

**DOULOS**  
**Galatians 1:10**  
**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. "Twelve Years a Slave" is a movie based on the true story of Solomon Northup, who was a free black man from New York. He was a professional violinist and was married with children. His life was great, until he was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the deep south. This was illegal, but how could he prove that he was kidnapped? How could he prove that he was a free man? The movie then shows the horrors of slavery in the antebellum south. Slaves had no rights. Children were ripped from the arms of their parents. Husbands and wives were split up. Slaves lived in terrible conditions, and were worked to death. They were tortured, raped, killed, and killed. One day a white man comes to do some work on the plantation, and he happens to be an abolitionist. Solomon confides in the man that he has been kidnapped, and asks him to send word to his family of his enslavement. I'll let you find out what happens next.
2. When we hear the word "slavery," that's the picture that most of us have. We think about the 12.5 million Africans who were forced into slavery and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. It was terrible. The idea of slavery is horrible.
3. Yet "slave" is the exact word that the New Testament authors chose to describe what it means to be a Christian.

**II. TEXT**

1. **Galatians 1:10** "For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."
2. Remember the context of Galatians. After starting these churches and moving on, false teachers moved in after Paul and told the Galatians that salvation required more than faith in Christ, it required becoming Jewish – getting circumcised and following the 613 Jewish laws found in the Old Testament. And they tried to discredit Paul. They said that the reason why Paul was preaching only salvation by grace through faith is that he wanted to please people and get more Gentile converts. And Paul says, "I'm not trying to please people. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ."
3. Paul called himself "a servant of Christ."
4. The Greek word for "servant" is *doulos*, and the most literal, accurate translation is not servant, but slave. In other words, Paul wasn't saying that he was Christ's volunteer, or Christ's helper, or Christ's employee; he was saying that he was Christ's slave.

5. Unfortunately there are only a few English translations that actually translate *doulos* as “slave,” because it carries such a negative connotation; but the accurate translation is “slave.”
6. Paul wasn’t the only one who called himself a slave.
7. In fact, while we usually call ourselves Christians, the word Christian is only found three times in the NT, but the word “slave” is found 124 times.
8. **Kyle Idleman**, *Not a Fan*, 149 “When Peter began 2 Peter, he didn’t introduce himself by saying, ‘Peter, a best friend of Jesus, present at the Mount of Transfiguration, preacher on the day of Pentecost.’ Instead he simply says, ‘Simon Peter, a slave...’ John, Timothy, and Jude all give themselves the same title. James doesn’t begin his letter by saying, ‘James, the half brother of the Son of God.’ He begins by saying, ‘James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.’ When Paul wrote to the church in Rome he wrote, ‘Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus.’ Really? Why not say, ‘Paul, educated by Gamaliel, spoken to on the road to Damascus, bestselling author of... the Bible?’ But all he says is, ‘Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ.’”
9. Why does the Bible call Christians slaves? The Bible actually uses a number of terms to describe Christians: Ambassadors, athletes, believers, body parts, branches, brothers and sisters, little children, disciples, exiles, farmers, fishers, light, priests, saints, salt, sheep, slave, soldiers, strangers/sojourners, and living stones. Each one of these terms helps us to understand what it means to be a Christ-follower. What about the term slave?
10. Slavery was very prominent in the Roman Empire at the time that the Bible was written, so it was a powerful metaphor for the Christian life. In the first century, about 20 percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves, or about 12 million. Slaves were young and old, and every race; some were educated, others uneducated; some highly skilled, others unskilled. Some were treated very well, and some were badly mistreated. But all slaves had the following in common: They completely belonged to their master, and they lived to serve and please their master.
11. In his book *Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity in Christ*, John MacArthur points out five parallels between Biblical Christianity and first-century slavery:

### III. **WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CHRIST’S SLAVE**

#### 1. **Exclusive ownership.**

- i. Slaves were considered to be the property of their owners, which meant they were under the absolute control of their owners. They had no more rights than an animal or a chair.
- ii. The bible teaches that we were born in slavery to sin, but Christ purchased us with His blood, and now we belong to Him.
- iii. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** “You are not your own, for you were bought at price.”
- iv. Romans 6:17-18 says, “having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness.”
- v. Titus 2:14 calls us “a people for his own possession.”

- vi. Being Christ's slave means you belong to God; He is your owner and master. You don't belong to yourself or anyone else. You exist for His pleasure.
- vii. You don't get to decide what to do with your body, your time, your health, your talents, your possessions. You, and everything you are and have, belong to God.
- viii. **Kyle Idleman (*Not a Fan*)** "There is a legal document called a 'quitclaim deed.' It's used when a person is signing over all rights to a property or a possession that they once had a share in. When they sign a quitclaim deed they are giving up whatever claim they once had. They are surrendering all their rights. When Jesus invites us to follow there's not a lot of paper work involved, but he's looking for some kind of a quitclaim deed. When you decide to follow him you are signing over your house, your car, your bank accounts, your career, your marriage, your children, your future, and anything else that you once laid claim to. You have no more rights and nothing can be withheld. You deny yourself and sign a quitclaim deed on your life."

