

Why the Bible Does NOT Condemn Slavery

Joseph Herrin (04-19-2010)

The following was written in response to a man in jail who has been writing to me to express sincere objections he has to the Bible and Christianity. He asked why Christ and the Bible did not condemn slavery, for he views it as a great evil. The answer leads one back to the purpose of this age, and reveals the misconception that many men, including Christians, are harboring in their minds. The answer leads one back to the disciple's cross and the afflicted way.

Dear (Name Withheld),

You asked me why the Bible, and Yahshua/Jesus, did not condemn slavery. That is an excellent question, and the answer is one that provides much insight into the purpose of this present life that we are living.

So many people (Christians included) have the perspective that this present life is of paramount importance. It is the only life that many people know about. With this attitude, you can well understand why so many people are seeking to attain to the fullest, most satisfying life now. One of the most popular Christian books in recent years is Joel Osteen's *Your Best Life Now*.

Such books and teachings reveal the apostasy (falling away from the truth) of the church. The church is doing the very thing that the Scriptures condemn. They are seeking to accumulate material possessions, and are pursuing a life of ease and comfort. They do so because they have adopted the false mindset that this present life and age was designed by God to be enjoyed by man.

It may seem bizarre to hear someone say that this present life and age was not designed to be enjoyed by man, but this is actually the case. This present age serves the purpose of developing sons of God who will share His character and image. This character can only be attained through suffering.

Hebrews 5:7-8

In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*

This is the method by which ALL sons of God must be perfected (brought to spiritual maturity) and learn obedience.

Philippians 1:29

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake...

The prophet Isaiah describes Christ as "a man of sorrows and well acquainted with grief." This is the experience that is required of all men in order to lead them to spiritual maturity. As we are faced with difficulties, distresses, suffering, and sorrow we are provided

opportunities for the Spirit of Christ to form within mankind the image of God.

Consider those things that are described as fruits of God's Spirit.

Galatians 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

When do people have the opportunity to exercise the peace of God? It is not proven or developed when their outer environment is one of peace. The kingdom of God must be established IN man. Divine peace is developed when our outer world is one of great distress, and unrest. This is what Christ demonstrated when He was sleeping in the boat while the storm raged all around Him. His disciples which were also in the boat became full of fear and awoke Christ saying, "Do you not care that we perish?"

Christ had found the place of rest. He knew that He was not going to perish for His Father was not done with Him yet. Despite the outer circumstances He was able to maintain calm in His soul and abide in perfect peace.

When do we have opportunity to develop gentleness? Is it not when we are provoked? It is when people mistreat us, or speak unkindly to us. The natural reaction of the Adamic man is to respond in like manner, to fight fire with fire. Yet Christ instructed those who would be perfect (spiritually mature) to speak a blessing when cursed; when slapped on the right cheek, to present to the person the left cheek as well.

Christ demonstrated this as He went to the cross. Peter tells us that "while being reviled, He did not revile in return. While suffering, He uttered no threats." Christ was as a lamb led to the slaughter. There was no other way for Him to demonstrate spiritual maturity than to be put into very unpleasant situations.

The same is true of patience. We only can develop God's patience when we are put in situations that our natural mind screams out to be released from. It is therefore necessary for God to subject His sons to experiences that they do not find comfortable or easy. As they come to a place of rest in the midst of what may be very difficult circumstances, the nature of God, revealed in the character of peace, is formed in them.

The same is true of self-control, perseverance, and so on. We only can develop these things when we are tested, sometimes severely.

Seeing that God has determined that this present time is for the perfecting of His sons, He must choose to subject them to many difficult things. Comfort and ease and pleasure do not promote the fruit of the Spirit.

The Bible has testified that the church would fall away from the truth. They would equate material prosperity and worldly blessing with spirituality. This is what Joel Osteen and a host of others have done. This is the predominant thinking of the church today. What they do not understand is that as they set their focus upon a life that is pleasant to them they are

avoiding the experiences that are needed to develop spiritually mature sons and daughters.

In God's sight, this present life is but a moment. There are long ages to come in which His sons are destined to share in His glory and to exercise His power and authority. Yet, many will receive very little of any of these things because they have not labored to qualify themselves. They have avoided the difficult path that alone could mold them into God's nature and character.

