



UNSHACKLED – Freedom to...

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BIG IDEA – God wants what you want, just a much better version.

scripture focus - Galatians 5:13-14: "**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.** But **do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh**; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself."

From birth, our three favorite words are... me, myself and I. It is sin-wired into our humanity - me, me, me and mine, mine, mine. We look at our lives as living free meaning, doing whatever we want. But did you know, the Bible tells us that we are all slaves? We are either slaves to sin (the devil) or slaves to God. Bob Dylan, in his first release during his "gospel" period, wrote the song "Gotta Serve Somebody" that hit the radio waves on August 20, 1979. Interestingly, John Lennon famously criticized Bob's song and wrote a parody song in 1980 titled "Serve Yourself" in response. **So, ask yourself, whom do YOU serve?** As a follower of Jesus, are you comfortable being called a slave? **Not only have we been freed FROM, but we have also been freed TO. Freed to what?**

As followers of Jesus, we have traded out masters! Oh, by the way, it was never us.

I have come to realize the Bible declares truth with no hesitation, no sensitivity to how we feel about it. It's raw, real and unapologetic. People are free to dismiss it, argue with it, burn it, protest it or simply ignore it. It does not matter; it is the written Word of God.

- **It goes out, never comes back empty.**
- **It is always successful and accomplishes God's will ([Isaiah 55:11](#)).**
- **Everything here on earth withers and dies, but God's word stands forever ([Isaiah 40:8](#)).**
- **It is alive and surgical in its ability to do soul & spirit work, exposing our secret thoughts and desires ([Hebrews 4:12](#)).**

Let me encourage you or warn you – God's had us all figured out before we were ever born. He knows our beginning and our end.

We are called to be free. God wants what you want, just a much better version.

The Apostle Paul, via letters, takes the churches he started through an **understanding of God, themselves as believers and THE Church under the banner of Jesus Christ.**

We get most of our Theology our study of who God is from these letters. **They were initiated by letters or people in the church regarding questions, concerns or conflicts within the churches.** Like having an Apostle as your spiritual pen-pal, **Paul would write back giving instruction, encouragement or correction.** Oftentimes, Paul would also **respond to threats or opposition to the Church, harming or confusing new believers.** These **oppositions would come from wayward preachers seeking money or cult-like groups twisting the truth.**

The churches in Galatia were continued to be harassed from deep Jewish messianic movement – the movement was called the Judaizers. They were persistent in **presenting a different gospel** than the one that Paul and the other leaders in the New Testament days had decided was **not** based on any legalist acts that came before the Law, the Torah, nor after. The gospel does not require the fulfillment of law or being justified by the works of the Torah, but in faith in Jesus as the Messiah ([Galatians 2:16](#)). Becoming a follower of Jesus requires faith, belief in his work, his sacrifice and obeying God.

Even in this very heavily Jewish understanding of God, the book of Galatians reveals **how we not only can know God better, but we can know ourselves better by understanding how to do life like God intended** – to be free to **produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.**

What Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit.

Free to not only receive, but also free to give or produce!

1. We are free to BE who God intended us to be.

Galatians 5:1: "It is for **freedom that Christ has set us free**. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

This kind of freedom means that we are open to receive

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness

- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness &
- Self-Control

From God himself, under the control and direction of the Holy Spirit!

We'll talk about this "yoke of slavery," in a moment. But first, listen to Paul's words when he tells us what our freedom is really for – Galatians 5:13-14: "**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;** rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself."

I said this last week, but I will repeat it. **Being free from something is only part of the solution, it is only half of the battle. Being free to go to something is the rest of it. In addiction or patterns of behavior, it's not enough to quit, you have to be able to do something new or different than what you did before.**

Paul knows that in our own flesh, in our weakness we are completely capable of using this newfound freedom as an opportunity to solely benefit ourselves - "apó-hormé," a "starting place" of a "sudden violent rush" to old ways! **Part of the root word Paul used here shares similarity to our English word for "hormone." Together it means "a place from which movement or an attack is made."**

Paul even went so far to explain the churches in Corinth that believers even have freedoms they should not exercise – because of that love for others who may be weak in those areas.