## 2. Complete submission.

- i. Being a slave in the first century meant being always available to do what the master says, no matter what it is, without hesitation or complaint.
- ii. That's what it means to be a Christian. Total and complete obedience, no matter the command, no matter the challenge, no matter the cost.
- iii. A Christian doesn't get to decide if they will obey, or when they will obey, or how closely they will obey; they obey completely.
- iv. Jesus set the example in this.
  1. **Philippians 2:7-8** "7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross."
  2. Notice that when Christ came to earth, he assumed the form of a servant (doulos; a slave). He became a slave to God the Father.
  3. What did this look like? Complete submission. "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death."
- v. Another biblical example of this is Abraham, when God called him to sacrifice his one and only son, Isaac, the person Abraham cherished more than anything in the world. Abraham obeyed, but God stopped him just before he cut his son's throat. That's complete submission.
- vi. A more humorous example would be the character Forest Gump. Forest wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer. He was a few French Fries short of a Happy Meal. He joined the army during the Vietnam War, and he was a great soldier. One time his drill sergeant got in his face and yelled, "Gump, what's your sole purpose in this army?" Gump, standing at attention with his eyes straight ahead said without hesitation, "To do whatever you tell me drill

sergeant!” The drill sergeant yells back in his face, “Gump, you are a genius. That’s the most outstanding answer I’ve ever heard. You must have an IQ of 160! You are gifted, Private Gump!” Forest goes on to narrate, “Now for some reason, I fit in the army like one of them round pegs. It’s not really hard. You just make your bed real neat, remember to stand up strait, and always answer every question with, “Yes Drill Sergeant!” In another scene during basic training, they are assembling their guns, and Gump was faster than anyone else. He says, “Done Drill Sergeant!” So the drill sergeant hurries up to him and shouts, “Gump, why did you put that weapon together so quickly?” Forrest answered, “You told me to, Drill Sergeant.” The Drill Sergeant responded, “This is a new company record. If it wouldn’t be such a waste of fine enlisted men, I’d recommend you for Officer Training School, Private Gump. You are going to be a general some day!” Why was Gump such a good soldier? Complete, unquestioning obedience. When given a assignment, he didn’t stop and think, “This is stupid, or risky, or dangerous, or boring.” He completely trusted and obeyed his commanding officer.

- vii. Some of us struggle with obeying God because we think too much. One I was a kid, my dad gave me a job to do in the yard. When I finished my dad came to inspect it, and he said, “Why didn’t you do the job like I told you to?” I answered, “Well, I thought,” and my dad cut me off and said, “Don’t think. Just do what I tell you to do. By the way, my dad was in the army in the Vietnam war, too.
- viii. To be a slave of Christ means complete submission: without hesitation, without complaint.

### 3. Singular devotion.

- i. **John MacArthur** “The life of a slave... may have been difficult, but it was relatively simple. Slaves had only one primary concern: to carry out the will of the master. In areas where they were given direct commands, they were required to obey. In areas where no direct command was given, they were to find ways to please the master as best they could.”
- ii. To be a slave of Christ is to live to please Him before and above anyone else.
- iii. **1 Thessalonians 4:1 (NLT)** “Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God”
- iv. **2 Corinthians 5:9** “Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to him.”
- v. Often in life you will be faced with a conflict of interest.
  - 1. God will want one thing, and you will want another. What should you do?
    - a. **Luke 9:23** “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

2. God will want one thing, and your loved ones will want another. What should you do?
  - a. **Luke 14:26** “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters— yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”
  - b. Does Jesus want you to hate your family? No. He wants you to love your family. But if ever there is a conflict of interest, there must be no contest, no compromise. Jesus comes first. We must never allow our loved ones to come before Christ, or to hinder our walk with Christ.
  - c. We have a church member whose sister is gay and is getting married, and of course invited her to the wedding. But because Christ comes first, she’s not going to the wedding.
  - d. Some people think it’s okay for a Christian to go to a gay wedding, that you should because it is the loving thing to do. Let me ask you a question. If your best friend decided to get married to her father in an incestuous relationship, would you attend the wedding? I sure hope not. If your best friend decided to get married to her dog, would you attend the wedding? I hope not. We must love people, but love is not the same as applauding or supporting someone’s behavior if their behavior dishonors God.
3. God will want one thing, but your boss will want another. What should you do?
  - a. Do you remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – three Jewish men living in Babylon, working for the king. Their boss made a huge statue and demanded that everyone bow to worship it or be executed. What did they do? When everyone else knelt, they stood.
4. God will want you to do one thing, but the government will want another. What should do?
  - a. The Jewish authorities commanded the apostles to stop preaching about Jesus, but the disciples said, “We must obey God rather than people (Acts 5:29).”
5. God will want you to do one thing, but your customers will want another. What should you do?
  - a. Jack Phillips, a Christian baker in Colorado, was asked to make a wedding cake for a gay wedding ceremony, and he refused, even though it cost him a great deal.

