

Philemon and the Problem of Christianity and Slavery

by Max Hougham

This sermon delves into the complexities of slavery in biblical times, exploring the different types of servitude and the nuances of relationships between masters and slaves. It highlights the importance of treating others with fairness and kindness, drawing parallels between the concept of slavery in the Bible and modern societal norms. The sermon emphasizes the need for Christians to embody the principles of love, equality, and compassion in all relationships, reflecting the teachings of Jesus.

Scripture: Philemon 1:16, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 4:1, Leviticus 25:10, Romans 6:18, James 2:8

Topics: "Biblical Servitude", "Love and Equality in Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

Good morning. It's just a real blessing to be here this morning. I'm blessed to hear the singing.

I just wanted to greet everybody in Jesus name. I'm thankful for the opportunity to gather together and just wanted to welcome everybody who's visiting and everybody who comes here regularly. Welcome and thanks for coming.

Does anybody have any prayer requests this morning? Why don't we stand? Father, thank you for this morning and this beautiful day and an opportunity to gather together to try to edify each other, build each other up, to hold each other accountable, to admonish one another, to try to walk together in your kingdom. God, I just pray that your will would be done here today. We lift up to you some special prayer requests this morning and help us all to be honest, Lord, with truth and to continue to push into it.

God, please edify us this morning and help us to edify each other and keep us humble. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

I wanted to ask you a question this morning and it's just kind of a subject I fell into this last week and I wanted to ask, what does your mind go to when you hear the word slavery? Sure, a huge blemish on our history. You know, the slavery that was forced on people of color here in the United States and the atrocities of it even in its mildest forms. Any other thoughts? Slavery.

Yeah. Okay, sure, like being a slave to sin, a slave to the world. Yeah.

Okay. That's good thoughts, Atlee. That's actually a really good segue into what I wanted to start with.

It's a little unusual, I guess, to do this, but I was reading through the preface of the English Standard Version and one particular thing that they wanted to bring attention to is the difficulty in translating from Greek the idea of a slave or a type of slave into English because there were different types of slaves and depending on how the word is used in its context, that determines what kind of slavery they're talking about. And as we study the New Testament, it's important to understand what type of slavery they're trying to bring out. I'm just going to read a little excerpt here from the preface of the ESV.

A particular difficulty is presented when words in biblical Hebrew and Greek refer to ancient practices and institutions that do not correspond directly to those in the modern world. Such is the case in the translation of Ebed Hebrew and Dulos Greek, terms which are often rendered slave in English. These terms, however, actually range, cover a range of relationships that requires a range of renderings.

Slave, bond servant, or servant, depending on the context. Further, the word slave currently carries associations with the often brutal and dehumanizing institution of slavery, particularly in 19th century America. For this reason, the ESV translation of the words Ebed and Dulos have been undertaken with particular attention to their meanings in each specific context.

Thus, in the Old Testament times, one might enter slavery either voluntary, like to escape poverty or to pay off a debt, or involuntarily, by birth or being captured in battle or by judicial sentence. Protection for all in servitude in ancient Israel was provided by the Mosaic law, including specific provisions for release from slavery. In New Testament times, a Dulos, which is where we'll be today in the New Testament, is often described as a bond servant, that is, someone in the Roman Empire officially bound under contract to serve his master for seven years, except for those in Caesar's household in Rome, who were contracted for 14 years.

When the contract expired, the person was freed, given his wage that had been saved by the master, and officially declared a freed man. I kind of think like the closest thing, at least in American history, that I could think of to that would be like indentured servitude, which is where somebody wanted to maybe get to the new world and start a new life here, but they could not pay the expensive fare to get here. That's just one example.

I think it had different forms. Somebody here looking for farm help for an extended period of time, and it could be years, would pay their fare, and in return, they would sort of work trade, and they called that being an indentured servant. Nonetheless, it could be, I mean, I think it was a way to exploit people, even though there was an exchange given and a type of slavery.

The ESV usage thus seeks to express the most fitting nuance of the meaning in each context, where absolute ownership by a master is envisaged, as in Romans chapter 6, slave is used. Where a more limited form of servitude is in view, like bond servant, as in 1 Corinthians 7, 21 to 24, where the context

indicates a wide range of freedom, servant is preferred. Anyway, so the whole point of my reading that is that in the Roman world, there were different types of slavery, ranging from absolute ownership, which would be similar to what we had here in the United States, with a middle ground of being sort of like an indentured servant or a bond servant, and then people that had more liberty.

