

Graeco-Roman Slavery and Interpretation of the New Testament

Daniel Institute
BD IV 414 (Biblical Studies)

Dr Annang Asumang

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The Christian Life in Christ Jesus: Romans 6:16-18, 22-23

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness... But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Human existence is described in terms of two opposing categories of slavery

- What was the nature of slavery in the first century?
- How did slavery impact social & religious lives of first Christians?
- How did the first Christians respond to the institution of slavery?
- What are the implications for interpreting the New Testament?

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Learning Outcomes

1. Evaluate the relevance of the categories of slaves in first century Graeco-Roman world for interpreting the slavery texts of the New Testament.
2. What is the New Testament's attitude to slave trading?
3. Evaluate what the New Testament teaches regarding the relationship between Christian slaves and their masters.
4. Explain the implications of how the New Testament employs slavery as a metaphor for (a) Christology (b) soteriology (c) ethics and (d) Christian ministry.

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Topics Covered

1. Slavery in the Old Testament
2. Nature of Slavery in first Century Graeco-Roman world
3. Slave-Master relationships in the New Testament
4. Slaving-trading (Human Trafficking) and the New Testament
5. Slavery as Metaphor in the New Testament

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Cautions and Caveats when dealing with Bible's Slavery texts

1. All societies, ancient and modern, practice(d) slavery of different varieties even if they may not be labelled as such.
2. Most information including legal documents on Graeco-Roman slavery was from elite non-slave circles. What is sometimes stated as existing law or even convention often reflects the ideal or imagined and not the real lives. How slaves themselves evaluated their condition is less known. So, for example, some grave inscriptions of Roman slaves indicate that some slaves lived independent lives from their masters, had families and indeed some operated their own businesses (contrary to the elite records) .
3. Graeco-Roman Slavery was complex and had wide varieties and ranges. This is complicated also by Jewish conceptions of slavery which though refracted through Hellenization and Romanization nevertheless made the New Testament idea complex. The status of the slave was certainly ambiguous. So, avoid simplistic interpretations.
4. Some slaves had intolerable lives; but many slaves depicted in the New Testament were effectively "employees". This problem cuts both ways evident in the complicated translation debates over whether to use "servant", "bond-servant" or "slave" in translations.
5. Certainly, avoid reading slavery texts through the lens of recent brutal trans-Atlantic slavery. On the other hand, avoid romanticizing ancient slavery in the texts. Freedom from slavery was the ambition (cf., 1 Cor 7:20-24)

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Two Important Definitions

• Indentured Slavery

- A system where a person agrees to work for an employer for a set period of time, often several years, in exchange for the costs of their travel and accommodation
- Some use other terms such as "debt slavery" or "bonded labour"

• Chattel Slavery

- A type of enslavement enslaved people are treated as personal property or "chattel" of their owners.

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Slavery Texts in the Old Testament

• General

- Enslaved Jews are depicted as temporary bondsmen to be given their freedom in the Sabbatical Year (Ex 21:2–3; Lev 25:40–41; Deut 15:12)
- Israel is repeatedly reminded that they were former slaves (Ex 20:2; 23:9)

• Debt Slavery

- Commonest type of slavery in OT is Debt slavery (Ex 21:2-11 [implied]; Lev 25:39-55; Deut 15:12-18; 2 Kgs 4:1; Neh 5:4; c.f. Amos 2:6-8).
- Israelites in debt-slavery have the legal status of paid workers

• Abuse of Slaves Prohibited

- Physical assault (Exod 21:20-21);
- Physical coercion (Prov 29:19; c.f. Lev 25:32);
- General abuse (Gen 16:6); and
- Abandonment (Gen 21:14; 1 Sam 30:13)

• Redemption & Ransom of Slaves

- Kinsman Redeemer (Lev 25)

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Key Features of Slavery in the Old Testament

