

Parson to Person

ROMANS 1 (PART 2)

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God”
(Romans 1:1 NKJV).

For an interesting backstory on the law and role of a bondservant, we need to look to Exodus where we read the following: *“Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. 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”* (Exodus 21:1–6 NKJV).

Some of you might be wondering about the why of six years and then the seventh. To this I will suggest that when studying numbers in Scripture we will quickly realize that six is the number of man. We know that man was created on the sixth day of the creation week, and running through the Scriptures, we find a consistency that takes us through to The Book of the Revelation. Therein we see that John records that the number six is *“the number of man”* (see Revelation 13:18 where the Greek carries no definite article “a”) and that the particular number “six-hundred sixty-six” is the number of the man antichrist. (Of interest to some may be the fact that in my dispensational model the sixth dispensation is the Tribulation wherein rebellious man is given what they desire – a world free from the Church and the regenerating/sealing presence of the person of the Holy Spirit.)

May I suggest that the application herein is that a slave (man, who is in bondage to sin and death) would long for freedom and therefore be set free on the seventh year (which is symbolic of the freedom provided by the true owner of man – the Lord Jesus Christ). When this freedom is recognized and the “slave” becomes a “bondservant,” that person is the voluntary slave of the owner for life. (This also explains why the Scriptures do not condemn slavery in particular as it describes bondage and a longing for freedom.)

Paul is suggesting, therefore, that He is a voluntary slave of Jesus. He was a man in slavery to sin and death but has experienced the sabbatical (so (seventh) year rest provided only in the Lord. Paul turned his life to the Master and therefore came to enjoy real freedom as a bondservant to Jesus for the rest of his life.

As a called apostle, Paul was declaring that he was called from birth to be a “sent one.” He personally described this in Galatians when he wrote, *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...”* (Galatians 1:15–16a NKJV).

Paul was hand-picked by God for this particular and unusual purpose. He, a Jew, educated in both Greek and Hebrew thought, was called by God to be an apostle (sent one) with the glorious message of hope found only in the Gospel. His call would not neglect the Jews, but as is clearly understood, his primary mission was to the Gentile world in the Church Age.

The promise God made to Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob included the fact that through their family line, Israel, the Messiah would come as the hope of the nations (see Genesis 12:3 and 28:14) who were all born in slavery to sin and death, but would be given true freedom in Jesus the Messiah—our Sabbath Rest.

Are you a slave to sin? Have you turned to Jesus for the rest only He can provide? Are you willing to become His bondservant? I have and am.

I love you all, Pastor Paul