

1 And He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you. 7 "But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? 8 "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? 10 "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

For those of you who may not be regular attenders, a quick note about our approach at this church, or at least this pulpit. We are committed to verse by verse exposition of scripture, and the way we do that is simply to work our way through books of the Bible, verse by verse, exegetically, from beginning of books to the end of the book.

That said, we aren't compelled to do them in order. In the 7 years now I've been blessed to be in this pulpit, we have worked our way through Matthew and Mark, and now we are in Luke, we have studied a smattering of the minor prophets, Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, and we have studied some of the apostolic letters, 1,2 Peter, Jude, Philemon, and before I was given the pulpit here, on Sunday evenings we studied through the book of Revelation.

All of the manuscripts for all of those studies are available on line at our web pages. tonopahchurch.org. It has been my wish and purpose to try to archive

everything spoken here, in written form, easily accessed. I want to be accountable in the future for everything ever said here, so I write out these manuscripts, and once delivered, they are published on line.

All of that is a bit of an apologetic for what we will be studying this morning. A most interesting topic, and salient in our day and our culture especially, and that is slavery. Slavery.

I'll begin by saying that my name is deeply rooted in slavery. Galli's were a people captured in Gall by the Romans and hauled over the mountains to northern Italy and subjected to slavery by their captors. A Galli is one of those particular slaves as opposed to all the other slaves.

So the current crop of children of generations earlier slaves who wish to speak about their mis-treatment have nothing on me. I can make the same claim. I have slavery in my past too. Poor poor pitiful me.

The reason I have chosen to come at this topic by this somewhat precocious back door is because slavery has become a particular flash point, a trigger subject for our current culture.

Our culture worships at the alter of it's new darling religion, the religion of absolute personal autonomy. In that religion, I am god. And anything or anybody that threatens my position of lordship over myself is the enemy.

And this particular fire is burning so hot at the moment that we feel the need to abolish and re-write our history. We are pulling down and defacing statues of anyone that was on the wrong side of history in the past. We are questioning every positive thing that may have ever been said about any person any time who was a person who defiled anyone else's personal autonomy.

Obviously the top of that list and the most egregious targets in the middle of the bullseye are people who were slave owners. Every positive word ever spoken about anyone who owned another human being must be erased. We

are scouring the history books and rewriting history. This was NOT a good person. Everything such a person may have accomplished that was once considered noble or positive is canceled out by this one sin that cancels all good, slavery.

So, then, what does the Bible teach about this problem in our cultural moment. Because, all of a sudden, Christians are finding this book an embarrassment. We are feeling the need to apologize about our book, because it clearly doesn't go as far into the righteousness of the current religion of absolute personal autonomy as the righteous of that group go.

I've got some bad news for you. This is really bad. Are you sitting down. You might want to grip the bench you're sitting on and brace yourself for something really really awful. Dispicable. Horrible as President Trump would say. Jesus is a slave owner. Jesus is a slave owner. How horrifying.

We need to re-write the Bible, because the term that is most often used as a descriptor of Jesus is absolutely horrifying. Lord. Over and over and over again. He is Lord. And no one is Lord, unless they are Lord of somebody. If Jesus is Lord, that means He is Master of . . . what, class? Slaves. There it is, I've said it. Jesus is Lord and Master of slaves. So many slaves. Oh dear.

He is the antithesis, the arch-enemy of the new religion of absolute personal autonomy. Maybe I'll shorten the name of the culture's new religion to APA. That's easier to type. APA. The religion of Absolute Personal Autonomy. Jesus is enemy number one.

Jesus the Lord of slaves is enemy number one to APA. This *book* with its truth claims and clear statements concerning sin and morality is enemy number two, to APA. And enemy number three is anyone associated in any way with either number one, or number two. That would be you. That would be me.

So back to our discussion of slavery. Jesus is going to speak to that topic in our verses this morning, but before we get there, let's ask some pertinent

questions about what this book says about slavery. Is it for it? Or against it?

