

"A Servant's Heart"

I love the song that our young people sing, "Lord make me a servant, make me like You". Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to look at a servant's heart. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Now God's ways are wise, and those who follow them find blessing. But some folks they face a lot of trouble all of their lives, because they refuse to listen to the wisdom of God. Thanks for taking time with us today. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

If you could choose to be anything in life that you wished, you might choose many things: a doctor, a lawyer, a politician, an executive, or leader. Would you choose to be a slave? Ah, the word "slave" conjures up for us many negative ideas: chains and labor, pain, and misery. And these are not desirable things. We despise the idea of slavery and human trafficking. It's demeaning and wicked. And no one, no one would want to be a slave like that.

As many as a third of the population in the city of Rome were slaves in the first century, and one in five throughout the Empire. We should know two important things about slaves in the ancient world. First, in the eyes of the law a slave was not a person but a thing. A slave was totally dependent upon his master. And a master could do absolutely anything that he liked to the slave. You see a slave had no rights at all. A master could beat him, sell him, throw him out, or even kill him. Second, slaves had no time that they could call their own; every moment belonged to the master.

But there is a type of slave, that is different! This slavery demands, but it also blesses beyond measure. Paul describes himself in Romans 1 and verse 1, "Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God." When you're a bond-servant or slave of Jesus Christ, you rejoice in the Lord. And it's only when you become enslaved to Him that you are truly free!

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on-line at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Philippians 2:5 to 11, and then we'll explore what it means to have the heart of a servant.

Our reading today comes from the book of Philippians chapter 2 and verses 5 to 11.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

That's a tremendous passage from the book of Philippians. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Jesus was willing to become a bond servant for our sake that we might have freedom from sin and be able to live with You forever. Oh Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Our world seems to think that the highest point in life is to be the boss, and to control what goes on around us. The rugged individualism of America calls out for self-fulfillment and charting your own course. Many never realize that there may be Someone bigger than themselves, Someone that calls them to a life grander and nobler than living for your own pleasure. One in five Americans think that meaning and purpose comes from working hard to earn as much as you possible can and to make the most of life. Nevertheless, is this all there is to life?

The Lord Jesus provides a different perspective for us all, one that helps us to see what really counts in life. In Mark 10:42 to 45 Jesus said to His disciples, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." In the Lord's eyes, the greatest one must be the slave of all. He serves to please the Father and to please others. He sees something bigger than his own pleasures. We see the servant heart of Jesus whenever we see that He sacrificed Himself upon the cross. Because He knows what it is to serve, the Father highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name.

The apostle Paul grew up in a privileged Hebrew home and he even schooled under the famous teacher Gamaliel. Gamaliel who was the was the highest honored teacher in Jerusalem. And yet he said in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 19, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them." You see winning souls was more important to Paul than freedom to do as he wished. He was willing to sacrifice himself and serve others that he might win them to the Lord Jesus.

Paul willingly gave up his place among the Jews in order to live for Christ. He said in Philippians 3 verses 4 to 11, "If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. (then he said) But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." You know some things are bigger, nobler, and worth more than what I put on my resume; or you do. And this is why Paul would give it all up, and why you should consider serving the Lord.

The Scriptures speak of slavery from the earliest times. The Old Testament Law actually protected Hebrew slaves from being abuse. In fact, some people even chose to remain as permanent slaves. The Hebrew law said in Exodus 21 verse 2 to 6, that "When you buy (speaking to the Jews) a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever." Well this man

found life as a Hebrew slave in this household to be better than life on the outside world and he wanted to remain!

Now every Christian belongs to the Lord. When we become Christians, we confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as Lord. Remember Philippians 2:10 and 11, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father." To call Jesus "Lord" recognizes that He indeed existed in the form of God; but it also recognizes His authority over my life. He's not just Lord; He is my Lord. 1 Corinthians 6 verses 19 to 20 says, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Now as Christians, we belong to the Lord Jesus body, soul, and spirit.