I want to turn this morning to Philemon. It's a short book, and it is the book that most deals with slavery. I was reading in a source recently just about the Roman world and slavery.

It was a society that was very much infused with slavery. It was a very prominent thing. There are estimates that up to 20% of the population in the Roman Empire were a form of a slave, some kind of slave, up to 20%.

In the Roman Empire, slavery was not an issue of race, but it was more of circumstance. And even though there were different degrees of slaves, a slave was the absolute property of a master without any rights. There were rules in the Roman Empire that govern, even though the slaves didn't have any rights, there were rules about their treatment.

For example, if a slave was to be sold, their family was expected to go with them, even though marriages within the slaves or the class of slaves were not recognized. The slaves were commonly freed by masters also, which I think is notable, as a reward for serving well. Now, as we read Philemon, I just think it's important that we have that as a backdrop, that there were different kinds of slavery.

It wasn't necessarily slavery like we understand here, and everything we read is colored by the fact that we have this American history and slavery. Conditions could be brutal. I was reading about the types of slavery.

Some slaves would be in household work. They became very close to their masters. Their jobs were not hard.

Others were grueling. The Romans had bathhouses, and some slaves were assigned to stoke the fires in the bathhouse, and it was brutal, brutal working conditions. So, let's read Philemon.

I'm reading this morning from Philemon out of the ESV. I just thought it does a really good job bringing out what was being communicated to this man, Philemon. Just to give you a little bit of backdrop about Philemon, Philemon was a convert to Christianity.

It seems that he had some money. He had a house that people could meet in. He was considered a brother by Paul, and the subject of the entire book of Philemon is a runaway slave.

Philemon, or not Philemon, Onesimus. Starting in verse one, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus and Timothy, our brother, to Philemon, our beloved fellow worker, and Apphia, our sister, and Archippus, our fellow soldier, and the church in your house. Grace to you and peace from God our Father in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints. 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. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Paul's got some pretty high praise for this man, Philemon. Because it's coming from Paul, I don't think that it's flattery, but I think that it's interesting to hear these praises of this man leading up to something that Paul is going to ask him to do, which was both radical and very difficult. And one thing that stands out to me throughout the letter of Philemon is Paul's tact with this man and consistent gentle pressure in trying to stretch him into something that he may not want to do.

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love's sake I prefer to appeal to you. I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus, I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. This is where Paul starts to sort of drop the bomb on Philemon.

Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me. I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart. 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, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion, but of your own accord.

In other words, Paul's saying, I could command you to do this, but I'm going to beg you. And I could keep this slave, Onesimus, but I want you to choose to do the right thing. For this perhaps is why he was departed from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bond servant, but more than a bond servant as a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

It's almost like Paul is saying to Philemon, look at this golden opportunity you have. You lost something that was a piece of personal property, and you're going to get it back as a brother in the Lord. And I don't want this opportunity to pass you by.

So I'm giving you the opportunity to do the right thing. So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me. And I just want that to sink in for a minute, like that is a pretty, Paul is a Roman citizen.

He is not a slave. And he's asking somebody to receive somebody who was personal property runoff at a loss back in an equal status level as the Apostle Paul, not for authority, not for apostleship or anything like that, but just like to give him, to extend it to him the same respect that would be extended to Paul if Paul were to be coming to the house. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.

I, Paul, write this with my own hand. I will repay it to say nothing of your owing me, even your own self. Yes, brother, I want some benefit from you in the Lord.

Refresh my heart in Christ, confident of your obedience. I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I say. When I was a boy, we had this family friend, and her name was Sharon.

She was a realtor. And she was just one of the warmest and friendliest people you could hope to meet. But she was an incredibly shrewd businesswoman.

And I remember reading her letters to clients, or maybe it was like, for some reason, I got ahold of one of her letters, like maybe to a homeowners association. And she did this thing that I see Paul doing here, where she's presenting somebody with something they didn't even see coming, that they have not committed to at all. And then she would say, I want you to do this, and I thank you in advance.

Which, like, this person is reading this letter, and they haven't committed to anything, and there's this appeal within the letter to do something that they may not want to do. And then the person who's writing the letter seals it with, thank you in advance. Like, as a way of saying, I know you'll do the right thing.

And I don't, I want to be careful, like, I don't want to call what Paul is doing manipulative. But Paul is calling this guy to, like, this guy who calls himself a brother, this guy who hosts a church in his house, to really put some action to his words. And I just, I just find that really humbling.

