

WEEK 5 — OUTLINE

Christ as the Slave of God and the Believers as Slaves of God and Christ Jesus in the Church Life

Scripture Reading: Exo. 21:1-6; Phil. 2:7-8; Mark 10:45; Luke 22:24-27; Rom. 1:1; James 1:1; Gal. 5:13

<< DAY 1 >>

I. The spirit of the ordinance in Exodus 21:1-6 is the spirit of a slave, the spirit of service and of sacrifice (Rom. 1:1; Titus 1:1; Phil. 1:1; James 1:1):

- A. A slave does not stand on his own rights; he knows only to serve and to sacrifice, not to care for his own interests (Matt. 20:28).
- B. To be a slave is to have the spirit of sacrifice; a slave is always willing to care for others, to serve them, and to sacrifice himself for them (Phil. 2:17).
- C. Love is the basis of a slave's service (Exo. 21:5; 2 Cor. 5:14; 12:15):
 1. Love is the motive and the prerequisite for a slave's continual service.
 2. The love of a slave is followed by obedience (John 14:31; Phil. 2:8).

<< DAY 2 >>

II. The slave in Exodus 21:1-6 is a type of Christ as the Slave of God, who sacrificed Himself to serve God and God's people (Matt. 20:28; Eph. 5:2, 25):

- A. The subject of the Gospel of Mark is Christ as the Slave of God, the Slave-Savior (10:45):
 1. Mark's purpose is to provide a detailed record to show the beauty of the Lord Jesus as the Slave of God in His human virtues (5:34; 6:34; 8:23; 10:14-16).
 2. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was a Slave who had no rights.
 3. In His gospel service the Lord Jesus was a Slave not only to God but also to man (Matt. 20:28; Luke 22:24-27; Phil. 2:7; Acts 3:13).
 4. Mark 10:45 reveals that, as the Slave of God, the Lord Jesus served sinners even with His life, His soul; by giving His life as a ransom for sinners, the Lord Jesus accomplished the eternal purpose of God, whom He served as a Slave.
 5. As the Slave of God, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, at the very time they were striving to be first, to take the position of a slave (vv. 35-45).
- B. Although the Lord Jesus was equal with God and had the highest rank in

the universe, He became a person on the lowest level of society; He not only became a man, but emptying Himself and humbling Himself, He became a Slave (Phil. 2:6-8):

« DAY 3 »

1. Christ's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and take on the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry (v. 8a).
 2. The pattern presented in Philippians 2:5-8 is now the life within us; there is an urgent need among us to experience Christ as such a pattern.
 3. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (v. 5); this is the mind that was in Christ when He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and humbled Himself, being found in fashion as a man.
- C. As the Slave of God, the Lord Jesus stood in the position of doing nothing on His own but acting only according to the word of the Father (Exo. 21:6; John 5:19, 30, 36; 6:38; 7:16; 8:26; 12:49; 17:4).
- D. The New Testament reveals the threefold love of the Lord Jesus for the Father, the church, and the saints (Exo. 21:5; John 14:31; Eph. 5:25, 2; Gal. 2:20).
- E. As the Slave of God, the Lord Jesus was obedient unto death; His death on the cross was an act of obedience (John 14:30-31; Phil. 2:8):
1. Because the Lord Jesus loved God the Father, He kept the Father's word not only as a Son but especially as a Slave (John 5:19; 12:48-50; 17:8, 14).
 2. The Lord listened to God and did God's will by keeping His word (4:34; 12:49; Psa. 40:6; Isa. 50:4-5).

