

Who's Slave Are You?

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing one's true identity as a slave to Christ and avoiding being enslaved to the things of this world, wealth, fleshly pleasures, and self.

Duration: 57:43

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:15, John 12:43, Romans 1:1, Galatians 1:10

Topics: "Marriage And Family", "Selfless Service"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of prioritizing our duties to family and church over extracurricular activities. He encourages listeners to lay down their lives for their spouses and to show respect and honor in their marriages. The preacher also highlights the responsibility of parents to shape their lives according to the will of God and to prioritize their children's well-being. He warns against the prevalent mindset of self-gratification and emphasizes the need to serve others rather than constantly seeking personal gain. The sermon draws from biblical teachings on marriage, submission, and selflessness.

Transcript

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, come before you in the name of your Son, and I ask, Father, for your grace and for your mercy that you would speak to us this day, that you would help us, that you would strengthen us, that you would get more glory out of us, that we would learn to walk as your servants and to be at peace in your sovereignty, that your real and true spiritual prosperity would be something in our lives, that we would be healed in the midst of affliction in a fallen world, that we would shine as lights, that we would be what we are, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Father, help us.

If there is someone here today who does not know you, that they might know you today, as Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen. I want us to open up our Bibles to Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1. I have known for about a week that I was to preach here and the Lord had laid something upon my heart.

And then early in the week, I was carried away back to Illinois. My mother is there in the hospital suffering with cancer. It's about to take her life.

But in a sense, that can be a good thing. She's been a Christian for over 65 years and she belongs to him. And she's going where I would choose to go if my work here were finished.

I want us to go to Romans chapter 1, verse 1. Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God. In this one verse is found volumes. Men could write for ages on these few words that we find here.

And I believe that the Lord has laid these words on my heart, not only for you, but for me. For in these words are found almost everything we need to know about who we are and what we are supposed to be doing. In these words are found great freedom and strength and joy, soundness in the Christian faith.

If we would only take these few words to heart. You know, sometimes we seek to grasp so many things in scripture. We seek to know so many things, and yet the little most important things escape us and cause us ruin.

I know of one man who sat out in his life to be consumed by one passage. He decided that he would take one passage of scripture, although he would not neglect the study of other scripture, he would take one passage and seek to know it all his life. And he chose Psalms 23.

And you say, well, how long can you stay in one chapter? Well, the Lord is my shepherd. You begin with the. Not a Lord, but the Lord.

There are volumes in that one three letter word because it defines his relationship over all creation, but especially over me. And so we seek to know so many things, and it is important to know many things. Sometimes it's good to return to some of the things that are most basic.

Now, Paul presents himself here. Paul, the apostle used as much as any man has ever been used in the history of the world. And yet let's look at the way he describes himself.

He says, Paul, a bond servant. He says you want to know who I am. I am a bond servant.

It's from the Greek word doulos. It means slave. I am a slave.

Now, let's just stop here for a moment. If someone were to ask you and a play on words to choose one word. To identify yourself, would this be the first word, the prominent word that popped into your mind, a slave? Would it? Do I need to go any farther? Do I need to ask you any more questions? Do I need to say another word if you were to only grasp, if I were to only grasp what I just asked, we would find so much healing and so much growth and so much power in the Christian life.

You see, the thing that first pops into your mind is probably the one thing you think most about yourself and that controls you. Well, I'm this or I'm that. I have this title or that title.

And none of those things ultimately bring joy. None of those things ultimately bring pleasure. They may bring prestige, the respect of men and so many other things, but they'll bring nothing from God.

Remember, those things which are highly esteemed by men are often despised by God. My question to you, if someone were to say, who are you? The first word that popped into your mind and out your mouth, would it be I am a slave? Now, I've written a few definitions down about a slave. First of all, it's one who completely belongs to his owner.

And whose entire life is shaped by the will of his master. Now, let's stop again. I know this is simple.