We can easily build a case against man stealing. The old testament is clear about that offense. But curiously it's more about *you shall not steal*, than it is about the issue of slavery.

We can also build a rock solid case against the sin of discrimination based on the amount of melatonin in the color of someone's skin. Although the melatonin issue is only a category in the broader command of You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Clearly it's there.

So man stealing and discrimination because of race or color is easily argued against, although not quite as front and center as the current complaints about slavery and it's history would wish. Still the individual offenses are covered plainly and called out as sin.

But what does the Bible say about slavery itself? Where does it get right in the middle of that and call it evil? Well, here-in is the current embarrassment of the evangelical community that is trying to defend our book and our religion against the trigger claims of the opposing religion of Absolute Personal Autonomy, APA. We come up sort of short.

Actually, this book sort of takes the position; You guys abdicated the throne in the garden of Eden and turned the place over to Satan to rule. What'd you expect? All bets are off. Satan rules this world and of course there are offenses. Every shape and kind of abuse and offense that the degraded human mind, devoid of God, sold under sin, can imagine.

The Bible's approach is sort of just, slavery exists. It's just part of the warp and woof of a fallen world. Child abuse exists. Sexual abuse exists. Abuse and debasement of women exists. The assault against marriage and family exists. Every kind of evil imaginable under heaven exists. The Bible doesn't really separate slavery from any of the other abuses that all co-exist in a fallen world ruled by the king of this world, Satan.

What Jesus offered in Matthew 11 isn't an abolishment of slavery, it's a transfer of ownership;

28 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*
29 *“**Take My yoke** upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.* 30 *“For **My yoke** is easy, and My load is light.”*

Jesus offers a transfer from one kingdom into another kingdom. He offers for the first time in all of the Bible, a transfer of ownership. From Satan, to Jesus. He says come unto me and take my yoke. He offers us the opportunity to leave the slavery and service of sin and of Satan to be transferred and owned by Him.

You're a slave either way. Either of a cruel taskmaster who invents every kind of abuse and torment and evil, or of a sweet taskmaster who loves you and gives your soul rest and a delight in service that transcends this world. Oh what sweet slavery.

So slavery itself isn't the main issue. It's not the main thing. *Who* owns you?? That's the thing. Every person under heaven, including all the duped people who are declaring their autonomy and freedom are slaves of someone. That's just the rule in a created universe.

Now then, we can point to every kind of possible sickening abuse in this country during it's days of slavery. If this is a topic that interests you for some reason and you'd like to get a better and more complete, perhaps a more genuine understanding of real slavery in this nation with all of it's problems and abuses, I highly recommend the Library of Congress.

In the middle years of the depression when the government was trying to help by creating jobs and things for people to do, one of those things was that the government had a task where they hired people to go out and interview people still living who were alive during slavery. It's a fascinating project.

Do the math, now. Abolished in 1865. The middle of the depression is 1935. That's a 70 year and greater span. So the people who were interviewed were very old, but they were actual slaves when they were very young. We have hundreds of first hand accounts of slavery given by actual slaves.

I read through many, many of those accounts. Your tax dollars at work. When I was caught up and a bit bored out where I worked I would go to the Library of Congress and read first hand accounts of slaves about slavery. It's a fascinating archive. Hundreds of first hand accounts and stories about how it was, and what it was like to be slaves.

And like I just stated, it's more about who owned you. There are many many accounts of noble masters who treated their slaves with dignity and respect. And sadly, there are many, many accounts of masters who were abusive and worse.

It was wrong to enslave a people. It was wrong that it was based in skin color. All of it was wrong, but within the wrong, if that's where you happened to wake up and find yourself in this world there was both good and bad depending on who owned you. Many many of those accounts recount that when slavery ended, things actually got worse for them. A whole set of new problems based in the previous sins.

