many masters with different jobs. At one point when I was in the Air Force, I worked for two masters at the same time. I worked on the Air Force base and served Uncle Sam all day long. After my duties on base were finished, I went to my supermarket job and checked out groceries all night. I had two different masters on the same day. The correct interpretation of Matthew 6:24 is no man can be a *doulos* [a slave] to two masters. Now it's true that a slave does serve his master, but a servant is not always a slave. There's plenty of Greek words for servant. Here are just six of them listed here [on Power Point], but *doulos* is not one of those in that list. *Doulos* is all by itself. It means slave, but in the history of the translations beginning with the King James Version, this word has been misinterpreted to mean "servant." At the end of the sermon, I'll tell you why I think that happens.

To be a servant and to be a slave are two very different things. I want to give you four things, four points to consider in your relationship with Jesus. These four reasons are why you should consider yourself as a slave rather than a servant of the Lord. The first and probably the major one is that **we have been purchased by our master Christ so he therefore has exclusive ownership of us**. You know a servant can be hired and quit, move on to a new master, but a slave has exclusive ownership to one person. In I Corinthians 6:19 and 20, it says "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, [he resides within us], whom you have received from God? You are not your own." You are not your own. You belong to somebody. "For you have been bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body." As a Christian we have been bought with a very high price, the blood of Jesus. This passage states, as a purchased slave of Christ, you are not your own. So many self-help books and advocates of improving yourself today advocate that we are masters of our own destiny. Not true if you are a Christian. If you're a true slave of God and true slave of Christ, you are purchased with his blood and therefore he owns you.

The second reason I want you to consider about your being a slave with Christ is that a **slave gives complete obedience to the master**. Philippians 2:5-8 tells us we should

be like Jesus in his obedience to the Lord. Listen to this. Jesus calls himself a slave. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God to be a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." He sidestepped his own desires, his own wishes, became a slave to God. He took the position of slave because he humbled himself. Jeff's class was real good today. One verse that stood out to me was Micah 6 verse eight talking about humbling yourselves. Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to his father God, to the point of death, even death on the cross. So a slave, especially a Christian slave, gives complete obedience to the Lord. You are not your own-- your wishes, your desires--they really don't matter because you're owned by Jesus. So it's our position to be humble enough to obey him, to please the Lord, since Jesus is our greatest example of who we are to be.

Reason number three is that **we have to follow the will of the master**. The Bible never condemns slavery. The Bible never condones slavery. Slavery was very common in the time of Jesus when he was on earth, and he never preached against it. So in I Corinthians the seventh chapter, it's interesting when it says "each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Don't worry about it. But if you are able also to become free, then do that, live as a free man, for he who was called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freeman. Likewise, he who was called as free is Christ's slave." It's pretty clear. It doesn't matter whether you're a slave or if you're free. When you accepted Jesus, it didn't matter. In Christ eyes, they were all the same. So if you accepted Jesus while you were a slave to an earthly master is what it's saying, or if you're a freeman it doesn't matter. Stay in that position because verse 23 says "you were bought with a price." Now you obey the will of the Lord, and then this warning: "do not become slaves of men, brethren, and each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called."

We have a really unique opportunity to look at the life of a slave in Philemon. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. He ran away from Philemon and met up with Paul. Paul writes to Philemon. He says I have your slave Onesimus here with me and he's serving me, and I appreciate what he's doing for me, but I'm sending him back to you because you're his master, so I'm sending your slave back to you, and Philemon, I hope you treat him the way you should. So slavery was never condemned, never condoned, it was just a state of affairs. It was just the way some people were; they were slaves. Other people were free, but no man can be a slave to two masters. That is right. Matthew six is right. You can't be a slave to two masters. You can't be controlled by two different persons, so exclusive ownership by one master comes with a high price paid for your salvation. It's the blood of Christ. And the Lord's will, his desire for you, becomes our will. All of these indicators are indicators of a true slave to Christ. Remember Mark 12:28? It says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength." Everything about you should be pointed to the will of God. It should be wrapped up in who Christ wants you to be. But if you try to follow the will of your employer, becoming a slave to man, which is warned against in this passage--if you become a slave to your job, you may not always please the Lord. You can only be a slave to one master, following the will of one master.