« DAY 4 »

III. The apostle Paul followed the Lord Jesus to be a slave (Rom. 1:1; Titus 1:1; Acts 20:19):

- A. Paul was such a slave by the serving and sacrificing life of Christ (Phil. 2:17).
- B. As a slave of Christ and of God, Paul was willing to empty himself, humble himself, and sacrifice his rank, rights, and privileges (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
- C. Paul had the spirit of a slave (Rom. 1:1, 9; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:13; 10:1).
- D. Paul had the love of a slave; he was a person who loved the church (5:14; 12:14-15; 11:28).
- E. Paul had the obedience of a slave (Acts 9:6; 22:10; 26:19; Phil. 2:8, 12; 2 Cor. 2:9; 7:15; 10:6).

IV. If we would take Christ as our pattern and follow Paul's example, we must learn to be slaves and sacrifice everything for others (Gal.

5:13):

- A. A slave knows only to serve and to sacrifice, not to care for his own interests (Luke 1:38).
- B. We need to empty ourselves, humble ourselves, lower ourselves, not claim anything for ourselves, and sacrifice ourselves to serve others (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
- C. We need to know the position of a slave (Exo. 21:6):
 - 1. Our position as slaves of Christ should be at the doorpost.
 - 2. The slave's ear was opened to listen to the master (Isa. 50:4-5).
 - 3. Many Christians are serving God, but they do not stand by the doorpost, and their ear has not been bored through (Exo. 21:6):
 - a. They act on their own, not in accord with what they hear from the Master (Matt. 7:21-23).
 - b. They do many things according to their own concepts, desires, and intentions (Phil. 1:15-17).

<< DAY 5 >>

V. A slave lives to the Lord, not to himself (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 14:7-8):

- A. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 Paul speaks of living to the Lord:
 - 1. To live to the Lord is to take Him as the aim of our living; in everything we do, Christ should be our unique aim (Rom. 14:7-8).
 - 2. To live to the Lord means that we are under the leading and constraint of the Lord to fulfill His demand, satisfy His desire, and accomplish His purpose (2 Tim. 1:9; 3:10).
 - 3. To live to ourselves means that we are under our own control and direction and that we care for our own aims and goals.
 - 4. To the Lord implies that we are the Lord's possession, that we already belong to Him; for the Lord implies that we are still our own and are according to our pleasure and convenience.
 - 5. Living for the Lord implies that we and the Lord are still two; living to the Lord indicates that we are one with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17).
- B. Living to the Lord is based upon the fact that we are the Lord's; we belong to Him (Rom. 14:7-8):
 - 1. We need to realize that the Lord bought us with the great price of His precious blood (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
 - 2. Now He is our Lord and Master, and we belong to Him.
 - 3. All that we have, all that we do, and all that we are, are to Him; everything is wholly to Him, and now we should live to Him (Rom. 14:7-8).

VI. In the church life we all should be slaves (Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:7; 4:7, 12; 2 Pet. 1:1):

- A. Only those who are willing to be slaves can remain permanently in the church life (Rom. 12:11).
- B. The Lord Jesus taught us not to be above others but instead to place ourselves lower than others and be their slaves (John 13:1-5, 12-15).
- C. In the church life there is no rank; we are all brothers, and we must all serve as slaves (James 1:1; Jude 1; Rev. 1:1; 6:11; 10:7; 11:18; 22:3, 6).
- D. All who believe in Christ, belong to Him, and have His life of service and sacrifice should take Him as their pattern by learning to be slaves, loving God, the church, and God's people; with such a love as our motivation, we need to be slaves sacrificing and serving (Mark 10:42-45; Phil. 2:5-8; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 1:1).
- E. In carrying out God's New Testament economy, we need to have the spirit of a slave, the love of a slave, and the obedience of a slave (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 9:19).

« WEEK 5 — DAY 1 »

Morning Nourishment

Matt. 20:28 Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died.

