1. Slave

In biblical times, a slave (Hebrew: *‘ebed*; Greek: *doulos*) was a person typically male who was legally owned by another and had little to no personal autonomy. Slavery was a recognized institution in both the Old and New Testaments, though often distinct from the racial slavery seen in later history.

Spiritually, the concept of slavery takes on deeper meaning. In the New Testament, Paul often describes believers as “slaves of Christ”, indicating complete surrender, obedience, and loyalty to the Lord Jesus. This form of servanthood leads not to oppression but to true freedom.

2 Timothy 2:24 (ESV)

> “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.”

Here, “servant” translates the Greek *doulos*, meaning slave. In contrast, those who reject Christ are described as slaves to sin:

John 8:34–36 (ESV)

Jesus answered them,

> “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.
> The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.
> So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Jesus reveals that sin enslaves, but He alone has the power to liberate. This echoes Paul’s teaching:

Romans 6:16 (ESV)

> “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey,

> either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?”

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2. Maidservant (Mjakazi)

A maidservant (female slave) shared the same condition as a male slave in terms of ownership and lack of freedom. In Hebrew, this is often the word *’amah* or *shiphchah*, and in Greek, it is *doulē*. Maidservants were common in patriarchal societies and often performed both domestic and personal duties.

A well-known example is Hagar, Sarai’s Egyptian maidservant, whom Sarai gave to Abram to bear a child:

Genesis 16:1 (ESV)

> “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.”

Hagar’s story illustrates the social and emotional complexities of

servanthood in the ancient world while she was a servant, she became a mother of nations (Ishmael’s descendants), under God’s watchful care (Genesis 16:13).

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3. Handmaid (Kijakazi)

The term handmaid typically refers to a female servant of even lower status, often used more humbly or affectionately. It reflects deep submission and lowliness, often voluntarily adopted in relationship to God.

In biblical usage, especially in Luke’s Gospel, “handmaid” (*doulē* in Greek) becomes a term of honor in submission to God’s will. When the angel Gabriel told Mary she would bear Jesus, she responded:

Luke 1:38 (ESV)

> “And Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the servant (handmaid) of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.'”

Bilhah and Zilpah, maidservants to Rachel and Leah, respectively, are referred to in the Old Testament in a lower capacity:

Genesis 35:25–26 (ESV)

> “The sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant: Dan and Naphtali.
> The sons of Zilpah, Leah’s servant: Gad and Asher.”

This distinction shows a hierarchy even within servanthood, especially in familial or tribal settings.

Freedom in Christ vs. Slavery to Sin

Theologically, the most significant form of slavery in Scripture is slavery to sin. All people are born into sin (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23), and apart from Christ, they live under its control. However, Jesus offers a radical exchange slavery to righteousness that results in life.

Romans 6:22–23 (ESV)

> “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.
> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Unlike the slavery of sin, which leads to death, servanthood to Christ leads to eternal life, purpose, and joy.

A Call to Surrender to Christ

Rather than striving in our own strength or being bound by human systems, Scripture calls us to full submission to Jesus Christ:

Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV)

> “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle

> and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

To wear His yoke means to enter a relationship of loving obedience with the only Master who gives rest, freedom, and eternal reward.

Final Word: Serve the Lord Alone

We are not to be enslaved by people, materialism, or sin. We were purchased at a price the blood of Christ.

1 Corinthians 7:23 (ESV)

> “You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.”

To be Christ’s servant is the highest calling. It is slavery that leads to life, joy, and eternal glory.

Maranatha.

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