

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

I TIMOTHY 6

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In chapter six of Timothy, the Apostle Paul continues to instruct Timothy on how he is to conduct himself in the church of Jesus. He turns his attention to the reality of slavery in the Greco-Roman world of the first century.

Let me say at the outset that forced slavery is wrong at any level. However, that was a way of life during this period of the New Testament. It was so prevalent during this period that 80% of the population were slaves. This means that if you walked down the streets of any major city in the Roman empire, except for very high military concentrations, four out of every five of the people you would meet would be some sort of slave.

Paul addresses the life of the "**Bondslave**". The bondslave was a designation for a particular kind of slave. It was a person who had made mistakes, usually concerning finances and the mistake was so serious that a debt could not be repaid. This was not unusual in the ancient world. The debtor would sell himself to the person to whom he owed money. If the debt was great enough the entire family would go into slavery to pay the debt. The bondslave was a designation for someone who at the end of the

period of slavery, usually seven years, did not want to leave the one to whom he had been enslaved. At the close of the period of enslavement, the debtor went to his master and said, You have been such a great master, you have forgiven my debt, you have been so good to me, that my family and I want to stay with you and serve you forever. The master would make sure this is what the slave wanted to do. If indeed that was the case, the master would take the slave/servant and place his head against a door and punch a hole in his ear in a certain way that would mark him as a "**Willing Slave.**"

This type of servant would be called a "bondslave" or in the Greek of the New Testament, a "doulos." When that doulos would walk down the streets of any city in the Roman empire and someone saw him and saw the mark in his ear, they would say something to the effect of, "What a wonderful, gracious, and kind master that man must serve.

This is an important word to the Apostle Paul because this was Paul's favorite designation for himself in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. You often read, "**Paul, a bondslave of Christ Jesus...**"

Prayer and Action Steps

You and I have been "bought with a price" and we are enslaved to the Lord Jesus. He is our master, and we are his slaves/servants. Our servitude is willing, not compulsory! The Lord has been so gracious, generous, loving, and forgiving towards us, why would we want to leave such a wonderful master?