Keeping the ordinances of the law has much to do with taking the form of a slave. There is not one nation where all the people are willing to keep the law. Instead, many try to escape the law and even hire attorneys to help them do this. Because people are not willing to keep laws, when God gave the Ten Commandments, He spoke of the people loving Him and said that He would show mercy to those who love Him (Exo. 20:6). This indicates that we cannot keep God's commandments unless we love God. In like manner, there is a prerequisite to keeping all the detailed ordinances of the law—the willingness to be a slave. The only one who can fulfill all the ordinances of the law is one who is willing to be a slave. A slave does not stand on his own rights. He only knows to serve and to sacrifice, not to care for his own interests. A slave must always be concerned for others. This slave spirit is the spirit of the ordinances in Exodus 21 through 23. Those who intend to keep the ordinances described in these chapters must first become slaves. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 804-805)

Today's Reading

To be a slave is to have the spirit of sacrifice. A slave is one who does not stand on his own rights; instead, he is always willing to serve others and sacrifice himself for them. If everyone in the United States had such a spirit, life in this country would be heaven on earth. There would be no need for attorneys, for no one would be fighting for his rights. The reason people fight with one another is that everyone cares for his own interests and rights. How different things would be if all men became slaves sacrificing and serving instead of fighting for their own interests!

According to Exodus 21:2, a Hebrew slave was to be set free after serving his master six years. If he obtained a wife and children during his years as a slave, he was to leave them as the property of his master and “go out by himself” (v. 4). However, the slave might plainly say, “I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free” (v. 5). Here we see that continuing as a slave is not a legal requirement; it is a matter of love. Because the slave loved his master, his wife, and his children, he did not want to go out free. Instead, he would serve his master forever. Love is the basis of his continued service.

It is often said that love blinds people. In a very real sense, if we would love others, we should be blind toward them. Concerning ourselves, however, we must be a sacrifice. Love requires sacrifice. Without sacrifice, there can be no love. The Lord Jesus loved us by being a sacrifice for us. Ephesians 5:2 says, “Walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” Christ gave Himself for us, dying a malefactor's death on the cross. This proves that love demands sacrifice.

If we have the spirit of a slave and the love of a slave, it will be easy for us to obey. Love is always followed by obedience. This can be illustrated by the relationship between parents and their children. In a very real sense, good parents must sometimes obey their children. Often parents obey their children more quickly than the children obey the parents. The point here is that love produces obedience. Only a slave can obey. A good parent is one who has the love and obedience of a slave. Deep within, a mother who loves her children is willing to be a slave to them and do anything for them. Why do parents sometimes obey their children? They obey out of love. Love is the prerequisite of obedience. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 805, 809, 811-812)

Further Reading: Talks concerning the Church Services—Part 1, ch. 3; The Importance of Living Christ by Walking according to the Spirit, ch. 6

<< WEEK 5 — DAY 2 >>

Morning Nourishment

Mark 10:44 And whoever wants to be first among you shall be the slave of all.

Eph. 5:2 And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Many Bible teachers have pointed out that the slave in Exodus 21:1-6 is a type of the Lord Jesus. I agree. The slave in these verses does typify Christ. The Lord Jesus lived on earth as a slave. Thus, as the standard of the highest human living, the Lord in His living fulfilled the requirement of the first ordinance of the law concerning our relationship with others. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 806)

Today's Reading

In Mark's Gospel are the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Christ as the Slave of Jehovah in Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; 49:5-7; 50:4-7; 52:13—53:12 and the details of the teaching regarding Christ as the Slave of God in Philippians 2:5-11. His diligence in labor, His need of food and rest (Mark 3:20-21; 6:31), His anger (3:5), His groaning (7:34), and His affection (10:21) display beautifully His humanity in its virtue and perfection. His lordship (2:28), His omniscience (2:8), His miraculous power, and His authority to cast out demons (1:27; 3:15), to forgive sins (2:7, 10), and to silence the wind and the sea (4:39) manifest in full His deity in its glory and honor. What a Slave of God! How lovely and admirable! Such a Slave served sinners as their Slave-Savior, with His life as their ransom (10:45), for the fulfillment of the eternal purpose of God, whose Slave He was.

