

#126 “The Bond-servant Mentality”

by Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

A true disciple of Christ is not the person who names the name of Christ when the spiritual weather is fair but when persecution will certainly arise. He lives for righteousness even when every emotion, temptation, and fleshly desire prompts him to do otherwise. He lives a life of service, sacrifice, and surrender. His goal is to serve and give and love because he knows that is what he is called to and that is what others truly need. It is in his relationship to Christ and in this alone that he finds the fullness of joy. A true disciple of Christ denies himself and gives up control. He desires, seeks, and follows God's will for every area of his life, and he sacrifices to put the interests of others ahead of his own. Given this list of the costs of discipleship, is it no wonder that so few ever choose to live in such a way? When a person is living in this way, or is at least moving in such a direction, we may consider him to have been revived.

This true discipleship is illustrated biblically by the bond-servant. A bond-servant was a slave who had been offered his freedom, but who, of his own volition, chose to remain a slave and serve his master faithfully. The master didn't force him to stay or to do his bidding, but it was the slave who chose joyfully and willingly to take on the role of slave. We don't like to hear that we "have to" do what God says. We don't like anybody telling us that we "must" do something, let alone to deny ourselves and follow Christ in all areas. This is a high and intense calling, but it is our calling. We are called to be bond-servants who willingly surrender to Christ in order to accomplish His purposes and desires on the earth. We are no longer to concern ourselves with what we want but with what He wants. Our goals for life are not to be ours but His. Our objectives each day are not to be self-made but God-ordered. It is a completely different mindset than what is natural as westerners where we are in charge, where we make the calls, and where we go after our American dream.

I remember reading something one time where the writer was praising a certain man for accomplishing all of his goals for his life. The man had listed the top one hundred things that he wanted to accomplish, experience, and enjoy in his life. Clearly, he had a wealth of resources and time to do what he did, which ranged from climbing the world's tallest mountains, to sailing across the ocean, and to owning his own yacht, just to name a few of the things. He decided what he wanted out of life, and he was able to get it all. Some years ago, my wife and I met with a financial representative, and he asked the question that financial representatives typically ask: "What do you want to be able to do when you retire?" He was looking for things like "travel to Europe," "buy a second home on the ocean," "golf the top fifty courses in the U.S.," and so on. I couldn't come up with anything that I wanted that was along the lines of what he was looking for. I realized that I had given up thinking about getting things for myself and proving my worth. My life wasn't about me. I had no interest or desire in making a list of the top one hundred things I wanted to do in my life. All I wanted to do was what God led me to do. I felt strangely like I was off beat, out of the loop, and just plain abnormal. If he had come to me several years earlier, I could have given him the script for my life which I had authored. I knew

what I wanted and I was going to get it. Yet God brought me to my knees through great suffering and showed me that He knew far better than I did. God reasserted Himself as rightful king of my life. Despite how radical this approach is to living life, I think that this is the bond-servant mindset to which Jesus calls us all.

Consider the passage in Luke 17:7-10:

"Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

The thrust of the passage is that the will of the master takes absolute precedence over the immediate needs and desires of the servant. He is in charge and we are not. We do not deserve thanks for our service, for we are only doing what God has required of us in the first place. That is the conclusion of verse 10. It is not, "Wow, look at me and what I have done for God today. He must be impressed with me." Rather, it is that we are unworthy apart from Christ, and we do only what we are expected to do given our submissive role before Christ. Our calling as Christians is a submissive and subservient role before Christ. We are placed under His authority, for Christ is our head and our Master. He is Lord of our lives and Lord of the universe. This is not up for debate, nor is this optional in discipleship.

The revived person recognizes this and begins to model his life after Christ, who Himself took on the form of a bond-servant. He left heaven with all of its wonderful rights and privileges and took on the form of a man. He was persecuted, He suffered, and He died on the cross for our sins. But He rose again, and God exalted Him above every name. This is why He is Lord. He first became the ultimate example of humility and servanthood. Now He will judge the world. We would do well to live in submission to the rightful Lord of our lives. If we want revival, we must take on the role of a bond-servant, bowing before the Master, seeking His kingdom first, and letting Him supply us with all of the rest of what we need. It is time that our wants become defined by what our God wants.