It may seem trite. There'll be no reward for this. But just think about these simple words.

Would you describe yourself as someone who completely, totally belonged to someone else and whose life was completely and totally shaped by the will of a master? Now you understand. You could spend years here, couldn't you? Absolutely years here. Who are you, Paul Washer? I'm a preacher.

I'm a director. I'm this. I'm that.

All of it's worthless. Titles of men. The first thing that ought to pop into my mind, I am a slave.

Wholly and completely, I belong to another, not myself. I have been bought with a price and my entire life is shaped by the will of the one who bought me. Now, I want you to know that the Bible teaches us that you.

Well, let me put it this way. I hate to quote him, but I will. Bob Dylan.

In his Christian years, so-called Christian years, he wrote a song and the song said this. You've got to serve somebody. You see, it's not a question of are you going to be a slave? It is only a question of whose slave are you? You are a slave to something.

As a matter of fact, our culture needs to understand that those today in our culture who claim to be most free, most autonomous are actually those who are in the greatest amount of slavery. You are a slave. You are.

The only question is to what? First of all, in the Bible, you don't have to turn here. I've written these verses out in Romans 6, 16. It says, do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness? Do you realize that you can be a slave to sin? Now, this needs to take two applications here this morning.

First of all, all of us as Christians will struggle with certain things. We all have holes in our armor. We all have battles that we must deal with that are personal, personal.

What may not be a struggle for you may be a great struggle for me. So we all struggle with sin. But I want you to know that in Christ Jesus, there is an overcoming of that sin.

And there is a great difference between a believer who struggles with sin and grows, progresses in victory over that sin. There's a great difference between that person and a church member who is constantly in bondage and slavery to sin. I struggle with sin more than most of you would probably even believe.

We all do. But in that struggle, there is a trust in Christ and there is a growing victory, for he says in Ezekiel, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. There is a struggle, but there is at the same time victory going more and more towards that goal, which is conformity to Jesus Christ.

But if you're here this morning and your life is marked by a constant slavery to sin, then maybe you should talk to someone here because the Christian life is not marked by bondage to sin. And there are many people who are enslaved to sin, even though they sit in church every Sunday. If that is you, realize that we want to speak with you.

We want to talk to you compassionately and with mercy and with truth. Don't remain as you are in bondage to sin. And you say immediately when I say something like that, people are thinking, yes, bondage to pornography, bondage to immorality.

Yes, those things. But there are other things that can be indications that you do not know him. Bondage to anger, bondage to hatred, bondage to bitterness and unforgiveness.

Are you in bondage to those things? You say you are a slave. The only question is to whom or to what? Go on, you can also be a slave to the glory of men. The Bible says in Matthew six, five, when you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites, but they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men.

Truly, I say to you, they have their reward in full. One of the most terrifying passages in all the scriptures that God will give you the desires of your heart. You say, what's terrifying about that? Think about it for a moment.

These Pharisees, the only thing they desired was the glory, the respect of other men. They desired to have a reputation among other men. That was the desire of their heart.

And God gave them their desire, not just meagerly, but he gave them their desire in full. And then they went to hell. Now you say, yes, we shouldn't be like those Pharisees.

But think about it. Let's pull this for a moment out of the religious context, just for a moment. You say religiously, I don't desire the glory of men, but do you desire the glory of men and other things? Do you desire their applause, their agreement, the nod of their head? Do you desire to fit in and be acceptable to this present age? You are so shaped by your desire to have the glory of men that you can't even see it.

The clothing you wear, someone else tells you what's in fashion and you do what they tell you. What kind of car you drive, the home you own, everything about you is shaped much more than you could ever imagine. By the desire to be respected of men, for them to honor you, you see, one of the things that we've got to realize is these things have a lot more control on us than what we're actually willing to admit or may even see.

One of the greatest declarations of this is in a very simple thing called, as I've said already, fashion, especially for you young people. Do you realize how much you are shaped by what everyone else is going to think about you? But very rarely are you shaped by the commandments of Scripture that says, be this way and don't be that way. So you see, we have to be very careful.