- Slavery is regulated, but not condemned (e.g. Exodus 21:1-11, Leviticus 25:39-55).
- Israelites could own slaves: Prisoners of war could be made into slaves (Numbers 31:25-30).
- Debt slavery was commonest form: Law demanded freedom in Jubilee year (Exodus 21:2-6).
- Some slaves were hereditary passed down to heirs, in families (Leviticus 25:44-46).
- Slaves were protected from extreme violence, and medical care required for injured slaves (Exodus 21:20-21, 26-27).
- Expectation was for Slaves to be manumitted (Deut 15:12-18).
- Humane treatment of all slaves legally enforced including provisions for protection of fugitives (Lev 25:39-43, Deut 23:15-16)
- Old Testament condemns forced enslavements (Amos 1:6; Ex 21:16; Deut 24:7)

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Uniqueness of Old Testament Slave Laws: Ex 21:2-11 as Example

Limitation to Period of enslavement

'When you buy a male Hebrew slave, **he shall serve for six years, but in the seventh he shall go out a free person, without debt.** 3 If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in **married, then his wife shall go out with him.** 4 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.** 5 But if the slave declares, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out a free person', 6 then his master shall bring him before God. He shall be brought to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him for life. **7** When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 8 If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then **he shall let her be redeemed;** **he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people,** since he has dealt unfairly with her. 9 If he designates her for his son, **he shall deal with her as with a daughter.** 10 If he takes another wife to himself, **he shall not diminish the food, clothing, or marital rights of the first wife.** 11 And if he does not do these three things for her, **she shall go out without debt, without payment of money** (NRSV). **Female slave's right to unconditional freedom if "undesirable"**

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Thomas Shirrmacher

"Generally speaking, there were numerous protective measures relating to slaves/servants [in the OT]. No master was to "rule . . . ruthlessly," neither over slaves (Leviticus 25:43, 46) nor over hired workers (Leviticus 25:53)...Accordingly, an Israelite slave was to serve for six years at most (Exodus 21:2, also see Deuteronomy 15: 12, 18). If he wanted to offer lifelong service, the slave had to conclude an eternal covenant with his master (Deuteronomy 15:16-17). This condition demonstrates once again just how great the relationship of trust between master and servant could be. Israelite slavery could not have been so bad if people voluntarily expanded it through an agreement from six years to a lifelong arrangement...Next to this there was a "right of redemption" (Leviticus 25:48) for slaves/servants, who had to be set free when they either bought their own freedom or when someone else bought their freedom (Leviticus 25:47-55). There even existed a "redemption duty" upon the "uncle" or the nephew, that is to say, the closest relatives ("his closest blood relative") (Leviticus 25:49). This right of redemption shows that slavery was a state that always needed to be ended as soon as possible. "

Schirrmacher, Thomas. "Slavery in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and today." Christian Values vs Contemporary Values (2014): Pages 43-75. Page 46-47

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Redemption and Slavery in the Old Testament

- **Two distinct Categories**

1. National Redemption from Slavery in Egypt (Ex 6:6; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 24:18)
2. Redemption of individuals or property sold into bondage through payment of ransom (Lev 25; Ex 21:29–30)

- **National Redemption**

- Yahweh's redemption of Israel was exercised 'with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm' (Ex 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2–4; 26:8)
-

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The Kinsman-Redeemer Concept: Leviticus 25:47-50

Indentured Slavery

If a foreigner residing among you becomes rich and any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to the foreigner or to a member of the foreigner's clan, they retain the right of redemption after they have sold themselves. One of their relatives may redeem them; an uncle or a cousin or any blood-relative in their clan may redeem them. Or if they prosper, they may redeem themselves. They and their buyer are to count the time from the year they sold Kinsman Redeemer themselves up to the Year of Jubilee.