In the Gospel of Mark we have a vivid record of the Lord's humanity as a Slave. The last chapters of Mark are especially long and detailed. The reason is that Mark's purpose is to provide a detailed record to show the beauty of the Lord as a Slave in His human virtues. (Life-study of Mark, pp. 7-8, 5)

In His human living Christ took the form of a slave, serving God and men (Phil. 2:7; Acts 3:13; Mark 10:45). He was a slave not only to God but also to man. In New Testament usage, the word slave refers to one who has sold himself and has lost all human rights. When the Lord Jesus was on earth as a man, He was such a person. He was a slave who had no rights.

In Mark 10:45 the Lord Jesus says, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." This is a very strong expression stating that Christ, as the Son of Man in His humanity, is the Slave of God to serve sinners even with His life, His soul. Furthermore, the word ransom here indicates that even the Lord's redemption was His service rendered to sinners for God's plan. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 296-297)

If we would keep the divine ordinances, we must be slaves. God's law requires this. Those who are not willing to be slaves cannot keep God's law. As One who Himself became a slave, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, at the very time they were striving to be first, to take the position of a slave. He said to them, "Whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27-28).

How can we love and be obedient? Help in answering this question is found in Philippians 2:7 and 8....First the Lord Jesus emptied Himself and then He humbled Himself. In Philippians 2 Christ is presented to us as our pattern. As a pattern to the believers, He is a model of a proper human life. This pattern is not of one who occupies a high position in society; on the contrary, it is the pattern of one who is a slave. Even though Christ was equal with God and had the highest rank in the universe, He became a person on the lowest level of society. The very One who was equal with God not only became a man but became a slave. In this He emptied Himself and humbled Himself. Those who would follow this pattern must also empty themselves and humble themselves. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 809, 804)

Further Reading: Life-study of Mark, msgs. 1-2; CWWN, vol. 47, "Authority and Submission," ch. 5

« WEEK 5 — DAY 3 »

Morning Nourishment

Phil. 2:7-8 But emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of a cross.

It is crucial for us to see that Christ's work in His human living to build up the fashion of a man and to take on the form of a slave was the foundation and background of His ministry. Those who aspire to serve the Lord need to have a work not by doing but by living. This is a work carried out by one's daily living. Those who wish to serve the Lord need to live to build up a work that will be the solid ground and strong background for their coming service to the Lord. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 685)

Today's Reading

The pattern presented in Philippians 2:5-8 is now the life within us. This life is what we call a crucified life. The seven steps of Christ's humiliation are all aspects of the crucified life. Although Christ had the expression of deity, He laid aside this expression. However, He did not lay aside the reality of His deity. He laid aside the higher form, the form of God, and took on a much lower form, the form of a slave. In this, He emptied Himself. Surely this is a mark of a crucified life. Then, after becoming a man and being found in the appearance of a man, Christ humbled Himself even unto the death of the cross. This was the crucified life lived out in a full and absolute way.

There is an urgent need among us in the Lord's recovery today to experience Christ as our pattern. We desperately need to experience Him as our crucified life. Such a life stands altogether in contrast to a life of rivalry and vainglory. In the church life we either take the crucified life as our pattern or automatically live a life of rivalry and vainglory. There is no third way.

Let us now consider verses 5 through 8 in more detail. In verse 5 Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The Greek words translated "let this mind be in you" can also be rendered "think this in you." The word this refers to the considering and regarding in verses 3 and 4. This kind of thinking, mind, attitude, was also in Christ when He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and humbled Himself, being found in fashion as a man (vv. 7-8). To have such a mind requires us to be one with Christ in His inward parts (1:8). To experience Christ, we need to be one with Him to such an extent, that is, in His tender inward feeling and in His thinking. (Life-study of Philippians, pp. 88, 92, 86)

A slave should stand in the position of doing nothing on his own but acting only according to the word of his master and should have his ear open to hear the voice of his master (John 5:30; Psa. 40:6; Isa. 50:4-5). (Exo. 21:6, footnote 2)

The Lord Jesus loves God, the church, and all His people. God is His Master, the church is His wife, and all His people are His children. The New Testament reveals this threefold love of the Lord Jesus for the Father, the church, and the saints. According to John 14:31, the Lord loves the Father; according to Ephesians 5:25, Christ loves the church; and according to Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 5:2, Christ loves all the believers, all the saints. Motivated by such a love, He was willing to be a slave. Love is the motive and the prerequisite of being a slave.