We read these things and we think, well, that has nothing to do with me. No, it has absolutely everything to do with you and with me. We are shaped by our desire for the glory of men.

One of the reasons that we are so afraid at times to soul-win or to witness to people, it's not because they're going to bash us in the head with a stick. It's because we don't want them to think that we're some kind of strange person. You see, we're shaped by our desire to have the glory of men and you can be a slave to that.

How many people are a slave to a banker simply because they desire to keep up with the Joneses? Do you see? Simply because they desire to live in a certain circle. We can be slaves to so many things and that slavery always tears our life apart. Now, you can also be a slave to the things of this world in 1st John 2, 15, 17.

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him for all that is in the world. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is

not from the father, but it's from the world.

The world is passing away and also its lust. But the one who does the will of God lives forever. Are you a slave to the things of this world? What consumes your thoughts? You know, you wouldn't you wouldn't have to be around me very long to know that I have a real fondness for archery.

And sometimes I'm looking through things and I'm looking at bows and I'm looking at arrows and strings and all sorts of things like that. I'll never forget one time I had just come back from England. I had been preaching in London and I just came back and I had bought this English longbow and I had decided I would be the first man in America to take a deer with an English longbow.

And I was sitting in this cane break one morning and the light was was shining just beautifully. The sun was coming up and I was in a cane break and I was waiting there and the dew had fallen upon me and upon that beautiful bow and it was glistening in the sunlight. And I was looking at it and it's as though a voice spoke to me and said, behold, Paul Washer's God.

Isn't it amazing how you and I have the ability to take the most trivial thing and turn it into a God? You say, well, brother Paul, it wasn't really your God. Let me just share something with you. The thing that most consumes your thoughts is your God.

Now, archery in itself can be a very good thing. Most things, almost all things in this world, when used properly according to the will of God, they are tremendous blessings. But you and I have to realize we can be enslaved to things of this world that so control us that we cannot serve Christ.

And we're going to learn here in this study that it is impossible to serve two masters. Are you enslaved? Well, I just have to ask you one question. What do you think about most? What do you think about most? You've pretty much put your finger on your God by what you think about most.

And I want you to realize this, especially for the young men here who are going into the ministry. Your ministry can become your God. What do you think about most of the things of this world? Everything has the possibility in our flesh to be elevated to the status of idol, the things of this world.

And you know, the things of this world we are warned about, they're passing away. You're serving a God that's dying. You're serving a God that is dying.

The Greek tense there, it can also mean that this world is being pushed out, that there's a greater force coming. It is the kingdom of Christ and it's pushing out this world. So don't live for the things.

Don't be enslaved to the things that moths can eat and rust can corrupt and thieves can carry away. Now, the Bible says also that you can be enslaved to wealth. In 2nd Timothy 3, 2, it says men are called lovers of money, lovers of money.

Matthew 6, 24. No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

He said, yes, brother Paul, you need to really be talking to the rich. Let me tell you something. I have seen rich enslaved to wealth and I have seen poor enslaved to wealth.

Matter of fact, I have seen the poor think more about wealth than the rich. You already have it. I'm not trying to protect the rich, but neither am I going to defend the poor.

We have to be so careful. You say, well, it has nothing to do with me. I'm not rich.

If you're seated here today, you're wealthier than 95 percent of the people in the world. And we can be consumed by money. We can be consumed by money.

Why? Because money has the power to give you what you want, to give you things, to give you all sorts of stuff, to give you reputation. You can be a slave to it, whether you have a great deal of it or none of it at all. You can be a slave to money.

You know, I said earlier that money gives you things. My God gives me things. Your God can give you things.

You don't have to be a slave to the same things the world is enslaved to. Your God will take care of you. Your God will watch out over you.