Prominent Examples in the Old Testament

1. Boaz as the kinsman-redeemer for Ruth (Ruth 3:9; 4:9-10)
2. God as the "kinsman-redeemer" who as Israel's father and husband rescues, redeems, and vindicates his people (e.g. Ex 4:22-23; Job 19:25, Ps 19:14, Isa 41:14, 43:14, 44:6, 47:4)

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The Servant of the Lord Concept in Old Testament

- A figure used as Yahweh's Instrument for the purpose of redeeming His people. It has its general and precise uses.
 - General Use for significant Old Testament figures such as Moses (Deut 34:5; Josh 1:13), David (Ps 18:1; Jer 33:21), King Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9)
 - Specific Use for the Messiah which is presented in different forms
- The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12):
 - He will suffer and bear the sins of others, redeem them from the bondage of sin.
- The Chosen Servant (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:1-7):
 - His Election upon whom the Spirit is placed to do the mighty deeds of God.
- The Anointed Servant (Isaiah 61:1-3):
 - Anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to preach good news, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

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Facets of the Suffering Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53

Dishonour	Isa 53:1-3	Suffering	³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not
Substitutionary atonement	Isa 53:4-6	Vicarious sin-bearing (i.e., bearing the sin of others)	⁴ he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... ⁵ he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed
Obedient Submission	Isa 53:7-10	The undeserved death of his Servant was God's will	⁸ ... he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer
Vindication and Exaltation	Isa 53:11-12	Outcome – for the servant and for us: vindication and salvation	¹¹ After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities

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Sociological Conceptions of Slavery

- **The Master's Property:**
 - Aristotle: The slave is "living property" (Politics 1.2.4-5, 1253b)
- **The Master's Instrument:**
 - Aristotle: "the slave is a living tool and the tool a lifeless slave" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.11).
- **The Slave is a body**
 - Greek – σωματίων (cf., Rev 18:13)
- **Extension (or Substitute) of the Master's Body:**
 - The slave's body is united to their master only in the sense that the master chooses to exert their will through that body. That also enables the slave to serve as substitute for the master in scenarios determined by them.
- **Social Death (Natal Alienation):**
 - Slavery is "the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated (social death) and generally dishonored persons."
[Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and social death: A comparative study, with a new preface.* Harvard University Press, 2018. Page 13]

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Conceptual Constituents of Chattel Slavery

Coercion & Bondage to Another

Natal Alienation & Social Death

Permanent State of dishonour

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Orlando Patterson

“Masters all over the world used special rituals of enslavement upon first acquiring slaves: the symbolism of naming, of clothing, of hairstyle, of language, and of body marks. And they used, especially in the more advanced slave systems, the sacred symbols of religion”

Patterson, Orlando. Slavery and social death: A comparative study; Harvard University Press, 2018. Page 8-9.

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Graeco-Roman Slavery

• Prevalence

- By first century AD 20-33% of all human beings in Rome were slaves. The proportion increased with the decades even though the authorities were consistently reluctant to admit the numbers for fear of “empowering” them

• Sources

- Prisoners of war
- Piracy, kidnapping & brigandage,
- Exposure of an unwanted child,
- Debt slavery - sale of a child or self to pay debts,
- Condemnation by the law courts
- Birth to a slave mother

Life of slaves in the middle and higher social scales was far better than many free persons

• Social Scales of Slaves

1. “Civil Service” Slaves: Slaves of the state, of cities, and of the imperial bureaucracy.
2. Slaves of rich Aristocratic household or plantations
3. Temple Slaves: took care of the sacred places and performed religious rituals
4. Slaves with Professional skills: craftsmen, masters’ business agents, doctors, philosophers, writers, tutors, entertainers
5. Domestic Slaves with varying liberties: manage household, cared for the children; acted as teachers and guides
6. Mine workers & sex slaves, who had incredibly bad working conditions and long hours

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Carolyn Osiek

Roles of the Household slave in the first century AD Dinner Party

“Roles of slaves include gatekeeping, guest control, food service, and wine service. The *obsonator* supervises banquets and sees to procuring what is necessary. The *vocator* or *nomenclator* acts as agent of the host or hostess, issuing invitations and assigning places. Other slaves welcome guests, help them to change into dining attire, wash and anoint their feet, etc. Between courses, they wash and anoint the hands of the guests. Those who serve may be called *ministri* or *ministratores*, in Greek, *diakonoi*. In clever presentations, slaves might also sing and dance as they present the food”

