

Our Desire to Be Slaves

Commentary for February 15, 2017 — by **Dr. Ernest Martin, August-September 1978**

Dr. Martin's short article will begin on the next page. We need to realize each of us is a slave, as our Lord said, "**Jesus answered them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant** [slave, bondservant] **of sin'**" (John 8:34). If you sin, you are a slave to sin.¹

The word "servant" in the King James Version is better-translated "slave" or "bondservant." In ancient Israel, no Israelite could legally enslave another Israelite by force. An Israelite could voluntarily make himself (or members of his family) a bondservant or slave to another Israelite because of debt or other reasons. The apostle Paul expands on this understanding:

"Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants [again, slaves or bondservants] **to obey, his servants** [slaves] **you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?**

But God be thanked, that you were the servants [slaves] **of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants** [slaves] **of righteousness.**

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants [slaves] **to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants** [slaves] **to righteousness unto holiness. For when you were the servants** [slaves] **of sin, you were free from righteousness. ...**

But now being made free from sin, and become servants [slaves] **to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting** [eonian or age-lasting] **life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal** [eonian, age-lasting] **life through Jesus Christ our Lord."**

• **Romans 6:16-23**

Of course, we sin voluntarily because God placed all children of Adam under the power of "**sinful flesh.**" God the Father sent Jesus,

"... his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

• **Romans 8:3-6**

Because of our flesh, we actually desire to sin and thereby become slaves to sin. We cannot help but do so. This is a horrible problem except for God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

David Sielaff

¹ Slavery still exists in the world today, and it is increasing, Anisa Mehdi, "[The Modern-Day Abolitionist Movement](#)." Selling and buying slaves will occur in the future (Revelation 18:13). DWS

"Our Desire to Be Slaves"

by Dr. Ernest L. Martin

The human mind is a paradox. We talk much about the noble principles of freedom and justice for all, but when it comes right down to it, many of us (and this includes me) have more often chosen the convenience of slavery. Slavery? Yes, the convenience of serving man. The word "convenience" is being used because many persons do not want to actively pay the price for freedom.

Freedom is not free. It takes a great deal of effort and fortitude to procure. It is usually easier, however, to let man rule over us (politically, financially, or religiously) as long as we are granted "comfortable" and unruffled lives to live. And true enough, if this is what people want, there will always be others around to take advantage of the weakness.

The Worst Slavery

In my view the worst kind of servitude is religious. While some of us cannot help being politically or financially ruled by others, in the environment of our western civilization no one needs to be a religious slave to anyone. That is why it is extremely sad when one sees religious servitude being subjected on so many today. Indeed, this is the way it was with the Corinthian Christians back in the 1st century AD. They did not have to be in religious bondage to man, but they, of their own volition, allowed themselves to become slaves.

What was it that brought the Corinthians to that state? It was their belief that men had the right to tell them religiously what to do. They respected the "authority" of men too much. Men were telling the Corinthians that they were "apostles" of Christ and they were the authorities that Christ had put on earth to rule them. But Paul admonished the Corinthians for their foolishness. To Paul the so-called authorities were **"false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ"** (2 Corinthians 11:13). They may have considered themselves "apostles" but they were the self-made variety.

The point is this, many people want to be "apostles" and rule over others — and people let them do so. Since God and Christ are now in heaven and seem so remote to some, people like to have someone near them in a tangible, physical way in order to talk to them, to get advice from them, or to gain comfort from their counsel. It seems so much nicer and profitable to talk with a real, live human being, than to talk with a real, live God in heaven. It is this concept that allows "apostles" to spring up all over the place to satisfy the physical and spiritual needs of man.

Of course, there is absolutely nothing wrong in having friends and advisors to counsel with, but when those advisers become religious "authorities" with so-called mediatorial positions ordained of God, that is when problems arise. And problems there are! This is because the relationship is not biblical. It is contrary to the word of God. **"There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus"** (1 Timothy 2:5).

