

Ephesians 6:5-8

Slavery in the Roman world was not the same type of slavery as in American history. Slavery was not a racial issue. There were slaves from all races. There are no slave uprising recorded for the purpose of overthrowing the institution of slavery. Most slaves could anticipate being set free by the time they were thirty years old. Slaves often served as household managers, teachers, business and industry. Slaves could own property and work on the side for money. Due to economic situations many slaves found their living conditions better as a slave than as a freeman. Some would sell themselves into slavery. Slaves were often set free for a variety of reason. A papyrus records a group of slaves being set free because of their enthusiastic service and affection for their master. Slaves were still owned as a possession and the owner had rights over his property. Aristotle called referred to a slave as a "living tool." More than one third of the population was slaves so a church of 90 people may have easily had 30 slaves as members. Notice slaves are considered members of the church and as members of the church they would have had spiritual gifts.

It is interesting to note that Paul does not challenge the social order of slavery but instead explains to the slave how to fulfill God's purpose even in the roll of a slave.

The OT explains slavery in Exodus 21; Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15.

Slaves in the ancient world came from:

1. War captives
2. Purchase - Nehemiah 5 mentions the sale of children into slavery. Most likely as a payment for a loan.
3. Self-selling
4. Default of payment for debts - a common way to enter slavery in Israel (sin, Isaiah 50:1)
5. A Gift (Gen. 29:24 - Leah received Zilpah)
6. Inheritance
7. Birth (Ex. 21:4; Lev. 25:54)

Kidnapping and selling of freeborn individuals is forbidden in Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7. Penalty = Death.

Paul continues to speak in Ephesians 6:5-8 concerning:

1. Wise Living mentioned in 5:15-20
2. A life filled with the Spirit (5:18)

Paul provides a four-fold description of the proper service of a "christian" slave:

1. Serve with fear and trembling in sincerity
2. Serve not the eye

3. Do the will of God in serving
4. Serve wholeheartedly

Each of these is followed with an "as" statement: "as to Christ", "as pleasing men", "as slaves of Christ", "as serving the Lord".

| Service | "as . . . " |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| With fear and trembling in sincerity | As to Christ |
| Not serving the eye | As pleasing men |
| Doing the will of God | As slaves of Christ |
| Wholeheartedly | As serving the Lord |

6:5 - "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ."

"fear and trembling" - simply means with due reverence. It does not mean "terror"
 "sincerity of heart" - means genuine, or singleness of heart.

Masters would use fear, but the Christian slave is to:

1. Obey his master
2. Honor his masters position
3. Serve in sincerity and focus

6:6 - "Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart."

Greek: "Not by way of eye-service as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from the soul"

A four description is added. Slaves are to serve with integrity, not just to impress or flatter their masters. So:

4. Integrity, doing what is right all the time

6:7 - "Serve whole heartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men"

"whole heartedly" is a Greek word used only here and it means "zeal, eagerness, wholeheartedness."

The reason for their service in this way is not to impress their masters or to win favorable treatment, but because they are serving and living before the Lord.

6:8 - "because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free."

Rewarded for "whatever" he does. Not just "spiritual" stuff or "ministry" activity. Rewarded for living the Christian life. Living a wise, spirit filled life. (Rom. 2:6)