A slave has **complete dependence on his master for absolutely everything**. A slave doesn't get a wage. He's relying on his master to provide everything for his living. As a believer in Jesus we are totally dependent on him as our master for everything-- protection, provision now and in the future, totally dependent on him. That is what it means to be a Christian, a slave to Christ. "Do not worry, saying 'What we shall eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows what you need. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33). We are a good slave to Christ when we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Romans 14:7-9 says none of us lives for himself. We live unto the Lord. We are the Lord's. You are owned by one person. Only one person could have paid the price for your salvation. You're completely and constantly obedient to that one master when you are truly a slave. You have one consuming reason to live, and that is fulfilled in fulfilling the will of the master for you, for your life, and you're dependent on the master for absolutely everything. All that is directly connected to what it means to be a slave to Jesus Christ. We are dedicated, our devotion is to our master. We have no other master to obey, to serve, to follow his will. That is why Jesus said you can't serve God and money. You can only have one master.

So why do we have these mistranslations? Why is that in the Bible as we read today? What happened in these translations? I think the basic reason is that slavery has always held a negative connotation. It's definitely something that you wouldn't be voluntarily saying to somebody. The idea that someone owns you--that just rubs most of us the wrong way. I mean that's why we have so many small businesses in America. Everybody wants to be their own boss. You're giving up your freedom. Your ownership comes with complete obedience to the will of the master, and you have to humble yourself. That's a hard thing for most of us to do. You have to set aside your own personal desires and fulfill the desires that Christ has for you. That requires a higher standard of living. Not that the translators wanted you to have a lower standard of living, but most people today, our desire is to have a lower standard of living. That's what is common to man. That's the nature of man, not to have to live up to a higher standard of living. I think that's why all these miss translations have occurred. And I believe the translators thought it was easier to explain to someone about the plan of salvation if you didn't have to tell him that they were going to be a slave.

The gospel message is an invitation to slavery. It's hard to offer salvation to someone when you have to tell them that they're going to become a slave to Christ. On the other hand, the gospel is the only road to freedom from sin's bondage. The gospel message is a summons to slavery, but a totally different kind of slavery. We are a slave to someone. It's either being a slave to Satan and sin or being a slave to Christ. I appreciated Mike's reading. I noticed his translation used the word "slave"-- good, that's right; that's what that passage means. I'd like to point out just to keep a few key points in what he read in Romans the sixth chapter. "Do you not know that when you present yourself to someone as slaves for obedience you are slaves of the one whom you obey?" Whoever you obey, whether it's Satan or Christ, that's who you are slave to. "Either of sin, resulting in death or obedience resulting in righteousness, but thanks be

to God that having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." So let's understand this correctly. The gospel is an invitation to slavery. On the one hand, the gospel is your avenue of freedom from sin's bondage. On the other hand, it is a summons to a whole different kind of slavery. You become slaves of righteousness. Both sides of the equation are vital. There is a glorious rewarding relief to becoming a slave of Christ's. There's no legitimate way to soften the message of becoming a slave to Christ in order to make it sound appealing to people who admire Jesus, but aren't prepared to be a slave to him and there's a lot of people in that position. They believe that Jesus is the son of God, and they want to be a part of his kingdom, but they don't really want to be a slave. Jesus is not seeking admirers. He is calling us to be followers and not casual followers, but true slaves. Luke 9:23. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." That's slave talk. You have to deny yourself, put your desires away, take up his cross and follow me. That's slave talk. You can't do your own thing; you have to do what Christ wants you to do. It's the end of you and your personal desires; you're finished. It's over, it's done, you are now a slave of Jesus Christ.

If you're here today and you're ready to forsake the burden of a life of sin and become a slave to Christ, giving him complete ownership of your life, learning humility as Jesus did to the point of complete obedience to the Lord, seeking his will for your life instead of your own personal desires, we welcome you to come as we stand and sing