When you read the Bible you find that the very ones that God loved the most, He subjected to very difficult experiences. He did this for their good, including His own Son.

David knew years of difficulty, living in wilderness places, being persecuted by Saul, knowing reproach and sorrow. Yet it was as he responded in a godly manner to these experiences that the nature of God was formed in David. Yahweh was therefore able to make David ruler of His people.

The same is seen in the life of Joseph. Joseph was given dreams of promotion, of ruling and reigning. Yet the path to this advancement and honor was exceedingly difficult. While his brothers were living as free men, doing whatever they chose to do, Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt. Later Joseph was falsely accused by his master's wife of sexual transgression and he was put in prison. His life was one of slavery and servitude. It was very difficult.

We read, however, that every place Joseph was put he was faithful. He did not wallow in self-pity, or grow angry with God. He did not abandon his faith. He continued to pursue behavior that Yahweh could honor and the day came when he was spiritually mature enough for God to promote him. God made Joseph ruler of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He was given honor and power and authority.

The process of Joseph's preparation serves as a parable for all mankind. God is seeking sons that He can promote. He is looking for those that He can bestow His honor and authority upon. These sons must be matured spiritually first. They must all walk a very difficult path so that patience, gentleness, humility, self-control, perseverance, peace, and such things as these might be formed in them.

This is the reason God has not condemned slavery. God takes a much larger view of things than man does. He knows that the experiences of Joseph as a slave and a prisoner were used to bring about godly character. So too will godly character be formed in all who can experience such things while yielding to the leading of the Spirit of God rather than responding according to the natural man's fallen nature.

Of course, it does not benefit a man at all to experience hardships, distresses, difficulties, and injustice if he does not choose to respond with peace, forgiveness, and other behaviors manifesting the nature of God. He will merely be hardened in his fallen nature, and will become bitter, angry, vengeful, depressed, or self-pitying.

This is why Christians are called to fight the good fight of faith. Responding in a godly

manner to adversity is not the natural man's normal response. It is a position that must be fought to attain unto.

God takes a much larger view of things, and He knows that a man can develop spiritually while a slave as well as a free man. It is all about attitude. Indeed, being free can be a great hindrance to a man unless he becomes a willing slave to God.

I Corinthians 7:20-22

Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave.

Do you see what is proclaimed here? To be acceptable in God's sight a man who is free must surrender his freedom to Christ. He must choose to not live for his own will and desires, but rather for the will and desires of God. He must make himself God's bondservant, a willing slave.

Philippians 2:5-7

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Yahshua, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, *taking the form of a bondservant...*

Christ was the perfect example of this principle. He freely subjected Himself to the will of His Father. He never sought to please Himself. He always sought to please God. Even when His Father revealed that it was His will for Yahshua to die a death on the cross, He said, "Not My will, but Your will be done." This is true submission to the will of another.

The apostles and church leaders manifested this same attitude.

Romans 1:1

Paul, *a bondservant of Yahshua Christ*, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God...

James 1:1

James, *a bondservant of God and of the Lord Yahshua Christ...*

II Peter 1:1

Simon Peter, *a bondservant and apostle of Yahshua Christ...*

Jude 1

Jude, *a bondservant of Yahshua Christ...*

These men had freedom, but they gave up their freedom to become slaves of another. It is no more difficult for a slave to do such a thing than for a freeman. All can be conformed to the nature of Christ if they will surrender their own will to do the will of another.

Slavery in the eyes of God is therefore not harmful to a man's spiritual development. In truth, it may be quite helpful. This is why God chose to subject Joseph to a life of slavery while his brother lived as freemen.

If our mind is upon pleasing ourselves, then slavery will certainly appear as a great evil. If we think this life is all there is, then it will seem unjust for any man to be deprived of liberty and a pursuit of happiness. If we have the mind of Christ we will understand that we are not called to please ourselves and this life is far from all there is.

I Timothy 5:6

But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

God has testified that His thoughts are not man's thoughts, nor are His ways man's ways. He considers the one who is living for pleasure to be dead already. They will forfeit long ages of ruling with Christ, sharing in His glory, power and authority.

You are on my heart and in my prayers.