

## Exodus 21:5-6

*"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever."*

Paul often referred himself as a servant, or a slave. The word he used was "dulous", which means bond-slave, or a person who was bound to another. It is not difficult to find examples in history of people who have been enslaved. Some are slaves because they were conquered in battle, others for religious or ethnic persecution, and still others because of debt or a criminal offense. It is quite difficult, however, to find examples of people who chose slavery as a way of life. I suppose no ambitious students ever pursued slavery as a career path, seeking a university that offers a good slave training program. Yet Paul refers to himself as a bond slave of Christ. Exodus 21 gives a vivid picture of why Paul would choose to be a slave.

Under the Mosaic Law a person would serve as a slave for a period of six years. Slavery was a form of payment for past debts, and after six years, the debt was cancelled. However, a provision was granted for a person who did not want to be set free. They could choose to have their ear pierced, as a sign that they belonged to their master, and commit to a life of servitude. The reason behind their decision was love.

*"I love my master... I will not go free."*

It was the goodness of the master that caused the individual to choose slavery over freedom. Someone, whose master treated him well, might choose to be bound forever, rather than be set free. Perhaps a man, prior to his servitude, had lived in poverty and suffering, but had a master that treated him like a son and gave him all he needed; that man might choose to be bound forever. Paul saw himself as that man. He looked at his life apart from Christ and realized, being under the authority of Christ, gave him greater freedom, than being bound to sin. He realized, the privileges of abiding in Christ, were better than life apart from Him. In a figurative sense, Paul drove an awl through his own ear, and committed himself to a life of following Christ.

Have you chosen to be bound to Christ forever? There is no higher place in life than serving Christ.

Pastor Jim