Osiek, Carolyn. 2008. “Slaves at Household Meals”, <<http://www.philipharland.com/meals/2008>

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Catherine Hezser

Distinctions between slaves and free persons were sometimes blurred. Although slaves were basically seen as property and compared with cattle, they were also treated as human beings capable of rational thinking and informed decisions. Slaves were not the only members of the household who were dependent on *the paterfamilias*. Wives and children also stood under his authority. In their basic powerlessness and submission under the householder’s authority, slaves, women, and minors are often correlated in ancient literary sources. Unlike wives and children, however, slaves lacked any ancestry. They were uprooted from their family, nation, and religion of origin and became members of a denationalized pool of slaves who, since they were seen as culturally neutral, could easily assume the cultural and religious identity of their respective masters. Once they were manumitted, male slaves could become Roman citizens and/or members of the Jewish community. Since their former enslavement would leave a lasting mark, however, freedmen would nevertheless occupy an intermediate position between slaves and freeborn people, a situation which was loaded with ambiguities.

Hezser, Catherine. Jewish slavery in antiquity. OUP Oxford, 2005. Page 26.

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Dale Martin

“Many families of the lower class in Rome combined persons of slave, freed, and freeborn status. Because of frequent manumissions and unions between slave, freed and sometimes even free persons, these groups, to a great extent, merged in daily life. This observation alone suggests that family life for these slaves could not have differed radically from family life of freed persons and the free urban poor”

Martin, Dale B. Slavery as salvation: The metaphor of slavery in Pauline Christianity. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021. Page 3

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Dale Martin

Slavery and Social Mobility in Graeco-Roman Empire

“Slavery in the Roman Empire functioned as a conduit for social mobility for several reasons. For one thing, usually when a slave of a Roman citizen was manumitted, he or she was also granted Roman citizenship. Therefore, in the first century, a Roman slave was better situated than a free foreigner for becoming a Roman citizen...In both the East and West and in Greek and Roman times, slaves were trained in everything from handcrafts to philosophy. After manumission, the ex-slave might go on to become a famous cook, writer, scholar, grammarian, or philosopher...As surprising as it may sound to modern ears, slavery was arguably the most important channel through which outsiders entered the mainstream of Roman power structures. The mere fact that so many inscriptions from the Roman Empire were erected by freedpersons testifies to the function of slavery in social mobility. Freedpersons were not ashamed, it seems, of their freed status; it demonstrated their own progress.”

Martin, Dale B. Slavery as salvation: The metaphor of slavery in Pauline Christianity. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021. Page 32

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Graeco-Roman Slavery was complex and had wide varieties and ranges. This is complicated also by Jewish conceptions of slavery which though refracted through Hellenization and Romanization nevertheless made the New Testament idea complex. The status of the slave was certainly ambiguous. So, avoid simplistic interpretations.

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Four Step Process of Adoption of Slaves into Graeco-Roman Family

1. Manumission:

- Slaves could be granted their freedom through a legal process called manumission. This could be done by the slave's owner, often in exchange for a sum of money or valuable service.

2. Adoption:

- Once freed, a former slave could be formally adopted by a Roman citizen, often the person who had freed them. This process was done through a legal ceremony and made the former slave a full member of the adopting family.

3. Citizenship:

- By being adopted, the former slave would gain Roman citizenship, which granted them legal rights and protections similar to those enjoyed by freeborn Roman citizens.

4. Inheritance:

- Adopted slaves could often inherit property and wealth from their adoptive families, just like biological children.

Benefits

- Rewarding loyal and skilled slaves
- Replenishing citizenry and family name
- Incentive for slaves to remain loyal

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Slaves and Masters Relationship in the New Testament

- **The Servant Parables of Jesus**
 - The doorkeeper (Mark 13:33-37//Luke 12:35-38)
 - The overseer (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:42-46)
 - The talents/the pounds (Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:12-27)
 - The throne claimant (Luke 19:12b, 14-15a, 27)
 - The unmerciful servant (Matt 18:23-28)
 - The servant's reward (Luke 17:7-10)
 - The wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-11; Matt 21:33-44; Luke 20:9-18)
 - The unjust steward (Luke 16:1-8)
 - The vineyard workers (Matt 20:1-13)
- **The Household Codes**
 - Eph 6:5-9
 - Col 3:22-4:1
 - 1 Pet 2:18-24
 - 1 Tim 6:1-2
- **The Philemon- Onesimus Situation**