Your God tells you to be his little children. Your God tells the poor man to rejoice to glory in his humility, to rejoice that he has been chosen for the kingdom if he is in Christ. The wealthy, they should also rejoice and glory in their humility, knowing this, that money is not it.

Christ is it and everything else is perishing. You have got to realize this and you've got to be careful not to be enslaved to it. Most of you parents, you think, well, my child is going to get out of high school, going to make good grades.

OK, why? So they can go to college. Why? So they can get a good job. Why? So they can make a lot of money.

Why? More than college, more than athletics, more than scholarships and all these other things that are passing away. We should be thinking, oh, that my child be godly, that my child give it all for the sake of Christ, that my child live for him, that my child not be enslaved to the very things that so enslaved me. Do you realize? Now, listen to this, there's a balance in everything.

There is. But do you realize, just take an agenda, write down a list of how much time is invested that you invest with your children in extracurricular activities and how much time you invest in your children with regard to godliness. We buy things, we fill them full of media, we put them into the world, we carry them every place on the face of the earth all throughout the week.

Our lives are so busy and scattered, we can't even sit down and have a meal. And what are we doing? We're making our children enslaved to the very master that enslaves us and ruins our lives. Instead of teaching our children, only one thing is needed, devotion to Christ, slavery to Christ, servanthood to Christ.

It goes on, you can be a slave to fleshly pleasures. It says in Romans 16, 18, for such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ, but of their own appetites. 2 Timothy 3, 4, men are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Does that not define our age? It's all about pleasure. But the pleasure is never lasting. It's never enduring.

No sooner is it in our mouth and we're swallowing it down that it turns to rot. The only true pleasures are the pleasures of God. You see, my dear friend, I'm not trying.

Scripture is not trying to take things away from you. It's trying to give you life, to realize all the things that the world so runs for has nothing to do with you now because you're a new creature and you're in Christ and the kingdom has been given to you, little children. It says in James 4, 1 and 2, what is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is it not the source of your pleasures that wage war in your members? Because you lust and do not have, so you commit murder.

You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. He's saying, what is the thing that such causes conflict among you? It's your desire for self-gratification.

You see, the one thing about a servant is a servant lives to gratify. Yes, but not to gratify self, to gratify his master, his master. That is why Jesus is constantly telling us the one who seeks to preserve his life will lose it.

The one who gives his life away for my sake will find it. The happiest, most content, most fulfilled person on the face of the earth is the person who is an absolute slave to an absolutely perfect master. And you can be a slave to self, which is probably the most horrible taskmaster on the face of the earth.

It says in 2 Timothy 3, 2, men are called lovers of self. This is introduced itself into Christianity. I mean, we have opened the door wide in the Church of America.

This is the me generation. I think someone had a kind of a spoof, a video on television, on the Internet recently called the me church. All about me.

I go there because of me. It's all about me. Me is a monster you can't feed.

You can never give him enough, because the more you give him, the bigger he gets and the more he wants. And it is a cycle of constantly serving self. Don't you know that I'm screaming at you right now just even about your marriage? The greatest problem in your marriage.

Is self, self gratification. What do I get out of this? What's in it for me? Problem in our relationships. It's all about self.

We're so preoccupied. Our minds are just almost frazzled to their limit in our consumption of self. One of the greatest ways to bring healing to a mind is to get a person to stop thinking about themselves and to set their mind upon someone else to gratify them.

Now, it is not a question of whether or not you're a servant or a slave, you are one. But Paul specifically calls himself a slave of Christ Jesus. Now, we have a genitive of description and a genitive of possession in the Greek language.

And I think that both of these can kind of go in there. When Paul says that he is a slave of Christ Jesus, he's describing what kind of slave he is. What kind of slave are you? Now, don't answer that immediately.

Ask yourself, if someone was observing my life over a period of time. Observing the way I speak, the way I talk, the way I walk, everything about me, and they had to fill in the blank of describing your life after looking at you sufficiently, would they write down slave of Christ Jesus? Would they describe you that way? Now, I want you to know something. I haven't attained to this, but this is what we ought to be shooting for.