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

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. I think Paul is a guy who's a master of using the framework of circumstances to persuade his audience. He uses the basis that, like, you're calling yourself a Christian, and I'm calling you to do the right thing.

I'm not commanding you, I'm just asking you, and I'm confident that you will do the right thing. Other examples of that are, like, in the book of Acts, when Paul says he's about to be beaten with the rod, and he says, tell me, is it lawful for you to be a Roman citizen uncondemned? And in another example, he says, they have beaten us openly, uncondemned being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out. I'm not sure I can, like, I'm not sure it's, like, within me to call on people like Paul does to do things, and yet I think we can learn from him about, just in general, like, this is a very, it's a very strong letter, and it's a very tactful letter, too.

And I just admire that. I admire that in Paul's writing, that he's challenging this man to do something radical, something incredibly difficult, and I think that's a good model to ascribe to. I want to kind of come back to the issue at hand here, this slavery issue.

You know, we have, we kind of went through what this letter is about. There's a slave who's run away, it's an isthmus, and then there's a man who is a Christian, he's counted a brother, and yet he's a slave owner. And I've found, I find this troubling, like, I have a couple questions.

Why does Paul address passages to slaves about obedience to masters? I think we all recognize that it's wrong to treat other humans that way. It violates the law of Christ about treating our brother as ourselves, or not even a brother, but just our fellow man, loving our neighbor as ourselves. It's a clear violation of the law of Christ.

Also, why are their men counted as brothers who own human property, or slaves? I'm not sure I have all the answers this morning, but I wanted to explore a little bit. Part of the answer, I think, through a little bit of study, is that it's clear that slavery was a foundational societal norm in the Roman Empire. Remember that up to 20% of the Roman Empire population was enslaved in some form.

Therefore, it was inevitable that early converts would include slave owners and slaves alike. And so my thought is that it's very likely that people who became Christians had to transition out of what they were in, out of what they were called out of, and it involved somewhat of a process. And I guess I think, especially talking about non-resistance, one thing we always get challenged with is, well, what about the soldiers in the New Testament? The silence on the subject doesn't mean that those men stayed soldiers.

When we embrace Christianity, when we embrace following Christ, it means that we're going to have to do some changing. And I feel like the same thing is true of people who were just doing the societal norm and engaging in slavery and slave trades. And therefore, there's a transition.

And I think we can piece together throughout the New Testament that these people were transitioning. Even so, it doesn't answer the moral question of why Paul seems to instruct slaves to bear their yoke of slavery. In this country, and this is something that I find deeply disturbing, churches defended, especially like in the mid-1800s and on into even, I would say, the turn of the century.

I don't think people just were like healed after the Civil War was over. I think a lot of people held on to these things. There was a defense from the pulpit, using scripture to legitimize the practice of slavery.

Consider the book of Philemon with me. Now, I don't think that it's fair to say that those people who were making a case for slavery were rightly using the scriptures. Consider with me for a minute, just the fact that the book of Philemon exists.

Paul is encouraging a slave owner to accept his former runaway slave as a brother, and likely a free man, offering to pay debts that this man owed. Consider these other passages pertaining to and probably used to promote or defend slavery. Let's turn to 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 1 and 2. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If that's the only letter or the only evidence we have, it looks kind of bleak.

It almost looks like maybe those men and women were right who were defending slavery 150 years ago. But there are other passages too. Let's look at Colossians chapter 3. This was kind of a breakthrough passage for me, and I just want to share it with you.

Verses 22 to 25. It's a lot of the same verbiage here initially. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God.

And whatsoever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done. And there is no respect of persons.

This is something like in 20th and 21st century America that we really don't relate too well. And if this passage is taught on, it's often about employers. However, this is about slavery.

It can apply to employers, but you have the freedom to leave your employer. These people that are being addressed didn't. This, I think, is a beautiful example of an inappropriate place for a chapter break, because we have to keep reading into verse one.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. I wanted especially to read this from the King James. That word equal means fair, but the translators, for reasons that I don't know, picked the word equal.

Now, just think for a minute. If this is the charge that Paul is giving to the church at Colossae, what are the implications of that as a slave-owning master in the church? That you would give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. And when you think about the Sermon on the Mount and the things that Jesus had to say about loving our neighbors as ourselves, there's not a whole lot of room there for a subservient class of people.

