



Slaves For Jesus

Paul has written to Titus, who has been left in Crete to set the churches in order, telling him to teach the kind of things that go hand-in-hand with sound doctrine (Titus 2:1) and he has been telling him what he means by that (2:2 – 10). It means different things for the different groups in the churches. Each group has its own responsibilities so what is to be expected of each is not the same. So far we have thought about what Paul said should be taught to young men, older men, young women and older women. Next Paul has some things to say about what ought to be expected of slaves.

A Good Slave

Slaves are told to be subject to their masters. Many are surprised that Paul addresses the subject of slaves and masters without so much as a comment on how repugnant the very idea of slavery is to enlightened minds.



Why do you think neither Jesus nor his apostles called for the abolition of slavery?

Slaves are to be taught:

- To obey their masters in everything — the word translated “obedient” is a particularly strong word.
- To please their masters in everything: to exert themselves, work hard and do their best
- Not to answer back: in other words obey and strive to please their masters without question, not being sulky or surly, not making comments under their breath and, presumably, not complaining about them.
- Not to misappropriate their masters’ goods — the word Paul uses describes petty theft — but rather, by implication, to be good stewards of those goods.
- To show all good fidelity: to be faithful, trustworthy and reliable.

Peter makes it clear that to give this kind of service is not conditional upon the master treating his slave well.

“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.”

1 Peter 2:19 – 20

Perhaps the best example we have of the kind of service Paul advocates is that of Joseph. Such was his service, we are told, that Potiphar...

“...left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.”

Genesis 39:6

It would have been easy for a slave to find things to complain about and to justify, at least to himself, his complaining. I am sure many struggled with the thought that they were enslaved at all, let alone give the kind of service Paul said they ought to give.



How would you have counselled a Christian slave who was struggling to put this teaching into practice?

A Good Witness

At the end of verse 10 Paul explains why these things are important.

“That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.”

Titus 2:10

By behaving in this way, slaves would make the doctrine about God our Saviour — the gospel — more attractive. The word used here is the Greek word *kosmeo* from which we get our word cosmetic. It means to arrange or adorn something so as to enhance or display its beauty.



How would such behaviour by a slave make the gospel more appealing?

This is the third time in the course of these verses about appropriate Christian behaviour that Paul has talked about the effect of Christian witness in a non-Christian world (see also verses 5 and 8). The way we all live our lives can either bring adornment to the gospel or discredit it.

Slavery Has Been Abolished, They Say

Slavery has been abolished in our part of the world for a long time but these verses are relevant to any believer who is in employment. There are some obvious differences but in many ways the position of an employee is similar to that of a slave for in effect he has sold a certain portion of his time to his employer.



In what ways are the positions of a 20th century employee and a first century slave different?

In what ways are they the same?

What do verses 9 and 10 have to say about your behaviour at work?