Paul actually has a very interesting take on slavery. We can glean much of what our current position about slavery should actually be by some things Paul says to the Corinthians. 1Cor. 7

20 Let each man remain in that condition in which he was called. 21 Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 22 For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

The entire chapter is answering questions the Corinthians had about how to proceed in the christian life. Should we get married. Should we stay single.

Should we change stuff in this world because we're Christians.

Paul says, don't worry about the situation you were in when you were called. If you're married. Stay married. Unless your unbelieving partner wants out. Then let them out. If you can stay single, stay single. If you're going to burn up with lust, get married. It's all good. And then in vs. 20 the thing about slavery.

Were you a slave when you got Christ's call. Don't worry about it. Stay a slave. Or if freedom becomes possible, choose that. It's all good. Why? Because what you are and where you're at in this life is inconsequential to the next life.

Called while a slave, congratulations, you're Christ's freedman. Called while free, congratulations, you're Christ's slave. But the underlying reasoning behind everything Paul tells them in all of his answers is that your top priority is to be as unencumbered with this current world as you possibly can in order to position yourself to carry out the most efficient service to the King of kings.

That's why he tells them, if you can stay single and not burn up, stay single because it's way less encumbering to you to be single while you are a slave of Christ. You can channel ALL your energy to Him. You don't have the concerns of family and wife and all the stuff that goes along with that deal. But you can't burn up either, so if you're wired that way, better get married. But he says, I wish everyone could just be like me. Single and totally devoted to the King. All of Paul's energy was spent on serving his King.

And that principle underlies what Paul says about slavery. Don't worry about it. You're Christ's freedman. But he says, if freedom is offered; take it! Why? Same as the marriage thing. If you're free from the slavery of this world, you are unencumbered to serve Christ in ways you couldn't if you have to obey a master here.

Paul never says slavery is evil. It's just never part of the equation. The Bible is written as if this life is 5 minutes long and most of it doesn't really matter.

One thing matters. Serving the King of kings. So unencumber yourself from the cares of this world as much as is possible so you can channel more energy to serve Christ.

It's like marriage? Whatever. Slavery? Whatever. Choose the best options open to you with one end in your mind. The most important thing, job one, on this earth, is to serve the King of kings. So make your choices with that end in mind. The rest is just; whatever. Nothing else really matters, eternally, except serving the King. The rest is; whatever.

That's kind of the biblical view of slavery. It's a fallen world. We abdicated in the garden. Slavery in a fallen world just *is*. Navigate it as best you can. The top priority, the most important end game is Christ. In our world today we could say; It's a fallen world. We abdicated in the garden. Employment and marriage just is. Navigate that as best you can. But the end game top priority is Christ.

We live as though this world and it's demands and concerns were 98% of what is important and 2% is our faith in God. But the Bible is written as though 98% of what we should be thinking about and working towards is the glory of Christ, and 2% is for this world here and now.

Now, to the religion of APA, (absolute personal autonomy) none of what I just said is tenable. Crazy talk. All of it. The **only** world is this world. **You** must be god. Get a really big bulldozer and steamroller and crush everything in the way of you being god. Slavery; evil. Families; evil. Wives and husbands; mostly evil but negotiable as long as you set the terms to dictate your autonomy above all else.

That's our introduction, and I think these basic foundational truths will help us with what Jesus says regarding slavery in our passage this morning. Absolutely sensible. To us. Anathema to our culture.

We are picking up where we left off last week, and Jesus is using the confrontation with the religious leaders of Israel who have mocked Him

openly and in public, public shaming, Jesus has turned to His own disciples and is using the contrasts of false religion as a teaching moment for His own.

Woe to those who cause others to stumble away from God. Woe to those who do not forgive the shortcomings of others who are repentant. And Jesus finishes that little section with the 7 times thing. If someone sins against you and returns 7 different times saying I repent, you keep on forgiving that person. That's how God treats us. That's what He expects of us in dealing with others.