This should be our glory, not titles, not the accolades of men, not the things that men glory in. Our one great goal is that, first of all, in my own personal life, my one great goal is that my wife could look at me and literally fill in the blank and put slave of Christ Jesus. Years ago, my wife, back when we were younger and more hippie-ish, some of you know what I'm talking about, she bought me a stone and had carved in it, she bought this rough leather thing to put it around my neck, but it was a stone and carved in it was *doulos tou theou* in Greek, slave of God.

I've never been able to live up to that stone. Don't you know, slavery is despicable to men, but to be a slave of God is the highest title that could ever be given to a man. That's what you should shoot for, and that's what your sons and daughters should see when they look at you and they look at me.

They should think servant of the most high God. What's your daddy? He's a servant of the most high God. Now, I want you to understand something.

I was thinking about this the other day, and I realized that so many times, and it's true in Christianity and in our music, we'll say that that I was enslaved and now I am free. And that is true. But there's a sense in which we need to reword it possibly.

You see, when you become a Christian, you don't go from slavery to freedom. When you become a Christian, you go from slavery to slavery. You change masters.

But the only thing about it is he is a good master. He is a kind master. You say, Brother Paul, I haven't seen much of his kindness.

I haven't seen much of his mercy. I haven't seen much of his provision. Well, why should he provide for you? You're doing it all yourself.

You see something and you want it. You'll go to debt for it, you'll do anything, you'll sell your soul to get it. And maybe it's a good thing that your master wants to give to you.

And if you were to wait upon him in prayer, maybe a year or two, he would grant it to you for nothing. Now, another thing, Paul says that he is a slave of Christ Jesus. Now, I think this is important.

He puts Christ in front of Jesus, indicating that he is not putting himself into slavery for just a man, but he's putting himself into slavery for the Christ, for deity, for the Messiah, for the one who lived and died and rose again. And his Lord of Lords, King of Kings, carries every title that can be carried. You see, it is totally irrational to give your life into slavery for a man.

But there is nothing irrational about giving yourself into slavery for God, for deity, for Christ, for the one who sealed his commitment to you by his own blood. As a matter of fact, the most ridiculous thing you could ever do is sell yourself for some of the things for which you've sold yourself. The most ridiculous thing is to spend your life for things, to spend your life for the accolades of men, many of whom will be condemned on Judgment Day.

To live for a world that's not only passing away, but being pushed out, now that is insanity. But enslaving yourself to Christ, God in the flesh, well, it's the only sane thing a man can do. It goes on, and I want to give you an example from James, and I just love this example.

James 1.1, it says, James, a bond servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this is James, the half-brother of our Lord. Now, just notice here for a moment.

He doesn't say, James, the half-brother of Jesus. He doesn't say, James, the one who has risen to great prominence among the church and the brethren in Jerusalem. He says, James, a slave of Christ Jesus.

Now, this is the power of conversion, because this man, before the death and resurrection of Christ, he mocked his brother. He did not believe his brother. But when he came to know Christ, not, as Paul says, in the flesh, but Christ as He really is.

When he came to know Him, his relationship with Him totally and completely changed. Slave of Christ Jesus. There's two guys claiming two titles in Scripture that I so greatly appreciate.

One of them is James, and the other is John. The one whom Jesus loved. Notice, he doesn't say, the one who loved Jesus.

I know it's biblical to sing songs about, oh, how I love Jesus, but I find it very difficult to do so. Because I don't find a whole lot worth singing about in my love towards Jesus. But I find a whole lot to sing about when we talk about the love of Christ toward me and men.

So, let's go on. To be a servant of Jesus Christ has the following implications. It means that we give ourselves up to the will of Christ.

Now, we give ourselves up to the will of Christ. Now, that's really easy to do as long as you stay as far away from the will of God as you can get. You say, I give myself up to the will of Christ.

