

## What Do You Call a Christian? – Servant / Slave of Christ

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:6-23

As we have already noted, words change meaning over the years. Sometimes they lose meaning through overuse. Sometimes they are mishandled, causing the true meanings to be corrupted or lost. The word “Christian” has been overused and mishandled over the years. It is the purpose of this study to regain its original and true meaning through the study of Biblical words and phrases.

### The next term in our study is “Servant / Slave of Christ.”

A Christian belongs to God’s “forever family.” They can call God their Father and know that Jesus Christ is their brother. God is their **Savior**. Nevertheless, they also see God as their **Sovereign LORD**, and Jesus Christ as their **Master**. We should be dedicated to obeying and pleasing our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ – even as the angels in heaven honor and obey God. This can only be done as we submit ourselves to the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. See Matthew 6:9-10; 23:1-12; I Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 2:10; 5:1-21; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 11:6.

There are over one hundred references in the New Testament that use a word that is usually translated “servant.” **This Greek word (“doulos”) always means slave.** There are other Greek words to convey the idea of servant (a hired worker – someone who can leave his job and be hired elsewhere or go into business for himself). The translation of this word has probably been softened because of the terrible history of slavery – particularly the practice of slavery done by England and Colonial America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Slavery was, for the most part, a much different system in the ancient world. For further study, look up the term “**bond-slave**” in a Bible dictionary. **John MacArthur’s book, Slave** (Thomas Nelson) **is highly recommended.**

To appreciate what it means to be called a slave of Christ, it would be good to refer back to the article that describes a Christian as **Redeemed**. Briefly stated,

- We were in bondage, as slaves, to sin.
- We were purchased, out of that bondage, into the service Christ.
- We are now His slaves to serve the greater purposes of God.

It is to be noted that Christ became a slave Himself in order to purchase us as His possession (Philippians 2:5-8). Christ is a loving and merciful master. We should find ourselves delighted to be free from the bondage of sin and liberated to the wonderful service of Christ.

**Please read Romans 6:11-22 and consider the word “slave” every time your translation uses the word “servant.”** This removes the option to pick and choose if or how you are going to obey and serve the Lord. We are slaves. That’s not optional for Christians. We choose to be either faithful obedient slaves, or unfaithful disobedient slaves.

The following references either have the word “servant / slave” (“doulos”) in them, referring to Christians as slaves, or they refer to our salvation as a call to serve God / be a slave to God.

See Acts 26:13-20; I Thessalonians 1:2-10; Galatians 1:10; 5:13-26; Romans 16:17-19; I Corinthians 7:22-23; II Corinthians 4:5; Ephesians 6:5-6; Colossians 3:22 – 4:1,12; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1; I Peter 2:13-16; Revelation 1:1.

The metaphor of a soldier (II Timothy 2:3-4) and a prisoner (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Romans 16:7; II Timothy 1:8) have similar application.

Calling Christians “slaves” does not contradict the idea of sonship and friendship with God. It is a contrast, designed to protect us from a careless and casual approach to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which can hinder people from repentance and godly living.

See Luke 6:46; 9:23; John 12:26; II Timothy 2:19-22; Titus 2:11-14; 3:5-8 cp. Jude 1:3-4.

When we combine the thoughts of **Redemption** (purchased for Christ’s purposes), **Reconciliation** (being made friends with God), **Sonship** (being made family with God), and **Discipleship** (being followers of Christ) with **the metaphor of a Slave** we get the complete picture. We are being shown that the terms of this servitude are most loving, gracious and friendly. We have been given the privilege of being in royal service to the King of Kings. We were His enemies. Now we are His friends. We are to serve Him without question. We are to be like the Angels of Heaven, only in a higher position than the angels. We are intimate family, ruling and reigning with Christ.

See John 15:13-15; Galatians 4:1-7; I Corinthians 6:3 (cp. vs. 19-20); Revelation 1:1 (“...to show His slaves...” cp. Revelation 2:26; 3:5,12,21; 21:7).

## A Summary of What It Means to be a Slave of Christ

### The slave has been purchased.

- I Corinthians 6:19-20 – You are not free to do just what you want to do. Christ purchased you with His blood and has the right to lead your life. He is the Lord.  
See Matthew 16:24-26
- Romans 6:17-18 – You previously were slaves to sin. Sin controlled you. Now you are free from sin so that you can serve Christ; to serve righteousness.  
See John 8:30-32, 34, 36.

### The slave's purpose is to please his master.

- II Corinthians 5:14-15 – Christ's love is what controls us as His slaves. We are no longer living to please ourselves. Rather, we are living to please Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.  
See Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 5:1-2; Romans 15:1-3 cp. Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21.
- Philippians 2:5-8 – Christ's slaves must remember that **their Master became a slave Himself!** There is no room for pride and self-will as a slave of Christ. Meekness and humility are the marks of a true Christ-follower.  
See Matthew 5:3,5; Luke 6:46; John 14:15; II Timothy 2:24-26.

### The slave is placed alongside other slaves.

- John 13:12-17 – We are compelled to care for one another. The world is no longer our home. We look to Christ. We cannot expect the world to care for us.  
See Matthew 18:1-6,10-20; 23:1-12 John 17:1-26; Colossians 3:12-15.
- Philippians 2:1-5,14-16 – We must work together to train and build up each other as a work-force in this world; to shine the light of Christ in this dark world.
  - II Corinthians 4:5-6 cp. Matthew 5:14 (*"Ye" or "You" is plural. "The light" is singular*).
  - Romans 12:1 (*"Bodies" is plural. "A living sacrifice" is singular*).
  - Romans 12:2-11 (*Romans 12:11 "serving" has same root word as "slave"*); II Timothy 2:22; John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:1-16.