The Lord Jesus is our Master! And He said in Matthew 6:24, that "No one can serve (be a slave to) two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve (that is be enslaved to) God and mammon (or money)." As Master of our lives, Jesus will not tolerate another master. If we belong to Him, Jesus must always be the undisputed master of our lives. Now we don't ask, well "What do I want?" but rather we ask, "What does God wish me to do?" We serve at His pleasure in His kingdom. And we are only servants.

Now a partial service to God or a faith that's "off and on" is not enough. The Lord said in Matthew 6 and verse 33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We must live each day with God at the center of our hearts. Seeking His kingdom and seeking His righteousness means focusing our hearts on pleasing Him as His people doing His will.

The Lord Jesus Himself serves as the great example of a servant who seeks to please. The apostle Peter knew the hardships of servants in the first century. He taught them in 1 Peter 2 verses 18 to 19, "Servants, (you) be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." And then Peter points to Jesus in verses 21 to 24, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in his mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

Now Jesus set the example of how to bear up under injustice. He didn't strike back or berate the Jews who were berating Him. Instead He entrusted Himself to the Father who judges righteously; He left things in the Father's hands. He didn't focus on the pain of the cross but on the importance of doing what was right and the importance of what He was doing in saving mankind: the bible says "by His wounds you were healed." Now He suffered so that you could die to sin and live to righteousness. Jesus chose to please the Father in bringing about the salvation of every one of us, if we follow Him, even if it meant going to the cross. Jesus knew His death would mean something to the Father. He said in John 8:29, "And He who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, (and then He said) for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

Paul too gave instructions to those who were slaves or bondservants in Colossians 3:22 to 25, he said "Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong that he has done,

and there is no partiality.” You see people should do a day’s work for a day’s pay and be loyal to those that they serve. And when you work heartily at the job, you’re “serving the Lord Christ.” By being faithful to the Lord in this life, even on the job, you can trust the Lord to reward you in the life to come. Whether a master or a slave, the Lord will reward righteousness and He’ll punish evil-doing.

Now as Christians, we must have a servant’s heart. Paul urged the Christians in Colossians 1 verses 9 and 10, “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” I tell you if you seek to please the Lord, you must know Him and you must know what He wills. Many people praise God but they know little about Him. It does little good to own a Bible but never open it and read it and study it. Study your Bible and then apply the words and the teaching there to your life.

Let’s never forget Jesus is our creator, our redeemer, our Savior, and our Lord. Colossians 1 verses 15 to 18 says, that “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.” Jesus deserves first place in everything; and we are nothing without Him.

The apostle Paul revealed his determination to keep his heart and his life right with God. He said in 1 Corinthians 9 verses 24 to 27, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and I keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” I tell you Paul went to great lengths not to lose out on his imperishable prize, and that’s eternal life!

My friend you too have the opportunity to enjoy eternal life with God in heaven! Put on a servant’s heart like Jesus, discipline yourself, and run in such a way as to win! Don’t let anything come between you and your Lord. Please Him in everything!

Let’s pray together. Father help us to be a good servant that pleases You. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

You choose each day whom you serve. You can serve anything that you want, if you don’t care about consequences. You can serve yourself, your money, your lusts, our culture; but you know what, these things won’t lead to heaven. Only Jesus Christ can give you eternal life. Paul asked in Romans 6 and verse 16, “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, that you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” Now choosing to serve sin is a disaster. Romans 6:23 says, that “For the wages of sin is death.” Now I’m telling you, you will earn wages according to whom or what you choose to serve.

Paul said in verses 17 and 18 of Romans 6, “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, you’ve become slaves of righteousness.” Now those folks left their old ways of sin and obeyed the Lord from the heart, and God set them free from sin. God can also set you free from sin, if you too will obey from the heart the standard of teaching.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart; believe in Him and in His word. Repent of your sins; confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God; and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized into Christ and His death, God washes you clean from sin through the blood of Jesus. Peter clearly taught in 1 Peter 3:21, "baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." I tell you in baptism we appeal to God for a good conscience; and God saves us!

So consider your soul. Think about what God says. And if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free 1-800-321-8633. You can also download these lessons online at: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs, study sheets, and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

But we do ask that you get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy one, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.