I believe that this is part of that transition that Paul is actually actively instructing the Colossians in. What would be the implications, perhaps, setting a slave at liberty? I like this side note here. I just look a few verses further on, verse seven here in chapter four.

Look who's there with Paul, who's actually going to be delivering this letter and helping to give people a rundown on the things that are going down in Rome with Paul. Who's there? All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother and a faithful minister and a fellow servant in the Lord, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate and comfort your hearts with Onesimus. That's his coming.

The runaway slave's coming to the church of Colossae. I don't know. That just really struck me.

That's who's going with Tychicus to share these things with these people. I don't know. But does it matter? I mean, does that change the fact that he's sending a runaway slave to deliver this epistle that has instructions to both slaves and masters? I just found that interesting.

Okay, one more, and then I'll be done. Ephesians chapter six, verses five through nine. Okay.

Bond of servants. Remember, that's kind of a middle form of slavery. Obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye service as people pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bond servant or free.

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. There's no room for cruelty to slaves. All are equal in the sight of our master, and we should treat them accordingly as the instruction here to the Ephesians.

Just wrap it up with some concluding thoughts here. The early church within the Roman Empire was in the midst of a society that was deeply involved in slavery. It was ingrained within the society.

Paul had to deal with the reality that new converts were going to be both slaves and slave owners. It was a reality. And he had to instruct them through his epistles to conform to the law of Christ on this issue.

It doesn't seem enough to us, Paul's words, I think at least it doesn't strike me as enough sometimes when we have the American history of brutality of slavery and not the kingdom of God, but the society within which it has existed has spurned it and condemned its practice. But think about it this way, to the churches he was writing to, it would be radical to treat slaves fairly and equally and even release them. Those are radical ideas to a society that is actively engaged in slavery.

My main basis for my conclusion is the very existence of the book of Philemon and Paul's gentle and not so subtle pressure on Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a brother, as well as his epistles to other

churches that contain instructions to masters to be mindful of slave treatment in light of their master, their heavenly master. And I don't think that it's totally irrelevant just because we live in a society that doesn't have slavery anymore. I think that all, every one of us is in transition trying to be more fully conformed to the mind of Christ.

And there are things that we used to formally do that we will find no longer fitting that we have to forsake and move past. And slavery still exists in the world and therefore these letters are still relevant today. That's all I have.

I hope that wasn't too long. God bless you all. Yeah, thank you Max.

This is a topic I've thought a lot about. I find it very fascinating. If you said it, I missed it, or maybe you implied it.

I was kind of listening for it, but maybe I missed it. But to me the big glaring omission is that we don't, we don't, somebody correct me. Maybe I might be saying this wrong, but I don't think that there's any teaching of like, hey don't you guys, you guys are Christians now.

You shouldn't be owning slaves. Owning slaves is wrong. Having human property is wrong.

Stop that. It's bad. It's sinful.

It's uncharitable. It's ungodly. It's not the Christian thing.

But rather we have instructions to be a good master. I don't, so I, I don't think there's any, okay maybe before I say anything further, I want to make the distinction, like, so Max said this thing, like when we hear slave we automatically think cruel, taskmaster, you just this unkind, unthankful, proud owner of another human being who demands lots of them and beats them and stuff like, as though it's synonymous. And I really want to make the distinction there.

There is a difference between being a lord or a master and being a cruel taskmaster. I think it's how it's worded in one place. And we know this because, because we are slaves.

We are absolutely owned by, by the Lord. He is our master. We absolutely, He absolutely owns us.

And there's no, there's no shame in it. Like if, if we would have the right attitude, we would embrace this position. And I don't, if it's an, if, if, if being a slave is, is a position to be embraced with God, I don't see why it couldn't also be embraced to be the servant or to be owned of a man.

And again, I want to clarify, like, I don't, I don't think it has to look the way that it's always, you know, that we have, like, we have this picture of, of American slavery, how that it's always bad. We, we live in a time where, especially here in America, but really all over the world, it's because of this thing called the industrial revolution. Everything is different.

It's so vastly different that it's, it's almost difficult to even comprehend how different things used to be. Things used to be such that if you didn't, uh, if you had a job with somebody, it was, that was a precious thing and you did not want to lose it because jobs were not easy. Nowadays, jobs are easy to come by.

You quit one job, you go get another job. There's, it's just like, you don't even think about it. It's so easy to get a job.

And for most of human history, that was not the case. Like we have the story of the prodigal son, like that guy, he had no op, like his only job he could get was, was where he was feeding pigs more than he was getting paid. Like he did not have any other, he did not have any other options.

