

# The Pierced Ear of the Servant

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the foundation of continuous service, leading to the voluntary surrender of rights and liberties for the sake of the Lord.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 21:5

**Topics:** "Love and Sacrifice", "Servanthood"

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## Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the profound connection between love, servanthood, and the voluntary resignation of rights in his sermon 'The Pierced Ear of the Servant.' He illustrates how a servant, motivated by love, chooses to remain in service despite having the legal right to freedom, reflecting a deeper relationship with the master. This selfless act mirrors the example of Jesus, who relinquished His rights and became a servant out of love for the Father. Sparks highlights that true service is not compelled by law but is a response to love, leading to a new identity as both servant and son in God's family. The sermon calls believers to consider how love may require them to forgo certain liberties for the sake of serving God more fully.

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## Transcript

Reading: Ex. 21:5-6; Deut. 15:12-18.

Here we have the ear of the servant, and right on the surface there lies the connection between love, the ear, and abiding service. Love here is connected with the bored ear, and becomes the basis of this continuous service which is something that is voluntarily entered into and cannot be legally imposed. It is something which is taken up by the servant himself or herself because of a heart attitude and a heart relationship. The love basis leads to the resigning of certain rights and liberties. This servant has the right to go free. He is not a foreigner, he is not a hireling who, under compulsion, is put to bond-service. He is a Hebrew, and as such he has rights, and his rights are in the realm of liberty. He may go out free without violating any law or obligation. Indeed, it is his master who is under obligation to him at the time. But this servant resigns his rights and his liberties because of love. It is something other than constraint by legal obligation. It brings into another realm altogether.

Paul himself, who so often referred to himself as the bondservant of Jesus Christ, in various statements indicates something of the meaning of this resigning of liberties. For instance, he says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient" (1 Cor. 6:12). 'I have rights, if I followed the line of rights. There is nothing to forbid me or to compel me so far as law is concerned, but I am actuated by something

more than that; there are other considerations; the Lord's interests and my concern for Him lead me to forego certain liberties and rights; I resign them voluntarily for His sake.' It is the bond-slave recognising that, while there may be nothing against certain things as judged by the ordinary standards of right and wrong, and that on that level certain courses are quite permissible, yet some higher interest may come in where the Lord can be better and more fully served if even those liberties are resigned for His sake. It is a much higher level, this level of the servant who says, 'I will not go out free; I might, I have perfect right to do so, but I will not. I am not here simply because I must be, because I am compelled; I am here because of love'. That is a fuller and a higher world altogether, and it may touch us at many points. We could... we might... there would be no wrong... but the Lord's highest interests require that we should on some things deny ourselves and say, 'Though there is no wrong, no harm, the Lord will be better served if I do not'. That is what is here. "All things are lawful... not all things are expedient"; and when that attitude is taken, a new relationship with the Lord is set up, a relationship of service in perpetuity; but now it is more as one of the household, one of the family. The Spirit of sonship enters in, and "thou art no longer a bond-servant but, a son" (Gal. 4:7). Love lifts and transfers, and, although it is still service, we find a remarkable relatedness in the New Testament, between the bond-slave and, at the same time, the son.

We find that the Lord Jesus becomes the great example. He had rights, very great rights: He could have held to them. He had liberties: He could have stood for them. There was no obligation upon Him legally to do anything but to remain in the eternal glory with the Father. He surrendered all His rights and His liberties. He took upon Himself "the form of a servant (bond-servant)... becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8). He said "I will not go out free"; and the Father bored His ear. He is the eternal Son-Servant. In Him the two combine - sonship and servanthood bound together in love for the Father. And what is in its highest and fullest expression in Him is transferred to us in our smaller way. Love requires sometimes that we have to say 'No' to some things which in themselves are harmless, and, in a way, desirable, and which would be quite permissible if we were serving only our own interests. To them we say 'No' in the interests of the One Who has become to us more than Master; He has become Lord.

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