But the disciples are a little overwhelmed. Their immediate response is; that's unreasonable. That's impossible. That's a bridge too far Jesus. Now you've crossed over into crazy.

You say, I'm looking at those verses and I don't see where they said any of that. Yes, but their response is, if this is how it is, I'm going to need a faith increase to deal with it. I don't have enough in the faith bank to deal with this.

5 And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"

This is coming from a little bit of exasperated astonishment. You've got to be kidding?!! 7 times? Same guy, same thing?? It's like when Jesus is talking about divorce and the disciple all say; *"If this is the case between a man and his wife, it is better not to marry."* Mt. 19:10b

It's a bit of christian whining. It's too hard. I can't do it. Your commands are unreasonable and impossible. *"Increase our faith!"* You're asking too much for the level of faith I've been given. Your demands are too high for normal christians. You'll have to make us SUPER CHRISTIANS! Normal people can't function at the level you're demanding of us. Forgive some abuser 7 times??

Now Jesus says something remarkable.

6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey

you.

What do we make out of that? Apparently I don't have any faith. I've got an apricot tree in the front yard that I secretly love and Pam wants removed. And I've been telling that apricot tree *'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'*; But it's still there. I'm trying, I'm trying.

What is Jesus really saying to His whining disciples. Increase our faith! Jesus is saying, you actually don't have any. It was faith that spoke the worlds into existence. We can't do that. We can't even cast an apricot tree into the sea. A fairly minor task compared to speaking all of the universes into existence ex-nihilo, out of nothing.

What Jesus is telling the lackey's is; faith never just comes from you. Faith that accomplishes things is connected to the source. God makes demands and you look inside yourself and say, I can't do it. You're right, you can't. But He can. If you're connected to the source that spoke the worlds into existence, ***that*** Person can supply you with the faith to accomplish all of His will.

But there's one little thing. He doesn't take orders from you. You take orders from Him.

The disciples are like; Your request is unreasonable unless you make us super christians. You're out of line. It's up to you to change me so I can meet your demands. Your demands are unreasonable to expect from the demandee.

And Jesus says; let me 'splain something about your position in this situation boys. That's the Jim transliteration. You've got this backwards boys, making demands on God. Let's do a refresher on who you are, and Who He is.

7 *"But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'?*
8 *"But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink'?* 9 *"He does not thank the slave because he did the things*

which were commanded, does he? 10 “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”

Does that seem pretty clear? You are slaves. In this relationship of God and redeemed purchased sinners, you are the slaves and He is the owner. You don't tell Him what to do; He tells you what to do. He decides what you will do, and He decides the timing on when your perceived needs are met.

That slave working in the field all day and then returning to the house is probably famished. Hungry. Tired. But that doesn't change anything. He is expected to don the proper attire, serve the Master His dinner, and then what; then his needs are also met. The slaves don't go hungry.

There's a lot here to mull on. 7 *“But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field,*

Did this just come out of Jesus mouth this way. Isn't Jesus out of line here using slavery as an example. Shouldn't Jesus have used this and every opportunity to not only denounce slavery, but also to denounce every other level of inequality?

The culture wants to turn Jesus into a cultural Marxist. Jesus says everything should be equal. Give your stuff away until everybody everywhere has an equal share of everything. Total equality and equanimity. That's the culture's Jesus. But is that this Jesus?

Not so much. Not this Jesus. This Jesus says, let me explain who you are in this deal. There's slaves and a Master. You're the slaves. You don't get to walk in from the field and say, I'm starved! How come my dinner isn't on the table.

That isn't how it works boys. You're the slaves, and you serve Him, and then you get to eat. He doesn't let you go hungry. But He's definitely the Master and you're the ones serving Him. And something else;

9 *“He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?”*

Slaves are owned by a Master. They obey the wishes of their owner. That owner doesn't owe them a debt because they obey His commands.

