

# THE NT & SLAVERY PHILEMON 16

**Philemon 16** Not now as a servant (δοῦλον), but above a servant (ὑπὲρ δοῦλον), a brother beloved (ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν), specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?

Basics:

## I. Slavery was the reality!

**Acts 6:8** And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. **Acts 6:9** Then there arose certain of the synagogue (ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς), which is called *the synagogue of the Libertines* (τῆς λεγομένης Λιβερτίνων), and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. **Acts 6:10** And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

**Thoughts:**

1. Records were not kept / have not survived

2. Numbers varied from province to province

3. The kinds of slavery also varied greatly

**Philippians 1:13** So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace (πραιτωρίῳ), and in all other *places*;

**Philippians 4:22** All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household (οἱ ἐκ τῆς Καίσαρος οἰκίας).

**Acts 12:20** And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain (τοῦ κοιτῶνος τοῦ βασιλέως) their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.

**Romans 16:23** Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain (ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως) of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

4. The numbers were 1 of 8 in most areas to 1 of 3 in Rome -- that endured some form of slavery.

## II. Slavery was the **norm** / **reality** throughout history and across cultures!

I cannot / have not found a major culture that didn't enslave – at least

Plus:

A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet.

Slavery by any other name was still slavery & it had many other names!

Serfs, bondservants, servants, indentured servants...

Slavery was &/ is invariably economic.

## III. Slavery could not be changed **directly** & **easily**!

Sometimes writers will criticize the Bible / Paul for not condemning all forms of slavery:

- Paul had no universal, military power
- Paul did deal with the problem indirectly
- Eliminating slavery required much more than eliminating the institution / passing laws

What do you do with the people? Jobs? Homes? Education?

How do you change hearts and minds?

Mauritania outlawed slavery in 1905, 1981, 2007, 2015. . .and still 600,000 people are enslaved.

## IV. Slavery was changed **indirectly** & **slowly**!

How did Christianity change things?

1. By certain transformational texts!

**Matthew 7:12** Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, **do ye even so** to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

**Luke 6:31** And **as** ye would that men should do to you, **do ye also to them likewise**.

**Leviticus 19:18** Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, **but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**: I *am* the LORD.

**Matthew 22:34** But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. **Matthew 22:35** Then one of them, *which was* a lawyer, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, **Matthew 22:36** Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? **Matthew 22:37** Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**. **Matthew 22:38** This is the **first and great** commandment. **Matthew 22:39** And the **second** *is* like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. **Matthew 22:40** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Luke 10:29** But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, **And who is my neighbour?**

**Luke 10:36** Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was **neighbour** unto him that fell among the thieves?

**Genesis 1:26** And God said, Let us make man **in our image, after our likeness**: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

**Genesis 1:27** So God created man **in his own image, in the image of God** created he him; male **and** female created he them.

## 2. By changing the nature of slavery!

**Ephesians 6:5** Servants (Οἱ δοῦλοι), be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; **Ephesians 6:6** Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as **the servants (δοῦλοι τοῦ χριστοῦ) of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart; **Ephesians 6:7** With good will **doing service (δουλεύοντες)**, as to the Lord, and not to men: **Ephesians 6:8** Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, **whether he be bond or free**.

**Ephesians 6:9** And, ye masters (οἱ κύριοι), do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master (ὁ κύριός ἐστιν ἐν οὐρανοῖς) **also is in heaven**; neither is there respect of persons with him.

**Colossians 3:22** Servants (Οἱ δοῦλοι), obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: **Colossians 3:23** And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

**Colossians 3:24** Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for **ye serve (δουλεύετε)** the Lord Christ.

**Colossians 3:25** But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: **and there is no respect of persons**.

**Colossians 4:1** Masters (Οἱ κύριοι), give unto *your* servants (τοῖς δούλοις) that which is just and equal; **knowing that ye also have a Master (κύριον ἐν οὐρανοῖς) in heaven**.

## 3. By changing / transforming the language of slavery!

**Matthew 20:24** And when the ten heard *it*, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. **Matthew 20:25** But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

**Matthew 20:26** But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your **minister (διάκονος)**;

**Matthew 20:27** And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your **servant (δοῦλος)**: **Matthew 20:28** Even as the Son of man came not **to be ministered (διακονηθῆναι)** unto, but **to minister (διακονῆσαι)**, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**Luke 22:24** And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. **Luke 22:25** And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. **Luke 22:26** But ye *shall not be* so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, **as he that doth serve (ὡς ὁ διακονῶν)**. **Luke 22:27** For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or **he that serveth (ὁ διακονῶν)? is** not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you **as he that serveth (ὡς ὁ διακονῶν)**.

**Colossians 3:22** Servants (Οἱ δοῦλοι), obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

**Colossians 4:1** Masters, give unto *your* servants (δούλοις) that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

**Colossians 4:12** Epaphras, who is *one of you*, a servant (δοῦλος χριστοῦ) of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.