Like this is, this is, I think, typical of how things used to be. Um, many people were at the bottom and they just didn't have opportunities. If you didn't have a trade, if you lost, or if you lost your job, you would be in a terrible, terrible position.

And there were lots of, there was, there was more people that wanted or needed work or, uh, paying work of some kind than, than there was work available. Um, peop, people would have gladly, if there was somebody who was going to give you a place to stay and give you food, you, you'd give your life for them. Like you, you'd be grateful to do it.

Um, and, and the person who's taking care of you and giving you work is really, uh, what's the word I'm looking for? Uh, but it would be very benevolent that they would be like doing you a great favor to, to be taking care of you in exchange for your service. Um, again, this, please try to separate what I'm saying from somebody who's just proud and, um, unkind and, and, and demanding, but, um, kind of like this thing when Max said, um, he gave this example of, of somebody who wanted something to get, he gave the example of getting, getting across the ocean on a boat so badly that they, they make an agreement. If you can, if you can do this for me, I'll just give you my whole self.

Like what else, what other choice do I have? And that the problem comes, um, and, and this is kind of what I would say is kind of crept into our entire mindset. Imagine that you, you're so desperate. You'd be so grateful if somebody would just make you their servant and take care of you and get you out of this terrible position that you're in so that you can take care of your family and you, they make you this offer and you, they give you the thing, they pay you up front, they pay you ahead of time, something that can't be taken back or paid back.

And then, and then you give your life to them. And then, and then you just, after a while you just start thinking like, man, why do I got to work for this guy? What? I mean, it's really like, um, I want to say it's the devil in a lot of cases, but just for the most part, like this atmosphere has been created where people can just despise their boss because they can go get another job. They're not dependent upon them.

And they can just be, eh, I can get better wages for somebody else. And it's, it's just, it creates this atmosphere where there's not good bosses and there's not good servants. Um, that there's, there's, I say it's the devil.

It's just kind of, it's probably just the love of money. Um, and I'm sure he's responsible, but it, it calls out to, um, it calls out to children. You don't have to be under your parents.

Look at all this opportunity. You can get out of their house and it's easy. Like you're not dependent upon them.

Wives aren't dependent upon their husbands anymore. Like it's just, there's all this opportunity and nobody has to serve anybody. Like you, everybody can be your own man.

And I, I mean, I, I just want to say like that it's not godly. Like we, we don't, we don't see this concept where God is telling, God is encouraging people to get out, um, to be your own man and don't serve another man. Um, we ought not serve sin, but there's no shame in serving a man.

Anyway, um, I, I just really want to, we don't really have a context. I don't, I don't think nearly anywhere on the planet you can't, we can't say like, you know, like it is in such and such a place, like just even in the poorest places, I don't think it's as desperate as it, as it has been in times past where these things were much more, uh, much more reasonable. I, um, I, anyway, I just like, I just kind of want to especially make that point.

Like we don't see God or any of the servants of God encouraging people to long for their freedom, um, or even tell people who are, who, who have people in their service that they really ought to be giving people their freedom, but really just to be, um, um, to be gracious and to be good. And, and kind of like when it, when it says plainly, like, because remember, because you also have a Lord, like this relationship that we have with the Lord isn't bad. And I, and I don't think necessarily a slave master, um, relationship was, was bad at all.

Um, anyway, I'd be glad for anybody to corrections. I don't want to say too much either, but being as buddy opened it up anyway. I agree with what he's been saying here.

I think there's, except one thing, didn't Paul mentioned somewhere about if you can be free, take it like in Romans somewhere. Maybe I didn't look it up, but I think just like, and I don't want, I mean, this could, this could be a, a half day's but, uh, and I think there are still areas in the world, maybe that, that people are in this situation where they are basically, if not fully like a slave. But I think, I think it's more complicated than just like, if we have this thing in our mind, like, okay, freedom, like, like if, if, if such a master were to come to Christ and just say, okay, now you're free, go.

It's not always humane. I don't think, I mean, like some of these situations, if we, if we go back to the American slaves, like, um, the, these people that maybe for generations have been slaves, and one day the master becomes a Christian, if he then the next day turns around and says, now you're all free, I'm no longer, I have freed you, go. You can go wherever you want, just go, is not necessarily humane either.