In John 14:31 the Lord Jesus said, "But this is so that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father commanded Me, so I do." Because the Lord Jesus loved God the Father, He kept the Father's word not only as a Son, but especially as a slave. He listened to God and did God's will by keeping His word. It was the will of God that the Lord Jesus die on the cross to redeem God's chosen people. The Father gave this commandment to the Lord, and out of love for the Father the Lord obeyed Him as a slave and went to the cross. Thus, His death on the cross was an act of obedience. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 810, 807)

Further Reading: Life-study of Philippians, msgs. 10-11; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 64

« WEEK 5 — DAY 4 »

Morning Nourishment

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, a called apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Exo. 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 God and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

The apostle Paul followed the Lord Jesus to be a slave. He opens the book of Romans with these words: “Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus.” In Titus 1:1 he refers to himself as “a slave of God.” As a slave of Christ and of God, Paul was willing to empty himself, humble himself, and sacrifice his rank, rights, and privileges. There is no question that in this matter he walked in the steps of the Lord Jesus. The Lord was a slave of God, and Paul also was such a slave by the serving and sacrificing life of Christ. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 808)

Today's Reading

If an Israelite saw a donkey belonging to someone who hated him lying under his burden, he was to render help (Exo. 23:5). If the Israelite had the spirit, the attitude, of a slave, he would be willing to help in this way. He would say to himself, “I am a slave serving God my Master. I love my Master, and I love His people. Even though this Israelite hates me and is an enemy to me, he is nonetheless one of God's people. I must fulfill the duty of a slave and take care of his cattle.”

My burden in this message has been to emphasize three matters: the spirit of a slave, the love of a slave, and the obedience of a slave. If we have a slave spirit, a slave love, and a slave obedience, we shall be able to keep the commandments. At first, this word may sound strange. But if you consider it honestly, you will see that it is true in our practical experience. Only a person with the spirit, love, and obedience of a slave can keep God's ordinances. In the New Testament economy, as well as in the Old Testament, there is the need of such a spirit, love, and obedience.

The Bible reveals that as believers in Christ, we are not only God's creatures but also God's sons. In the old creation we are creatures of God; in the new creation we have become sons of God. However, if we maintain our rank as creatures and sons, we shall not be able to keep God's word. To keep His word, we need to empty ourselves and humble ourselves, laying aside the rank both of a creature and of a son. Then we shall be slaves with God as our Master. According to the type in Exodus 21, Christ is the slave, and God is the Master. If we would take Christ as our pattern, we must learn to be slaves, those who sacrifice everything for others.

The spirit that pervades all these ordinances is the spirit of service and of sacrifice. If the Israelites did not have this kind of spirit, there would be no way for them to keep the ordinances. However, they could keep the ordinances if they were willing to empty themselves, humble themselves, lower themselves, sacrifice their rights, and serve others. Then they would live for others and not for themselves.

Exodus 21:6 speaks of the slave being brought to the door or to the doorpost. In ancient times slaves were to stand by the doorpost waiting for the master's orders. Instead of doing anything on their own, they were to act only according to the word of the master. Today our position as slaves of Christ should also be at the doorpost. Furthermore, in 21:6 we are told that the master bored his slave's ear through with an awl. This indicates that the slave's ear was opened to listen to the master.