Well, what's that will? As long as you don't know, you're pretty much still free. The only way you can make a claim to slavery is if you're going to get serious about knowing the will of your master. And that comes through renewing the mind.

It comes through prayer. It comes through biblical fellowship. It comes through sitting under preaching.

It is this desire to know His will. It is a terrifying thing. It is a terrifying thing to be sent to do a task and not know anything about it.

Knowing that you'll be held accountable for that task even though you have no direction whatsoever. It's terrifying. It's terrifying.

It's like when your dad tells you, go out into the shed and get that tool. And you can't find it. And then you hear, if I have to come in there.

You see, so many people will emotionally say, oh yes, I'm a servant of Jesus Christ. But if you were to ask them, okay, what has your master commanded you with regard to marriage? What has your master commanded you with regard to child rearing? What has your master commanded you with regard to being a son or a daughter? Then the whole thing changes. You see? Now, I want to read a text for you that's very, very important.

And it's this. Jesus Christ was our example of what it means to be a servant. And He said in Mark 10, 45, that He did not come to be served, but to serve.

Now, brothers, listen to me. Now, listen to me. You'll notice I speak a lot about marriage and family because it is the most important thing.

I want to tell you something. Your chief problem in your marriage is, even though you would not say it, you've entered into this thing to be served. Wives, I can tell you the same thing.

All of us in every one of our relationships have to be so afraid of this. Many people will go on staff at a church in order to be served. Many people enter into a friendship in order to be served.

Many people, because they do not understand the full crux of marriage, will enter into marriage in order to be served. But I want you to know that you will find great freedom when you begin to turn this thing around and say, I'm here to serve, whether I get served or not. It's a problem we have in almost everything.

Now, I know time is fleeing away, but I at least want to get into the second part. There's three parts. I'll do this first one and then the second one.

Paul, a bondservant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle. Now, literally, what this says in the Greek is, a called apostle. A called apostle.

And I think it is very important to understand that. Let me give you another verse. In 1 Corinthians 1.1, he says, Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.

And in 1 Timothy 1.1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God. What am I saying? Paul was a called apostle. It means he was what he was by the will and commandment of God.

You must, and I want to speak most to my brothers here now, you must be able to say, or you have no foundation whatsoever in your life, brothers, you must be able to say, I am what I am by the will and commandment of God. It is not what I have chosen for myself, the ministry I have chosen, or the profession I have chosen, or the work I have chosen, or the place I have chosen, or the circumstances I have chosen. No.

It is all about I am what I am by the commandment and will of God. Now, there are two ways to look at this. One is an overarching sovereignty.

It gives us great peace. It gives me great peace to know this, regardless of all the times that I have missed hearing His voice, regardless of all my failures and all my sin, I am smack dab in the will of God right now because God's sovereignty is able to override my mistakes and dullness of ear. So I am what I am by the will of God, by the commandment.

Do you see that authority there? It is not I chose to be this or I chose to be that. And do not think this should be relegated only to the ministry. You must be a doctor by the commandment and will of God.

You must be a contractor. You must be a salesman. You must be this and that and everything else because you know it is God's will for your life.

If you don't, you have no foundation. Now, I want to point out a couple of things here. It is so hard.

I'm using notes for like the first time in my life. First of all, why is it so important? I'll tell you why it's important. A vague knowledge of your calling will lead to a very vague obedience.

A vague knowledge of your calling will lead to a very vague obedience. When I start talking about slavery and discovering the will of God and living according to the will of God as a slave, I know what's going on in your head. You say, you know, I'm sick and tired of preachers telling me what to do.

I wish one of them would tell me how to do it. How do I get started? I mean, it's so big. The will of God is so gigantic.

So how do I start doing it? Well, I'm going to tell you. First of all, you must get specific about God's place in your life and your place in God's economy. You find out where He has brought you.