I think there's much more, uh, to it. There's more complications to it. Um, and there's more responsibility for this master that has become a Christian than, than just the fact of signing free papers and saying, so there could be a, there could be a long, a long discussion along on this matter.

But I, I think this master does have a responsibility to act in a Christian manner toward his slaves. And if it were possible to free them and set them on their feet, let them go, if they want to go, that would be preferred. Um, anyway, I don't, there's more I could say, but there's, there's, there's other, there's other situations that we can look at in history.

Um, the serfs in Russia where they, they served the, um, the landholders and, and they're the same way. Like, um, if you read any of Tolstoy, uh, there, there, there's these pictures of, of men that saw this thing and were striving, like they, they battled with this question of how to, how to free their serfs basically. And it's not, it's not as easy as just, there you go.

And I think there's more responsibility for one that is in, in such a situation. Although we have a, we have a harder time of grappling with that in our mind because of where we're at, uh, in this society. Um, anyway, my, my mind's been going all over the place.

I don't know that I have a, any specific disagreement, um, other than just to point out what Buddy was trying to point out as well, that it's not just a flat, um, a flat question and, and a flat answer, if you will.

Yeah, it might be unnecessary for me to add my voice or opinion here, but, um, I did find it very, a very good lesson, very good comments here. Um, and it is one of, I guess I kind of felt like Leroy, just like, man, I've, I've grappled with some of these thoughts for a long time and I, uh, and still do like, and, and what I, what I think is something like, I think, I think Max is emphasizing like, uh, the error of masters who are not cruel, who, who are, who are like taking advantage of servants.

And, and yet when I, all these passages that Max read, like, there is an instruction to both the master and the servant. And, and I, I think we do well to, to see both of them. Like, I agree with what Buddy said, like, it's not, not, not every, not every master was what we think of when we first think about slavery.

Like, oh man, people driving men in the heat, uh, and whipping men and, and that those things happen. They're, they're completely wrong. But sometimes I've read stories of like, I've read stories of, of people who owned servants and were such, such good and benevolent masters and, and servants who had such a, such a, um, in, in Uncle Tom's cabin, Uncle Tom is the person that comes to my mind, such a heart of Christ that like, the whole picture, the whole picture looks really beautiful.

Um, like it looks, it looks like, wow, here is a man who, who is a, who is a master like unto God is our master. And here is a servant like unto how we are a servant. And it's almost beautiful.

And I just don't have, I guess because of these instructions that we have for both people, I have struggled with what to think about people who worked on the underground railroad in America and helped run away slaves. And, and I've often come to the conclusion that like, I think that was wrong. And then, and then some brother Joseph's not here, but he sometimes challenged me, well, what, you know, what, what would you do if one of your daughters was somehow became a slave, like to some evil man who used, you know, who used her for money.

And it's like, Oh man. Yeah. Or, or maybe not even just my own daughter, like any, any, any woman, like, I don't have the answer to all those questions, but, but there is, I think there is something that we have in the kingdom of God that the world cannot have and worldly governments cannot have because, because the kingdom of God only functions and only governs if, if it is by choice and free will that somebody enters it.

It's why his kingdom is different from this world. The other, not too long ago, Joseph and I were having this conversation with a man in Springfield who had a, who had a Black Lives Matter shirt on. And, and, and it was because of that shirt that we struck up a conversation and somewhere in the conversation, he, he was saying something like, I think Joseph started saying, if we would all follow Jesus teachings and he, this man interrupted and said, we'd all be socialists.

And, and I said something like, okay, if, if we all, like, if we all follow Jesus teachings, we would all like, in a sense, be socialists in the level that we would look out for our neighbor. We would love our neighbor as ourself. We would not have what another needs.

And we have abundance and another has need. However, I said that the, you know, what, what's being pushed in, in a socialistic government is theft because it is theft to take from a rich man and give it to a poor man. And, and, and then it was later, the, the more I thought about that, the more I thought like, okay, yeah.

And the reason, the reason it never works in government is because you can never get a whole society willing to, to do that. And if, if there's not a free will willingness to do that, then it becomes this, then it becomes this dictating authoritarian thing with cruelty, with it, it has to be, it has to be done with guns and swords. And that, that is also what, what, what happens in, in slavery and like people will, will maintain them with guns and swords, with violence, with power.

But, but in the kingdom of God, like we can instruct both, we can instruct both people, like the same thing that Paul instructs Philemon, like, treat this man as an, as a brother. He, receive him as if you were receiving me. And, and, and, and don't, don't think that, don't think that you, you, you own him in a way that you can take advantage from him.