Many Christians are serving God, but they do not stand by the doorpost, and their ear has not been bored through with an awl. They act on their own, not in accord with what they hear from the Master. They do many things according to their own concepts, desires, and intentions. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 808, 812, 808, 805, 810)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1967, vol. 2, “An Autobiography of a Person in the Spirit,” chs. 2, 8-9; The Vital Groups, msg. 7

« WEEK 5 — DAY 5 »

Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constrains us because we have judged this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.

[In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15] Paul does not speak of living for the Lord, by the Lord, or with the Lord; instead, he speaks of living to the Lord. To live to Christ is to take Him as the aim of our living. In everything we do—at home, at work, or in the church life—Christ should be our unique aim.

Galatians 2:19 says, “I through law have died to law that I might live to God.” To live to law means that we are under the law, led by the law, ruled by the law, and obligated to follow the law. To live to God or to the Lord means that we are under the leading and constraint of the Lord to fulfill His demand and to satisfy and accomplish His desire. (Truth Lessons—Level 3, vol. 3, p. 78)

Today’s Reading

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 the apostle Paul puts together Christ’s constraining love with our living to Him, indicating that because we love Christ, we live to Him, not to ourselves. It is quite meaningful that in verse 15 Paul does not say, “No longer live for themselves but for Him”; rather, he says, “No longer live to themselves but to Him.” Living to the Lord is deeper in significance than living for the Lord. Living for the Lord implies that I and the Lord are still two; living to the Lord indicates that I am one with the Lord, as the wife is one with the husband in married life.

To live to the Lord means that we are under the Lord’s direction and control and that we desire to fulfill His requirements, satisfy His desires, and complete what He intends. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3215-3216)

We must understand the difference between living for Christ and living to Christ. To Christ implies that we are the Lord’s possession, that we already belong to Him. For Christ implies that we are still our own and are according to our pleasure and convenience. We may be active and aggressive for the Lord in a natural way, doing things for the Lord by our natural aggressiveness. This offends the Lord, and it distracts us from enjoying Him. Since we belong to the Lord, the Lord desires that we be to Him. It is not enough to say that we are for Him; saying that we are for Him indicates that we still have things under our control and that we could leave Him. However, if we are to the Lord, we cannot leave Him and are even one with Him.

Living to the Lord is based upon the fact that we are the Lord’s (Rom. 14:8). We live to Him because we belong to Him. We must realize that the Lord bought us with the great price of His precious blood (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Now He is our Lord and Master, and we belong to Him. All that we have, all that we do, and all that we are is unto Him; everything is wholly unto Him. We should not say that we are doing certain things for Him, because we already belong to Him. Since every believer has been bought by the Lord with a great price, he should have one living to the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 5:15 Paul says, “He died for all that those who live may no longer live to themselves but to Him who died for them and has been raised.” Worldly people always live to themselves, but the love of Christ constrains us to live to Him and not to ourselves. To live to ourselves means that we are under our own restraint, leading, and control, mindful only of our own aim and goal. This is not only to live for ourselves but also to live to ourselves, taking ourselves as the aim for our living. The apostles, however, had the ambition to live to the Lord, to be well pleasing to Him; they were absolutely under the Lord, under His leading, restraint, and control. Everything they did was for the accomplishment of the Lord’s purpose and desire. Since they were this kind of people, they did not live to themselves but to the Lord. (Truth Lessons—Level 3, vol. 3, pp. 78-79)

Further Reading: Life-study of 2 Corinthians, msgs. 10, 33, 44-45

« WEEK 5 — DAY 6 »

Morning Nourishment

John 13:14-15 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example so that you also may do even as I have done to you.