Under no circumstances does God allow, in our present dispensation, human intermediaries

to act in anyone's behalf. The only Mediator is the Son of God, Christ Jesus! It makes no difference how authoritative or prestigious the person may appear, he can be no more an intermediary for you than an oak tree.²

There are other leaders, however, who excessively boast about the ranks they are supposed to possess between God and man. This is the way it was with the "false apostles" coming in the midst of the Corinthian Christians. Men were introducing themselves to the Corinthians as being the righteous representatives of Christ on earth. They had nationality and genealogy behind them (2 Corinthians 11:22). They told the Corinthians how righteous they were (verse 15) — and they looked good on the surface. But Paul had some sharp words to the Corinthians about these men. They may have appeared righteous and good, yet Paul saw through their façade:

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

• 2 Corinthians 11:14–15

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for allowing these "false apostles" to bring them into bondage. And strange as it may seem, the Corinthians allowed these men to bilk them, even with the victims having a sense of gladness about it: **"for you suffer [allow] fools gladly"** (verse 19).

What a state to be in! The Corinthians were permitting some foolish men to rule over them, and they were doing it with alacrity. Why did they allow it? Why do we allow — or why have we allowed men to do the same to us? The answer is simple: People naturally fear other men. When those who claim to be "important" see the weakness of people to revere men, they step in to fill the role. It is wrong! Paul was indicating to the Corinthians that they had become even greater fools for letting those so-called "religious authorities" get away with it.

**"For you suffer [you allow it] if a man bring you into bondage,
[you allow it] if a man devour you,
[you allow it] if a man take of you,
[you allow it] if a man exalt himself,
[you allow it] if a man smite you."**

• 1 Corinthians 11:20

The Corinthians were becoming the slaves of men — to self-made representatives of God. These men were devouring the substances of the Corinthian lay people. They were taking their money for their own comfort and welfare. They were exalting their own worth by claiming that God had created them for their high "callings." If the Corinthians objected to any of their ways, the "authorities" would show their high ranking positions by smiting them on the face and getting away with it. No wonder Paul said they had placed themselves in bondage. The Corinthians allowed themselves to be treated as slaves.

² Of course, many fine individuals represent various Christian denominations on earth today. They should all be respected for what they are and who they are, but **none of them is a mediator** between the Father and you. Only Christ has that role. ELM

Are there Christians that permit the same things to happen to them today? Believe me, there are all types of “Corinthians” around us. They are bondslaves to men and to men’s organizations.³

Actually, the Christians of Ephesus were commended for having the spiritual wisdom to discern who was a true apostle and who was not. **“You have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars”** (Revelation 2:2). Note that the whole *ekklesia* found the self-appointed apostles to be liars — the judgment was not reserved to a select group of ministers somehow specially qualified for judgment.⁴ This shows that the Ephesian *ekklesia* members must have known these **“false apostles”** and had heard their teachings — else how could they judge them properly?

Their example is a good one for all Christians today. If one finds someone claiming to be an apostle, it is surely the duty of all the people of God (individually) to “check him out.” The Ephesian Christians did this and they were able to find, in the time of the apostle John, that they were liars. Of course, there are probably no liars today — or are there?⁵

The apostle Paul has some teaching for the Christian who wishes to claim the birthright of freedom in Christ, which He secured for us on the cross:

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

• **Galatians 5:1**

One cannot be a proper Son or Daughter of God and be, at the same time, a religious slave of man. The two roles are quite incompatible. The only apostle that Christians have is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1). We need no other! When all begin to exercise our God-given freedoms in Christ, it will really begin to make sense what it means to be happy the way God intended. But freedom is not free. It takes effort! It takes gumption! It takes courage! But it is worth it in the end.

[So ends Dr. Martin’s 1978 article, “Our Desire to be Slaves”]

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com

³ Again, as a reminder, many fine organizations and leaders look after the spiritual and physical welfare of their members as their first priority. They need to be commended highly. Too often, though, there are those who want to rule and to be masters over the flock and say that “their commission” or “the organization” or “their office” must take precedence above the individual Christian. All those subscribing to such nonsense are bound to make themselves slaves to the system (the system of man). Christ on the other hand, is interested in the individual, and no one stands between you as an individual, and the Father except Christ Himself. That is not only what Paul taught, that is what he demanded (1 Timothy 2:5). *ELM*

⁴ For more information on what is the “True Church,” look at the following ASK articles, [“What Is True Fellowship?”](#), [“The Folly of Tradition,”](#) and [“The Dangers of External Religious Actions.”](#) *DWS*

⁵ Read more on this subject in Dr. Martin’s articles, [“Religion Is Slavery, Christianity Is Freedom,”](#) [“Why Churches Fall Apart,”](#) and [“The Curse of Church Authority.”](#) *DWS*