4. Total dependence.

- i. Since a slave didn't own anything, they were completely dependent on their master for the basic necessities of life – food, shelter, and clothing. If they had a good master, this was an advantage over a free person, because they didn't have to worry about finding food or shelter. Since their needs were met, all they had to do was focus on pleasing their master.
- ii. That's what the Bible says about us.
- iii. **Matthew 6:33 (NLT)** "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."
- iv. As slaves of Christ, we don't have to worry about anything. All we need to do is focus on pleasing the Master, and He promises to take care of us.
- v. When Lydia and I got married, our dream was for her to be a full-time homemaker and stay-at-home mom. But when we went to seminary, we decided it would be best for her to work full-time to put me through school. And it was hard. She wasn't where she wanted to be, and the work itself was very hard – she worked in a daycare, and then opened her own daycare in our home. Every once in a while I would try to encourage her by saying, "Don't worry, when I graduate, you can stop working; I'll take over the role of provider." And she didn't believe me. She would say, "Yeah right." But sure enough, as soon as I graduated, I kept my word. I graduated in May 2005, and we moved to Lafayette in June 2005, and she hasn't worked a day since.
- vi. I lot of us are like that. God promises to provide for us, but we don't believe Him. And so we struggle to completely submit to Him. But our Master is not a cruel, stingy, hard master. He also happens to be our loving Heavenly Father, and He promises to take good care of us (Phil 4:19).
- vii. Jesus talked a lot about worry. He said, "Consider the birds of the sky. God feeds them, and you are worth far more to God than birds. Or consider the flowers. God clothes them beautifully, and you are worth far more to God than flowers. If God takes care of the birds and the flowers, then surely He will take care of you (Mt 6:25-34). You just focus on serving and pleasing the Master."

##### **5. Personal accountability.**

- i. A slave in the Roman Empire was accountable to his master. If he pleased his master, his master would reward him, perhaps even giving him his freedom after years of faithful service. But if he displeased his master, he could face a flogging, or something worse, such as crucifixion.
- ii. As slaves of Christ, we too will be held accountable.
  - 1. **2 Corinthians 5:10** "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."
  - 2. This will happen when Christ returns.

iii. But accountability won't just happen on judgment day. It happens every day. When we rebel against God, we can be sure that our Heavenly Father will apply loving discipline, not out of revenge, but because He loves us too much to watch us live that way.

1. **Proverbs 3:12** "for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights."
2. When I was a little boy, I loved and admired my father, but I also feared him, because I knew that he would spank me with his leather belt if I stepped out of line. Knowing that was a great motivator to do what was right.

iv. As slaves of Christ, we are accountable to our Master.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

1. As Christians, we have the wonderful privilege of being adopted into God's family. We are children of God, and God is our loving, heavenly Father.
2. But don't forget that we are also slaves of Christ. Don't forget what that means: Exclusive ownership; complete submission; singular devotion; total dependence; and personal accountability.
3. But also don't forget this: We don't live as Christ's slaves to earn salvation, but out of gratitude for our salvation. We don't live as Christ's slaves because we have to, but because we want to. When you consider all that Christ has done for you, and how loving and kind and wise He is, you should want to be His slave.
4. In the Old Testament days the Jews had slaves. The slaves would serve for six years and then be set free. But sometimes a slave would so love his master, that he would volunteer to be his slave for life. This was called a bond-slave. They had a special ceremony for that. His master would bring him to the judges and then pierce his ear with an awl, and he would serve his master for life.
5. That's what we're supposed to do in our relationship with Christ. We are supposed to look at how much He has done for us, and how much He deserves, and how wonderful He is, and then unreservedly give ourselves to Him as His slaves, to do with whatever He wants.
6. Many Christians have never done this. They like Jesus. They think Jesus is great. They believe in Jesus. But they have never had a bondslave ceremony. They have never dedicated themselves fully to Christ, saying, "Jesus, I'm Yours. Your will, not mine. Your way, not mine. Your plan, not mine. Your agenda, not mine. Your timing, not mine. From this day on, I live to please and serve You with all my heart."
7. Would you do that today?