

## John 13:1-17

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"Too often we confuse "the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3) with the "poor-spirited," and true humility with timidity and inferiority. The British literary giant Samuel Johnson was once asked to prepare a funeral sermon for a girl who had died, and he asked what her special virtues were. He was told that she was kind to her inferiors. Johnson replied that this was commendable, but that it would be difficult to determine who her inferiors were!" -Warren W. Wiersbe

"Note the development of this theme:

2:4—"Mine hour is not yet come."

7:30—"His hour was not yet come."

8:20—"His hour was not yet come."

12:23—"The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."

13:1—"Jesus knew that His hour was come."

17:1—"Father, the hour is come.""- Warren W. Wiersbe

"Jesus' special knowledge of his Father's will for him, articulated in v. 1, is now repeated, but with two significant additions: he knew not only that the time had come for him to leave this world, but that *he had come from God* and that *the Father had put all things under his power*. With such power and status at his disposal, we might have expected him to defeat the devil in an immediate and flashy confrontation, and to devastate Judas with an unstoppable blast of divine wrath. Instead, he washes his disciples' feet, including the feet of the betrayer."- D. A. Carson

Jesus shows the way of the servant, for only in this can sin be overcome and humanity left standing!

I'm Batman- Bound with bonds of Love.

In all versions of Bat Man, bruce Wayne the main character is assisted in his endeavours by his Butler Alfred. It is clear that Alfred has gone from mere servant to a key person in the life of Wayne, from protecting him when his parents dies to providing

emotional support during the times when life is tough in the Bat Man persona. Alfred has become bound with “Chains of Love”, and has sealed himself to the family for the rest of his life.

### The Doulos/bond-servant (Hebrew Ebed)

The Hebrew word for “bondservant,” *‘ebed*, had a similar connotation. However, the Mosaic Law allowed an indentured servant to become a bondservant voluntarily: “If the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” (Exodus 21:5-6).

Many prominent men of the Old Testament were referred to as servants. God spoke of Abraham as His servant (Genesis 26:24; Numbers 12:7). Joshua is called the servant of the Lord (Joshua 24:29), as are David (2 Samuel 7:5) and Isaiah (Isaiah 20:3). Even the Messiah is called God’s Servant (Isaiah 53:11). In all of these instances, the term *servant* carries the idea of humble nobility. Being God’s servant is an honorable position.

bondservant or servant:

- In Hebrew – used in the OT
- ebed (eh’-bed)
- a servant – translated bondman, bondservant or servant
- found 791 times in as servant(s), bondman(men), manservant(s) in the OT
- In Greek – used in the NT
- doulos (doo’-los)
- a slave (literally/figuratively, involuntarily/voluntarily)
- translated bondman or servant
- found 121 times as servant(s), bondman(men)
- The Israelites would have servants, but God wanted to make sure that they did not treat their fellow Israelites like the Egyptians or other Gentiles:

Leviticus 25:38-46 ESV

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God. “If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: he shall be with you as a

hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God. As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are around you. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land, and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly.

- In verse 39, ‘brother’ refers to fellow Israelites, not just biological siblings. So, Israelites were not to treat fellow Israelites like slave. God claims the Israelites as His own (v. 42-43).
- Back to Exodus 21:6 – So if a fellow Israelite becomes your servant, then they shall serve 6 years and go free the 7th year with no debt owed to you.
- But if – There can be another choice...
- this is the desire – The will – of the servant...
- plainly say – To show desire to do something...
- ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children’
- to have love for someone – affection for
- ‘I will not go out free’
- This is the decision – the choice – of the servant to remain as a servant.
- then his master
- The master must also desire this servant to stay...
- bring him to the elders
- These are witnesses to the decision and agreement between the servant and master.

Why become a bondservant? Why go to the elders?

- This was a contract – a covenant – between the servant and the master.
- The contract said that the master would take care of the servant
- shelter, food, clothing – everything.
- This was a big deal.
- bring him to the door.... his master shall bore his ear through with an awl
- This was the signature on the covenant for the servant.