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Evaluation of Theories on the Background of Letter to Philemon

- **Runaway (Fugitive) Slave Theory:**
 - **For**
 - Onesimus stole money from Philemon (v. 18), escaped and converted under Paul
 - Paul is through the letter, addressing the legal rights of Philemon under the Gospel
 - Paul is asking for forgiveness of Onesimus and his diplomacy designed to save Philemon's face
 - Paul is asking also for the manumission of Onesimus to join his team (v. 16)
 - **Against**
 - Paul never states that Onesimus run away. He was *ἔχωρισθη* (separated) from his master (v 15)
 - Conditional clause *εἰ δέ τι* (if however, in any way) in v. 18 places the idea that Onesimus stole money in doubt
- **Strained Relationship (Fallen Out) Theory:**
 - **For**
 - Relationship between Onesimus and Philemon had deteriorated as Paul uses *ἥδικησέν* (he has wronged) and *ὀφείλει* (he owes).
 - It is further suggested that Onesimus was a "roaming" slave rather than a runaway slave, indicated by the use of the term *ἄχρηστον* (useless; v. 11) employed in some papyri for roaming slaves
 - Legal documents exists which distinguished wandering or roaming slaves who intended to return from fugitives who did not intend to return
 - **Against**
 - It does not explain why Paul needed to intervene if Onesimus intended to return on his own accord
 - Paul deployment of diplomatic language and apologetic tone suggests that some wrong has been done even if expressed in hypothetical or tentative language

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Annang Asumang

“[D]espite the increasing popularity of the recent “fallen out” theory, the two theories are equally possible. What may be certain is that Onesimus was with Paul without the consent of his owner. The exact circumstances under which he left his master remain a matter of speculation. My view is that the Fugitive Slave theory appears more likely. Whichever view one takes however, Paul’s letter appears designed to achieve two things. First, he wanted to restore the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon to a level far higher than it was before the two were separated (vv. 16-17). And secondly, the aim was to request that Onesimus become a member of Paul’s team (vv. 13-14)! When these two objectives are taken together, Paul’s letter is a patent request not only for the manumission of Onesimus, but for his elevation to an equal status as Philemon himself—in Christ. Paul is basically demanding that the theological truth of the spiritual liberation of all in Christ become evident in Philemon’s practical life”

Asumang, Annang. Paul and his letters: A textbook for conservative and charismatic Christians. Johannesburg: SATS Press. 2008. Page 306

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Slave trading is a grievous sin: 1 Tim 1:9-10

We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practising homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers – and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine

ἀνδραποδισταῖς

Compound noun denoting forcibly abducting or forcing another person into slavery in order to sell them off as slaves. So, “kidnappers” (NKJV), or “manslayers” (AKJV)

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Woe to Babylon (Roman Empire) for Human Trafficking: Rev 18:11-15

'The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more – cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and **human beings sold as slaves.** They will say, "The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendour have vanished, never to be recovered." The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment.

Σωμάτων καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων

Lit., "slave body, and, namely souls of human beings"

ESV: "slaves, that is, human souls"

NRSV: "slaves—and human lives"

The Message: "And slaves—their terrible traffic in human lives"

Lit., "bodies"; but it is used pejoratively when slave is being described as a commodity or an instrument.