This is just shockingly countercultural. Would our current culture not read these words from Jesus mouth and put on their robes of judgement and say these words are so abusive that we can't even have this book in print.

Our world, our culture is more righteous than Jesus. They are holding court on Jesus, and any Jesus who would say what this Jesus just said, well, that Jesus and anyone who believes in Him should be banished. Eliminated.

He not only believes in slavery, He tells His disciples; You're the slaves. You were bought with a price. God doesn't owe you a thank-you because you obey His wishes and commands. That's what slaves do with no expectations in return.

This was a problem the pharisee's had. They thought their righteousness was so above and beyond that God should be showering them with even more wealth in payment for their righteousness. Here is the contrast;

10 *“So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”*

That was countercultural then, and it's countercultural now. Jesus says we are to think of ourselves rightly as humble slaves in the service of a master, a Lord, and when the Lord of the harvest blesses our endeavors, our heads don't get big, like the pharisee's then and this culture now.

God can do and will do mighty things through the efforts of His slaves. They turned the whole world upside down. It was His doing. He causes all things.

And at the end of the day, although the entire world, even now, can tell you who Peter and Paul were, they were so influential we're still changed by them even today, but they would just say; *We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.*”

I was reading something this week, a blog by John MacArthur at the Master's Seminary website. <https://blog.tms.edu/is-the-evangelical-movement-really-evangelical>

I'll try to keep the link alive when I post this message on our web pages. I heartily recommend what he wrote to you. It's about a 12 minute read. The title is; **Is the Evangelical Movement Really "Evangelical"?**

And spoiler alert!; He says that the word evangelical has gotten so deflated and mushy by those who claim to *be* that, that the word itself is sort of useless. It now means anything and everything and nothing. So the discussion was along the lines of; What do we call ourselves now, that that word is ruined at best and useless at worst.

He said before R. C. Sproul went to heaven he was leaning towards calling our brand Imputationists. Good word, but no one knows what it means. They'd think we were amputationists. MacArthur says he leans towards just returning to *christians*, but of course that moniker was spoiled long long ago.

My feelings, which accounts for exactly nothing in that world would be we should call ourselves Doulon's. We aren't evangelicals, we're doulons. The greek word for slaves.

At the end of the blog, MacArthur writes out **his** personal confession of faith, since everything is up for grabs these days in the current may-lay (melee). I want to close by reading that confession of faith to you.

My Confession of Faith John MacArthur

So what is my confession of faith?

I am bound by Scripture and reason to declare that Jesus is Lord, in the full sense of that term, and I am his slave, also in the full sense of that term. I love him. I bow to him as God the Son in all the fullness of his deity and with faith in all the fullness of his work. My slavery to him springs from a heart of love that drives me to obey his Word gladly. This is a perfect reflection of his infinite mind and holy nature. What Christ do I love? What Christ do I preach? We preach Christ, who is the eternal Son, one in nature with the eternal Father, and one with the eternal Spirit—the Triune God. He is the Creator and Life-giver as well as the Sustainer of the universe, and all who live in it. He is the virgin-born Son of God and Son of Man—fully divine and fully human. He is the one whose life on earth perfectly pleased God, and whose righteousness is given to all who by grace through faith become one with him. He is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin that pleases God, and whose death under divine judgment paid in full the penalty for the sins of his people, providing for them forgiveness and eternal life. He is alive, having been raised from the dead by the Father, validating his work of atonement, publicly declaring him righteous, and providing resurrection for the sanctification and glorification of the elect, to bring them safely into his heavenly presence. He is at the Father's throne interceding for all believers. I approach his perfect, pure, inspired, inerrant, and true Word with objectivity, rationality, veracity, authority, incompatibility, integrity, and unreserved faith.

End quote. Our culture says slavery is anathema. Our Lord says, slavery is who you are. Real Christians belong to and are owned by a person. The Lord, Jesus Christ.