- The Hebrews viewed the ear not only as the means of hearing but also symbolically linked the ear to obedience.
- The servant was literally and figuratively becoming part of the master's house and household.
- The servant was saying that they were not only a part of the household of the master, but figuratively they had an open ear open to the master's call.
- In some ways, this was an adoption of the servant by the master.
- he shall serve him for ever
- Some commentators say until the jubilee (every 50 years)

### The raising up and shock of lowering down

"Peers did not wash one another's feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love. Some Jews insisted that Jewish slaves should not be required to wash the feet of others; this job should be reserved for Gentile slaves, or for women and children and pupils (*Mekhilta* § 1 on Ex. 21:2). In one well-known story, when Rabbi Ishmael returned home from synagogue one day and his mother wished to wash his feet, he refused on the ground that the task was too demeaning. She took the matter to the rabbinic court on the ground that she viewed the task, in his case, as an honour (*cf.* SB 1. 707). The reluctance of Jesus' disciples to volunteer for such a task is, to say the least, culturally understandable; their shock at his volunteering is not merely the result of being shamefaced, it is their response to finding their sense of the fitness of things shattered. But here Jesus reverses normal roles. His act of humility is as unnecessary as it is stunning, and is simultaneously a display of love (v. 1), a symbol of saving cleansing (vv. 6–9), and a model of Christian conduct (vv. 12–17)." -D. A. Carson

"The servant (slave) is not greater than his master; so, if the master becomes a slave, where does that put the slave? *On the same level as the master!* By becoming a servant, our Lord did not push us down: He lifted us up! He dignified sacrifice and service. You must keep in mind that the Romans had no use for humility, and the Greeks despised manual labor. Jesus combined these two when He washed the disciples' feet." -Warren W. Wiersbe

## Informed Choice

For consent to be *authentic* consent, it must be truly *informed*.- Satan did not truly inform us when he tricked us into bondage.

*Jesus took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist*—thus adopting the dress of a menial slave, dress that was looked down upon in both Jewish and Gentile circles (SB 2. 557; Suetonius, *Caligula*, 26). Thus he *began to wash his disciples' feet*, thereby demonstrating his claim, 'I am among you as one who serves' (Lk. 22:27; *cf.* Mk. 10:45 par.). The one who was 'in very nature God ... made himself nothing' and took 'the very nature of a servant' (Phil. 2:6–7). Indeed, he 'became obedient to death—even death on a cross!' (Phil. 2:8). The matchless self-emptying of the eternal Son, the eternal Word, reaches its climax on the cross. This does not mean that the Word *exchanges* the form of God for the form of a servant; it means, rather, that he so dons our flesh and goes open-eyed to the cross that his deity is *revealed* in our flesh, supremely at the moment of greatest weakness, greatest service

But once the symbolism is seen, Jesus' words are almost inevitable: *Unless I wash you, you have no part with me*. That is always true: unless the Lamb of God has taken away a person's sin, has washed that person, he or she can have no part with him. The notion of 'having a part (*meros*) in' something is regularly used with respect to inheritance (*e.g.* Lk. 15:12), and, in Jewish thought, can refer to participation in eschatological blessings

The point of the aphorism in this context is in any case painfully clear: no emissary has the right to think he is exempt from tasks cheerfully undertaken by the one who sent him, and no slave has the right to judge any menial task beneath him after his master has already performed it

"Doubtless when Jesus washed the disciples' feet he included the feet of Judas Iscariot. If this proves anything beyond the unfathomable love and forbearance of the Master, it is that no rite, even if performed by Jesus himself, ensures spiritual cleansing. Washed Judas may have been; cleansed he was not (*cf.* 6:63–64). The only other place in the Fourth Gospel where Jesus tells his disciples (minus Judas) that they are clean is 15:3: 'You are

already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.' Real cleansing is effected both through Jesus' revelatory word and through the atoning sacrifice to which the foot washing pointed"- D. A. Carson

"both the footwashing and that atoning death are the supreme displays of Jesus' love for his own (v. 1b). The footwashing was shocking to Jesus' disciples, but not half as shocking as the notion of a Messiah who would die the hideous and shameful death of crucifixion, the death of the damned"- D. A. Carson

### Application

Throughout the New Testament, the word *bondservant*, *slave*, or *servant* is applied metaphorically to someone absolutely devoted to Jesus. Paul, Timothy, James, Peter, and Jude all describe themselves as "bondservants of Christ" (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1, NKJV).