Pejorative term used by Ezek 27:13 LXX to condemn trade in human beings who are treated like soulless objects. Basically, human trafficking

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Metaphors of Slavery in the New Testament

1. Christology
2. Soteriology
3. Christian Existence (Discipleship)
4. Christian Ethics
5. Christian Ministry

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“Slave” Christology in the New Testament

- Christological ideas which metaphorically present Jesus as a slave or in relation to the concept of slavery
- Six Categories
 1. Jesus’ Self Characterization as Servant (E.g., Mk 10:45)
 2. Jesus as the Servant of the Lord (E.g., Matt 12:18-21)
 3. Jesus’ self-dramatization of His Servitude (e.g., Jn 13:1-17)
 4. Jesus as Kinsman-Redeemer (He 2:14-15)
 5. Theological account of the Christ event in terms of slavery (E.g. Phil 2:7-8)
 6. Jesus as specific exemplar to Christian slaves (1 Pet 2:18-25)

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Jesus as Servant of the Lord in the New Testament

- **Explicit Passages**
 - Matt 12:18-21 (quotation of Isaiah 42:1-4)
 - Mk 10:45; Matt 20:28
 - Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27-30; 8:30-35
- **Allusions**
 - 1 Cor 15:3
 - Phil 2:7
 - Rom 4:25; 5:12-21
 - 1 Pet 2:21
- **Dramatizations**
 - John 13:1-17
 - John 4:34

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“Slave” Christology in Phil 2:7-8 (NKJV)

“He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”

ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν
[Emptied Himself]
Self Natal Alienation

Γενόμενος ὑπήκοος
[Having become obedient]
Shared in lowest life of humanity

μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν
[Taken the form of a slave]
Voluntary Enslavement

θανάτου σταυροῦ
[Death on a cross]
Slave’s death

“the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
(Mk 10:45)

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In what ways do 1 Pet 2:18-25 reflect “Slave” Christology?

Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

²⁴ He who did not sin, was made to suffer for us, that he might free us from all unrighteousness.

Redemptive Suffering of the Saviour
The component of Slave Christology that cannot be imitated by the disciple

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Servant of the Lord Christology in 1 Pet 2:21-25

Isaiah 53	1 Pet 2:21-25
Isa 53:9b: “though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth”	1 Pet 2:22: “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth”
Isa 53:7: “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”	1 Pet 2:23: “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”
Isa 53:4, 5, 6, 12: “[He] bore our suffering...by his wounds we are healed...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all...he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”	1 Pet 2:24: “He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”
Isa 53:6: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray...”	1 Pet 2:25: “For ‘you were like sheep going astray,’ but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

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Annang Asumang

“it is not the exact suffering of crucifixion that believers are urged to follow, as some misinterpret this verse. It is the manner in which the Lord bore His unjust suffering, by His non-retaliation and submission to the just God to vindicate Him.”

Asumang, Annang. The General Letters and Revelation: A textbook for conservative and charismatic Christians. Johannesburg: SATS Press. 2011. Page

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Jesus' washing of His Disciples' Feet: John 13:1-17 (cf. Phil 2:5-8)

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.² The evening meal was in progress, and the **“being in the form of God” (Phil 2:6)** **Divine Christological Interpretation of the Footwashing** to betray Jesus.³ Jesus knew that the Father had put **“but emptied himself,” (Phil 2:7a)** **Incarnational Interpretation of the Footwashing** and was returning to God; **“taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7b)** **Slave Christology** so he **“obedient to...death” (Phil 2:8)** **Slave Christology** came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, you are washing my feet?” Jesus replied, “You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand.”⁸ “No,” said Peter, “you shall never wash my feet.” Jesus

Soteriological Interpretation of Jesus' washing of feet of His disciples

whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.¹¹ For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.¹³ “You call me

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” (Phil 2:5) Moral Ethical interpretation of Jesus' washing of feet of His disciples

him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

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Nnamdi U. Ijeudo & Daniel C. Unachukwu

“By laying down his cloth, Jesus foreshadows the laying down of his life. According to Dodd (1953:116), the act of Jesus putting off his garment and then putting them back on in verse 12 shows him as that of the Good Shepherd (or leader) willing to lay down his life for others. The footwashing episode in verses 4–5 parallels Luke 22:27 accounts in which Jesus infers: ‘I am among you as one who serves’. It also points to the confessional hymn of Philippians 2:6–11, wherein the Jesus is portrayed as the one who emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...The Greek word μέρος (meros [Jn 13:8]) means to share with or be a partner with, and it connotes in this context ‘not only a fellowship with Jesus, but also a sharing in his heritage and his kingdom’ (Lopinski 2019:89). For Brown (1966), Jesus is doing more than just giving a lesson on humility that the disciples could easily understand; what is involved has theological implications that can be understood only after ‘the hour’ is over.