The very place you are at. And then you enter into Scripture and begin to discern His will. And I'm going to give you an example of this.

First of all, verse 7 here in Romans 1 says, He's called you to be a saint. A saint. That's what it says.

So the will of God, discerning the will of God, will begin in this place. God has called you to be a saint. What does that mean? He's called you to be a separate one.

One separated unto Him. That's the first thing you need to know. God has called you to be a saint.

Which means He's called you to be separate. And so you go into Scripture and you begin to discern what that means. God has called you not to participate in many of the things in which the world participates.

He has called you in Scripture to find out everything He hates and avoid it. And then to discover everything He loves and run to it. He has called you to be conformed to the image of His Son.

And if you're to devote yourself to anything, you are to devote yourself to godliness. Because if you were truly a saint, if you were truly godly, you'd have a lot less problems in your marriage. And your relationships, and church, and family, and everywhere else.

So primarily, God has called you to be a saint. And you need to get in Scripture, get in that concordance of yours, look up saint, look up holiness, look up what God loves, look up what God hates, and start living accordingly. He's called you to be a saint.

Some controlling verses here would be Paul saying, not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. This is what God wants for you.

And gentlemen, listen to me. I'm always referring back to you. Why? I know you like that idea of being the head of your home.

Do you know what that means? You set the stage. You are the example. Don't expect your wife, your children, or anyone else to be headed towards godliness if you yourself are not visibly working and pressing on in that direction.

Would your children look at you and say, the one thing about my dad that I really notice is he is pressing on to be more and more like Christ. He's disciplining himself for godliness. You see? So many fathers have said, well, I'm just, you know, working as hard as I can to give my children all the things I never had.

It was the things you never had that made you the man you are. And it's the things you're giving them that's destroying them. And God didn't call you to give them things.

He called you to discipline, to educate, to train them in righteousness. You see? So what's God's will for your life? To press on hard, to be conformed to the image of Christ so hard that it is visible to those who are closest to you, gentlemen, beginning with your wife. What has God called you to do? He's called you to be a saint.

Now let's get a little more specific. Usually when we talk about calling, we're always talking about something religious or something in the church. I want to tell you something.

The church would get a whole lot healthier if we got a whole lot healthier in a lot of other areas in our life. So let's just look at it. You're a slave? Okay.

Slave? Has He called you to be a husband? Has He called you to be a husband? All right then. Then love your wife through dying to self and daily laying down your life for her. That's God's will for your life.

And I don't care if it consumes the entire day. Because if you can't get this down, what else are you going to do? A man has no privilege of ministry. He cannot even be an elder if he doesn't do these types of things.

So here's what I want you to see. You always say, what's the will of God? Are you a husband? Then I'll tell you the will of God. Has Christ loved the church and laid down His life for her? So lay down your life for your wife.

That doesn't mean being someone who just follows her every will and wish. No. No.

It means that you are growing in godliness so that you can lead her, so that she will become everything she ought to be in Christ and in righteousness. That's your job. Sometimes on an airplane, someone will say, what do you do? And I'll say, well, I'm a husband.

They go, what? I'm a husband. No, what else do you do? Well, I'm a father. No, what else do you do? Oh, well, if I have any time left over, I minister and preach her.

We don't take this serious enough. We'll run all over doing all kinds of things. Are you a husband? Then lay down your life for your wife.

Are you a wife? Then this is the will of God for you. Respect and honor your husband through loving and joyful submission and through serving him as a suitable helper. That's God's will for you, slave.

If you're going to be a slave and you're a woman and you're married, then this is God's will for you. Do this. Give yourself to understanding what this means.

You're not going to get it here this morning. It's only being brought to your attention this morning. It takes a lifetime to learn what this means.

Are you a parent? Then bring up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. More than ball games, more than soccer moms, more than this and that, more than beta club and honor club and athletics and everything else, all of it should take second place, must take second place. I'm not saying it can't be in their life.