Believers today should still consider themselves bondservants or slaves of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22; Ephesians 6:6; 2 Timothy 2:24). He is our Lord, and our allegiance is due to Him alone. As bondservants, we renounce other masters (Matthew 6:24) and give ourselves totally to Him (Matthew 16:24).

Being a bondservant of Christ is not drudgery. His "burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). Also, we have this promise: "Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life" (Romans 6:22).

When I say I'm a Christian, I am saying Jesus is the sovereign over my life. Whatever He wants, I submit to that. That's the first great understanding of Christian life. Second...first, Jesus is Lord; two, Christians are slaves. We are *douloi*, that's the plural. It means we're owned.

"Jesus knew that there was a competitive spirit in the hearts of His disciples. In fact, within a few minutes, the men were disputing over which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24–30). He gave them an unforgettable lesson in humility, and by His actions rebuked their selfishness and pride. The more you think about this

scene, the more profound it becomes. It is certainly an illustration of what Paul wrote years later in Philippians 2:1–16. Peter must have recalled the event when he wrote his first epistle and urged his readers to “be clothed with humility” (1 Peter 5:5).”- Warren W. Wiersbe

Jesus was the Sovereign, yet He took the place of a servant. He had all things in His hands, yet He picked up a towel. He was Lord and Master, yet He served His followers. It has well been said that humility is not thinking meanly of yourself; it is simply not thinking of yourself at all. True humility grows out of our relationship with the Father. If our desire is to know and do the Father’s will so that we might glorify His name, then we will experience the joy of following Christ’s example and serving others.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 345.

“The church is filled with a worldly spirit of competition and criticism as believers vie with one another to see who is the greatest. We are growing in knowledge, but not in grace (see 2 Peter 3:18). “Humility is the only soil in which the graces root,” wrote Andrew Murray. “The lack of humility is the sufficient explanation of every defect and failure. It takes humility and grace to serve others, but it also takes humility and grace to allow others to serve us. The beautiful thing about a submissive spirit is that it can both give and receive to the glory of God.””- Warren W. Wiersbe

“When God “bathes us all over” in salvation, He brings about our *union* with Christ; and that is a settled relationship that cannot change. (The verb *wash* in John 13:10 is in the perfect tense. It is settled once and for all.) However, our *communion* with Christ depends on our keeping ourselves “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). If we permit unconfessed sin in our lives, we hinder our walk with the Lord; and that is when we need to have our feet washed.

This basic truth of Christian living is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament priesthood. When the priest was consecrated, he was bathed all over (Ex. 29:4), and that experience was never repeated. However, during his daily ministry, he became defiled; so it was necessary that he wash his hands and feet at the brass laver in the courtyard (Ex. 30:18–21). Only then could he enter the

holy place and trim the lamps, eat the holy bread, or burn the incense.” -Warren W. Wiersbe

Since in first-century Mediterranean society there was no term for an internal state that did not entail a corresponding external action, love always meant doing something that revealed one’s attachment – that is, actions supporting the well-being of the persons to whom one is attached

- So, was being a bondservant a big deal?
- It was for Paul: Titus 1:1 NKJV "Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness,..."
- It was for Peter 2 Peter 2:1 "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:..."
- It was for James -James 1:1 NKJ "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

## Trust

Bond slave- during foot washing by the Bondservant the master is venerable, and thus there was a level of trust

Sign of honour and love. It was a trust relationship, Jesus is effectively saying, "you can trust me."

Trust each other.

I have to ask myself:

Am I a servant?

Am I a servant of my fellow Christians?

Am I a bondservant of Christ?

Am I prepared to say, "I’ll do whatever where-ever whenever you want me to, Lord"?

Am I prepared to hand over my will to the Lord and let Him take care of me?



Am I prepared to obey my Lord? It's all in the Bible...  
Am I willing to trust the Lord?