Ijeudo, Nnamdi U., and Daniel C. Unachukwu. "Re-examining John 13: 1–17 in the context of Nigerian political leadership." *HTS Theologese Studies/Theological Studies* 78.3 (2022). Page 5.

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Jesus' washing of his disciple's feet in John 13 was not just a lesson in humble self-sacrificing act of humility and love to be imitated. It was at the same time also a prophetic act foreshadowing His self-emptying death on the cross by which He redeems, purifies, and incorporates those who believe into union with Himself. Not only does it match the Christological hymn of Phil 2:5-11. It dramatizes Jesus' earlier saying to His disciples in Mk 10:43-45 "whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." It was thus a potent dramatic imagery combining Slave Christology, Soteriology and Christian Discipleship.

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Slavery Terminologies & New Testament Soteriology

• Redemption

- Λύτρον (ransom Mk 10:45; 1 Tim 2:6) – emphasis on the buying back from slaving
- ἠγοράσθητε (you were bought; 1 Cor 6:20, 7:23) – emphasis on the price at slave market
- ἐξηγόρασεν (redeemed; Gal 3:13; Gal 4:5) – emphasis on the slave-master being the law
- ἀπολυτρώσεως (redemption; Rom 3:24, 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30) – emphasis on "in Christ"

• Adoption

- Υιοθεσίας (divine adoption; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5)

• Substitution

- Παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν (delivered over for our transgressions; Rom 4:25)
- ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνήνεγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ (our sins He Himself bore in His body; 1 Pet 2:24)

• Union with Christ

- "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal 2:20)

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Salvific Redemption and Slavery Metaphors

- Acts 20:28b
 - “Be shepherds of the church of God, which **he bought** with his own blood”
- Eph 1:7
 - “In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace”
- 1 Pet 1:18-19
 - “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were **redeemed from the empty way** of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect”
- Col 1:13-14
 - “[He] **has rescued us from the dominion of darkness** and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom **we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**”
- Tit 2:13-24
 - “[We] wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who **gave himself for us to redeem us** from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

41

Christian Discipleship is Slavery to Righteousness: Rom 6:15-22

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

**The Christian is a slave of God in Christ.
He or she must live only to God’s obedience and pleasure like a slave**

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Slavery Metaphor and Serving one another

- **Mk 10:42-44**
 - “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”
- **Phil 2:3-4**
 - “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”
- **Gal 5:13**
 - “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”
- **Col 3:23-24**
 - “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

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Slavery Metaphor and Christian Ministry

- **Paul as “Slave of Christ”**
 - Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Tit. 1:1
- **Peter as “Slave of Christ”**
 - 2 Pet. 1:1
- **Jude as “Slave of Christ”**
 - Jude 1
- **James as “Slave of Christ”**
 - James 1:1
- **Other “Slaves” of Christ**
 - Timothy (Phil. 1:1)
 - Epaphras (Col. 4:12)
 - Mary (Lk 1:38)
 - All believers (1 Cor 7:22; Rev 1:1)

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The Character of the Minister as Slave of Christ: 2 Tim 2:23-25

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach patient²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth

The character of the minister as slave of Christ, especially within the context of how they relate to other believers in a chaotic environment as it was in Ephesus was crucial. The slave of the Lord must behave in a manner that is determined to rescue those in error from the clutches and traps of Satan. How a minister as slave of the Lord comports themselves matters a great deal

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Topics Covered

1. Slavery in the Old Testament
2. Nature of Slavery in first Century Graeco-Roman world
3. Slave-Master relationships in the New Testament
4. Slaving-trading (Human Trafficking) and the New Testament
5. Slavery as Metaphor in the New Testament

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Questions?