As those who believe in Christ, we all must be His slaves. We should say, "O Lord, I love You. Even if I have the freedom to go out, I do not want to leave. I love You, I love Your church, and I love Your children." On the one hand, we may testify of how enjoyable and glorious the church life is. On the other hand, in the church life we all must become slaves. The New Testament as well as the Old indicates that God's people need the spirit of a slave. (Life-study of Exodus, pp. 810-811)

Today's Reading

The elders in the churches need to realize that if they are not willing to be slaves, they cannot be proper elders. Every elder must be a slave. This was the reason the Lord Jesus taught His disciples not to seek to be above others, but instead to place themselves lower than others and be their slaves. In the church life there is no rank. We are all brothers, and we all must serve as slaves.

In the past we have given hundreds of messages on life, the Spirit, Christ, and the church. However, if we would apply these messages, we must be slaves. Those who are not willing to have the spirit of a slave cannot enter into all these messages in a practical way. In the past certain ones testified that they loved the church and were willing to consecrate themselves to the church. However, eventually these very ones left the church life, and some even became opposers of the church. Deep within them they had the ambition for position. Because this ambition could not be fulfilled in the church life, they left the church. Only those who are willing to be slaves can remain permanently in the church life. No matter how I may be treated by the saints, I have no choice but to remain in the church life. The church is the home of my Father and of all His children. I am simply one of His slaves, loving Him, loving the church, and loving His children. After giving so many messages on life, the Spirit, Christ, and the church, I am glad to give this message on slavery. This word is for us all. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 811)

In Matthew 23:11-12 the Lord taught, "The greatest among you shall be your servant. And he who will exalt himself shall be humbled, and he who will humble himself shall be exalted." We should not desire to be great. If we are great, we will be a servant. The more we serve as a slave, the greater we will be. The leading ones in the churches and those who serve in the work must be careful not to consider themselves to be higher or more important than others. If we consider ourselves to be higher than others, we have fallen into the snare of Satan, who rebelled against God because of his desire to be exalted (Isa. 14:13-14).

The apostles and the elders do not have exalted positions in the church. The apostles are slaves to the churches, serving the churches, and the elders should be patterns, not lords. The apostles and elders are simply brothers. In Matthew 23:8 the Lord said, "Do not be called Rabbi, for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers." Rabbi is a title of honor meaning "teacher, master." The business office of the church should not be like a secular business office; the elders and the serving ones are not the bosses and employees. This will not be the situation if we are walking according to the spirit. We need to realize that in the church there is only one Head, Christ. (The Importance of Living Christ by Walking according to the Spirit, pp. 42-43)

Now we can see why God puts the ordinance concerning slaves first and why the slave here is a type of Christ, the true slave. As those who believe in Christ, belong to Him, and have His life of sacrifice, we also must be slaves loving God, the church, and God's people. With such a love as our motivation, we need to be slaves sacrificing and serving. (Life-study of Exodus, p. 812)

Further Reading: Elders' Training, Book 8: The Life-pulse of the Lord's Present Move, ch. 8; Life-study of Exodus, msg. 68

<< WEEK 5 — HYMN

Hymns, #86

1

Though Thou art God, most glorious, high,
Thou in the flesh to us came nigh,
A lowly man become thereby;
Lord, I remember Thee!

2

Glory divine was put away
Under the tent of flesh to stay,
No outward beauty to display;
Lord, I remember Thee!

3

Thou art a root from out dry ground,
Thou wast the Man of sorrows found,
Hated, despised by man around;
Lord, I remember Thee!

4

Gentle and lowly is Thy heart,
Willing to suffer all Thou art,
To God and man complaining not;
Lord, I remember Thee!

5

Thou as a man art tender, sweet,
Balanced in every way, complete,
Meal-offering to the Father meet;
Lord, I remember Thee!

6

Doing the Father's will Thy prize,
Never accepting Satan's lies,
None like Thyself, so faithful, wise;
Lord, I remember Thee!

7

For Thine obedience to God's will,
Willing to suffer deathly ill,
E'en on the Cross my place to fill,
Lord, I remember Thee!

8

Therefore hath God exalted Thee,
Given Thee glory, majesty,
Heaven and earth will bow the knee;
O Lord, I worship Thee!