

## Slave or servant?

Webster's Dictionary: slave

1. a human being who is owned by another
2. one dominated by some influence
3. one who slaves

Greek words

- doulos – slave
- douleia – slavery
- douleuō – be subject, serve

The Hebrew experience: Joseph, Egyptian bondage, Moses, Exile

For the captives of the Assyrians and the Babylonians, it was not just a matter of being servants to people who hated them, but also “banishment from their own land meant above all, the loss of their claim to [the covenant]... To live in a foreign and hostile land was tantamount to being cut off from fellowship with the Creator and guarantor of one's own existence.”

Hebrews could own fellow Hebrews

- Inability to pay a debt (most frequent reason)
- Restitution for a crime
- Slavery for a fellow Hebrew usually came with an expiration date, not necessarily the case for non-Hebrew slaves

By Roman Empire time slavery was common

Greeks despised slaves because of what slavery represented to them: Loss of freedom

Freedom: to be independent of others and to manage one's own life and to live as one chooses

A slave doesn't belong to oneself, but someone else

**New Testament**

Estimated 10 to 15% of Roman Empire's people were slaves

NIV has a habit of using “servant” instead of “slave”

Jesus' use of slave imagery: Matthew 6:24; 8:9; 24:45 (NRSV); foot washing

- 1 Peter 2:18-25 (p. 1889)
- Philemon v. 12-16 (p. 1861)
- John 8:34-36 (p. 1663)

Paul refers to himself and others as prisoners (not just when incarcerated)

For Paul, the main point is the freedom found only in Christ  
Otherwise we are slaves to sin rather than slaves to God

Romans 6:15-23 – we are all slaves!