Some of that can be very good and wholesome and a good activity, but it must not even come close to first place. Your main responsibility as a parent is to raise your child that way. Now, are you a son or daughter? Then I'm going to tell you God's will for you as a slave.

Honor your father and mother in humble submission and heartfelt obedience. Don't even think about calling yourself by the name Christian unless you honor your parents. Don't even think about it.

Don't even let it enter into your mind. If you would honor a president or a king more than your dad or your mother, you do not know what it means to walk with God, and you do not know the will of God, nor do you understand Christianity. Although I am to honor kings and presidents, they take no honor over father and mother.

The will of God for slaves. This is it. Are you an employee? Ephesians 6, Be obedient to those who are your employers according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart as to Christ, not by way of eye service as men pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart with good will, render service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, he will receive back from the Lord whether slave or free.

That you are serving Christ, even if you are mistreated, even if you are maligned, even if you are not given your due, you are serving Christ, and you should serve with a sincerity of heart and represent Christ there. One of the things that is so important is many of you need to understand. I was preaching several years ago on the biblical view of employment, and this state trooper came up to me afterwards.

I mean, just a man's man. He came up to me and he's just crying. And I said, Brother, what's wrong? He said, I sit hours and hours and hours a day in a car, catching people going too fast.

And I've sat there and I've thought, I don't serve Christ, I don't do anything, I just sit here, I'm a state trooper, I arrest bad guys, and my life has no meaning. And he says, Now that I understand Scripture, my life is filled with meaning. I do this as unto the Lord.

This is what He has called me to be, and I will be it. Many of you think that God only calls you to be certain things in the church. No, He calls you to be accountants and housewives and policemen and judges, and yes, even used car salesmen.

As a matter of fact, the godliest man I know on the face of the earth is Adrian Jones from Leadbetter, Kentucky, and he's a used car salesman, and he's done more to help the church in Romania than probably every mission organization combined. You see? Do it as unto the Lord. You see, let me give you a little eschatological truth.

When Christ entered into the grave and then broke it open, that grave door was shattered, and the entire tomb was filled with light and even meaning. And when you throw open the door of your life and your employment and everything that you do as a housewife, as a mother, as a father, as this and that, and you throw open that grave door, the light of Christ fills that tomb with meaning and light. You've been taught that it's a little thing to be a mother.

It's a little thing to be a housewife. And you say, what's the meaning in all of this? My life has no meaning. And the feminists in the world today tell you your life has no meaning.

That is a lie. When Christ is brought into it, it is filled with meaning. Our whole life ought to be just glowing with the life of Christ.

Are you an employer? Then practice justice and equity without partiality, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven and there is no partiality with Him. Employers ought to tremble, to be fair, full of equity, and kindness. Now, lastly, are you a member of a church? You see, when you thought about calling, all you think about is church.

When you think about the will of God often, all you think about is church. There's so many things ahead of that. A member of the community of faith, are you? Then do this.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad. With the grace given you, serve the community.

You say, Brother Paul, but if I'm a good husband and a good wife and a good father and a good mother and a good employer or a good employee, there won't be any time left. No, that's not true. Here's the problem.

There are so many activities in our life that are extracurricular and not necessary, but we will hold on to them and throw away duties to family and throw away duties to church in order to hold on to our extracurricular activities. Throw them away first. Get your priorities straight, because there's time enough to do the will of God.

There is time enough to do the will of God. There is time enough. Now, you see, there's a lot in one verse.

There's a lot in one verse. This call to you is this. Are you a slave? Do you desire for people to look at you and say, slave? Young men, you want the young ladies to look at you and think popular, strong, handsome, all these other things.

Well, if that's what the young lady is looking for, she's not worth having. She ought to be looking for a man who is a servant of the Most High God. And you young men, you ought to be drawn to a woman because you can say, behold, a bondmaiden of the Lord, a servant of the Most High God.

Let's pray.

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