

Bondage

A few years ago, I found out that I had a great grandfather who was removed from his homeland in Africa, and carted to North America to be a slave. I think that this is interesting that he didn't know a word of English, that this is where my family in North America began, and that this took place not all that long ago. I am fascinated by my Black heritage. But, what I have recently become intrigued with is the correlation between physical and spiritual bondage.

Today, when we think of slavery, we think of Blacks being bought and sold in open market places. We think of their suffering at the hands of their taskmasters, their fight for freedom and the abolishing of slavery in the United States, in 1865. Well slavery had existed farther back in time than this. In Bible times, farmers used nations captured in war, prisoners, and those who could not pay their debts as slaves. Slavery was legal and was no breach of any moral code. Jesus gave very specific instructions to slaves about how they ought to serve their masters (Eph.6:5, I Tim.6:1), and very specific instructions to masters about how they were to treat their slaves (Eph.6:9; Col.4:1).

God made man physically free. He was given dominion over the Garden of Eden, and all of its contents. God was his Master, but man was not bound. God made man spiritually free. God gave him the freedom to choose between right and wrong. In ancient times, it was a common practice for Africans to sell their war captives to Arab countries. Later, many European and American colonies were buying African slaves, thus slaves became a desired commodity. They were stripped of their freedom to marry, have a family, testify in court, and own land. Then, greed caused man to change his perspective on slavery and lose his compassion for his human property. The slaves became trapped in an increasingly demeaning lifestyle, with only thoughts of freedom to comfort them.

Manumission was a formal release from slavery granted by an owner for a slave's faithful service. This release became their principle hope. Slaves also had the option of buying their freedom, which few could do. Another alternative was to try running away, but if caught, their action brought harsh and even fatal repercussions.

God saw our spiritual need for a Saviour. He knew that our new owner (the devil) would not give us a legal release. He knew that we lacked the power to run away, that no matter where we went, sin would find us. So our freedom had to be bought back. Jesus Christ paid the price that we could not pay. Jesus bought back our freedom with His precious blood. With this payment, He redeemed us from the devil's hand. He bought us from the devil and gave us back our freedom. Many slaves worked under hard taskmasters; they worked under very cruel conditions in mines and on plantations. So, when slavery was abolished in 1865, most slaves were glad for their freedom, took it gladly and started new lives for themselves. But, of the house slaves who were well treated, many chose to remain with their former masters.

This point also pertains to man's spiritual state. Those who got kicked around so badly by the world, sin, and the devil, gladly accepted Christ's payment for their sins. They realised that Christ's payment was the only way for them to be free from the harshness of their lives in sin. But, unfortunately, many people didn't see their need for a Saviour. Many people felt that their lives were "not so bad" and so did not accept the payment that had already been paid. Still others continued through life trying to buy back their freedom themselves.

For those who did not accept the payment for their freedom, their story ends here; they died as slaves. But for those who took their freedom, there are two endings. One group of people fought in wars alongside whites; they became skilled in carpentry and other trades; they became merchants and authors; they became educated, and made many noted achievements. Another group was forced into

overcrowded, unsanitary, segregated housing, plagued with poverty, crime, and despair. They were uneducated and unskilled and therefore became servants, doing the same jobs they did when they were slaves.

Spiritually speaking, the sad ending is of the Christian who does not reap the benefits of his freedom; does not live for God, but turns and serves another master. He allows himself to become a slave again, this time to a master of his choosing: sin, selfishness, bitterness, pride, hate, work, money, status, fame, the list is endless.

Single parent, know that your freedom has been bought back; you do not need to be a slave to anyone or anything. Man will try to oppress you, your situation in life will try to oppress you, and the guilt of your sins will try to oppress you. Put it all under the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*" John 8:36.

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