But, but at the same time, I think he is also like saying to, uh, to Onesimus, like, you need to go back to him. I don't, I don't want to do something with you without his consent. You, you to some level belong to him.

And, um, anyway, those are, those are some of my thoughts. My comments are not going to be as long as Leroy's and brother, um, buddy's and, um, Dwayne's. Thank you, Aaron.

You're going to speak before the night's over, brother Aaron, you will speak, but, uh, thanks Max. You did, you did a lot on, um, you edified the book of Philemon. Uh, my memory verse of Philemon is verse five.

I try to memorize a verse from every book in the Bible, but verse five, hearing of your love and faith, which thou has to Lord and all the saints, the love and faith. And what does Philemon mean, Daniel? Anyone know Philemon, Lloyd Philemon, love, love something. Philos means love.

So what's the Illamon? Philemon, what's Philemon? It must mean lover of people or lover of what? It has a, it has a definition, Philos. But anyway, my quick comment before a demo is that, uh, yeah, thank you, Max. I mean the insight of Paul.

Okay. I don't mean to boast, but Hey, let me tell you about myself. You know, he says, I don't be a fool in both Corinthians, but let me tell you about all my things.

And then, uh, and then in this one in Philemon, he says, uh, now, you know, make, send them free and all this and, you know, Oh, but by the way, you owe me your very life. You know, that that's the key. You know, I know you, but you owe me your very life.

And like you said, uh, Max about, uh, Oh, he's in the bathroom, but you said, uh, he was about to be beat. And he says, is it lawful for you to beat a Roman citizen? You know, he, he, he had a shrewd way and he knew exactly what he was saying. The Lord be magnified.

Amen. Praise the Lord for the word. Um, I don't know if Philemon was written before Colossians, but they, both of the epistles were written from Rome.

So brother, um, Robert, um, had asked before about the, um, if it was written before, uh, before or after, I guess we should try to find the word did, um, Philemon leave. So we could kind of find if, if both letters were sent at the same time. And then when Onesimus was going with the letter of Colossians and the letter of, of, of Philemon, um, to Philemon, he, if he went like looking on the map and trying to determine where Philemon was, um, I think Philemon means the lover of one.

Yeah. Um, I don't know. Is that, is that what it is? The lover of one.

Yeah. Um, we see in the, in the old covenant, the mercy towards, um, people that, that owed others or could not pay. And then they were allowed to sell themselves as slaves in order to, to pay for the debt.

And, um, if the debt was so great that they could not pay for it after a long period of time, every 50 years, they had the year of Jubilee. So all, all debts were forgiven. So if I owed brother Dwayne money and working for him for 49 years was not enough, um, to pay for it on the 50 year, he would have to forgive me and let me free, forgive all the debt, which was something, I guess was something good.

Um, the other thing is, um, like there was, if the masters, um, dealing with, with, with the slave cause the slave to be hurt, like if you smite your servant's eye and the eye perishes, you let him go for the eye sake. And if the, the maiden, uh, had her tooth broken because of the master striking her, uh, she should be let go free, free to, to go away because of the tooth sake to, um, slavery was not, um, we, you think about, um, this black, um, slavery kind of thing in America. It was the same in Brazil.

Um, the slave trade went down there too. There are places that like, if you go to Rio de Janeiro, um, the vast majority of the population, there are black people. Um, the favelas, the slums, very, very dangerous places in Brazil are, are called favelas.

And, um, the situation is so bad that you could find little children walking with guns that not even the police had. That's so, so sad. It was, uh, I lived in one of the slums.

It's called the city of God. I guess the founders were Christians because many of the streets there have Bible names. Um, even have a Bible plaza there, a Bible park.

Um, so when they, they were set free, kind of like the government, all right, you're, there was a princess that she signed the letter saying that they should be let go. I think that's when that happened. Um, if anybody has more information on Brazilian history, let me know, but it looks like they, they were not allowed to be in the rich areas of society.

So they were margin marginalized towards the slums here in America, rich people will live in the hills and mountains in Brazil. It's the opposite. It's the poor, like you go to the, to the mountains in Rio de Janeiro, you're going to find the dangerous communities.

Um, it's, it's, they, they were set free, but there was no mercy from the government towards them. All right. You're free to go, but don't come down here.

You better go to the mountain. And the situation is so sad that people, they're the only thing they know how to do very well is drug dealing. Like they don't have a, they don't have maybe birth certificates or ID cards or things like that.

If you go to Brazil and you're going to reach those people, you have to teach them how to work after they, they get converted because they don't know how to work. They know how to do crime. Yeah.

And Daniel and I will translate for you. Um, I guess I lost my train of thought here. Oh yeah.

Um, I think when, when Christians, if Christians were owning slaves, I don't know, I don't know if Brazil, Brazilian Christians had this kind of thing. I never heard of such a thing down there in Christian. If, if it was something, it was, it was very little, but here in America, there is this, oh, you know, preaching from the

pulpit that it's right to own slaves.

But I think if they really understood what that meant to be a slave or to be a servant, um, like Galatians, right? It says, uh, that everyone that has been baptized, uh, in Christ, they have put on Christ and, and therefore now there is no June or Greek nor bond nor free. We're all one. There's no male nor female.

And people will twist that and say all sorts of things about the genders probably. But what it's saying there is there is an equality, the word equal that brother Max said there, um, it can also mean fair. Like there's this fairness in the kingdom of God that God does not discriminate, um, between the poor and the rich, the black and the white, the male and the female, the bond and free.

And in Christ, we're all made free, right? I, I, I guess, um, there's diverse that talks like, um, a brother mentioned before, like if you're able to be free, go, go free. And what it reminds me of the old Testament, the word bond bonds, bond slave or bond bond servant was this man that he was a slave to this master that was very kind to him. He gave him a wife, he treated him very well and provided everything he needed.

It was never a striker against him. And then the time for his release came and then he had to go, but he could choose to stay. So he would say, no, I don't want to leave.

This is a good master. He's very kind to me. So I want to stay with him.

And so he would go to the, to the judges and then they would put a nail through his ear or some, some kind of signal that would say, this man is a slave by his own choice and he can never be set free because he chose to be bound for life. I guess that's the feature of Christians that Christ has set us free from sin. Now we can choose to go being a slave to righteousness as was said before, or we can choose to go back to sin and be a slave to sin.

May God help us. May we be a child of God each day. My life will shine out of the grave.

I'll sing His praise while ages grow old. And strive to help some troubled soul. For my seeming time is sinking low.

A few more days and I must go to meet the needs that I have found. Where there will be no setting sun. The only life that will endure Is life that's kind and good and pure And so for God I'll take my stand Each day I'll lend a helping hand.

My seeming time is sinking low. A few more days and I must go to meet the needs that I have found. Where there will be no setting sun.

I'll have someone in time of need. And journey on with gladness in. God help us in the poor and weak.

And words of kindness to them speak. My seeming time is sinking low. A few more days and I must go to meet the needs that I have found.

Where there will be no setting sun. From the beginning of life's weary road. My seeming time is sinking low.

A few more days and I must go to meet the needs that I have found. Where there will be no setting sun. God guide you in some troubled road.

Where there will be no setting sun. God guide you in some troubled road. A few more days and I must go to meet the needs that I have found.

Where there will be no setting sun. Where there will be no setting sun. We cannot contain it.

Or open the windows of heaven to it. There's so many living in our presence here. They know not the Savior.

Have no peace within. But we know that we should hide. But all are repenting.

For this we do cry. Open the windows. And pour out a blessing.

Shower your power upon us we pray. Send such a blessing. We cannot contain it.

Or open the windows of heaven to it. Sometimes I am weary. And heavy and worn.

I'm crushed by the tender. And greedy and torn. I go back to Jesus.

With tears on my face. And cry out for mercy. His love and his grace.

Open the windows. And pour out a blessing. Shower your power upon us we pray.

Send such a blessing. We cannot contain it. Or open the windows of heaven to it.

So while this your power is so strong. The yesterday's blessings are all past and gone. Once again we can see.

And humbly we pray. And that's why we echo our voices to say. Open the windows.

And pour out a blessing. Shower your power upon us we pray. Send such a blessing.

We cannot contain it. Or open the windows of heaven to it. Lord, I confess you.

I confess you. In this meeting you do. My rising and my resting place.

My heart and flesh is all in this place. My love's before, they are my own. Heart and my God is still in me now.

He knows the words I need to see. There from my own knee. Within my surfing mouth I stand.

On every side I find I am. Come with us we can go abroad. Eyes and ears to the living God.

O may these mountains my rest. Wherever I roam, wherever I rest. More than my weaker passions bear.

Consensus in full rise.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/mqRw2OF0oNA.mp4>

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