- 1 Corinthians 6:12: "**I have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial.** I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything."
 - He gives one example of eating meat offered to idols. In Corinth, the church had a lot of new believers that came out of some crazy sexual perversions, that were mixed with wild parties and a lot of expensive meats being sacrificed to idols. **Paul told the church, eating meat** offered to idols is not a big deal because idols are not real, and the meat is just meat – it holds no special contamination from being offered to statues. However, to new believers or those who were deeply trapped in the culture of perversion and idolatry that same meat is very offensive to their conscience and brings back memories of their evil days.
- He wrote, "But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble." [1 Corinthians 8:9](#).
- And **misused freedom can actually hurt the people you want to help!** He wrote, "And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to

do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ.” [1 Corinthians 8:12](#).

- Similar can happen with alcohol, or even movies or shows. The freedom to be like Jesus yet **not offend** a brother or sister is honorable and right. **This kind of freedom allows us to love and not justify our behaviors. It allows us to give grace and not argue or prove a point.**

Did Jesus ever flaunt his power or authority?

What do you think?

Actually, he did.

Who did Jesus use his power for? How did he use his authority?

The disabled, the disenfranchised, the weak and broken.

John tells us that “Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.” [John 13:3](#) And what did he do? He got up and served!

Paul told us in Philippians 2:6-8 that Jesus, **“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.** When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.”

Why didn’t Jesus own a nice home? Why didn’t he travel by horse or donkey more often? Why was he so dependent on the generosity of others?

Because Jesus was FREE! And Jesus wants us to be just as free.

Freedom in the New Testament is always to be **both free from something** in order **to be free for something**.

2. We are FREE to change masters.

No one really sits down and explains to us a child or even a teen that we are all born into sin – and it is our master! And since sin was our master, that makes us **SLAVES**.

There is so much controversy, pain and sorrow around the word “slave,” but again, that doesn’t stop God from using the word – **knowing exactly what that word means and what indignity it brings to a human.**

The thread and discussion surrounding slavery is all through the Bible, Old and New Testament.

Yet this fact is true. **Jesus said it plain and clear, that's why the Jewish listeners had such a fit about his words. "Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.'" John 8:34.**

The writers of the New Testament are very familiar with the word "slave," and had the audacity to use it frequently. **But when the Bible was translated into English, back in 1611, the word slave was so offensive that they had difficulty putting the real translation it in the Bible.** Back then, **the majority of the English translations of the Bible used the words, servant or bond-slave.** It's some of the modern translation, like New Living Translation, has the guts to translate it correctly. **Every one of the ancient listeners or readers who heard or saw the Greek word, "doulos" – knew its meaning: someone who belongs to another; a slave or bond-slave, without any ownership rights of their own.**

Many of the New Testament authors opened with their "status."

- James, the half-brother of our Lord; it doesn't say, "James, the half-brother of Jesus." He says "James the slave."
- Paul (Titus 1:1, Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1) "a slave of God, slaves of Christ Jesus." "A prisoner for preaching," Philemon 1:1
- 1 Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," but in 2nd letter...
- 2 Peter 1:1, "Peter a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ."
- Jude 1:1 "Jude a slave."
- Revelation 1:1, "his slave John."

They identify themselves as a "slave of Christ," **chosen, bought, owned, subjected, dependent, disciplined, rewarded, provided for, protected, and obedient, and obedient.** It was a very offensive message.

It sounds strange to be excited about being a slave that would be owned by a new master! But this is the illustration the Bible uses to let us know that we were owned by one master (sin), but Jesus bought us to free us! In this freedom, for all those who believe and yield to Jesus, God becomes our new master!

Again, Paul explains this the Corinthians... speaking to those who were actual slaves under human masters at the time. Paul wrote to them like he would a prisoner serving his sentence in a prison.

And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And **if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world.** Are

you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. [1](#)

[Corinthians 7:20-23](#)

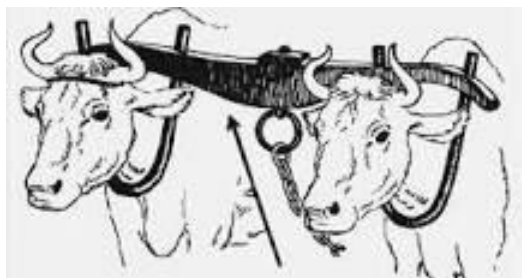
Paul reminds the congregation that God bought them with a price (the life of Jesus), so don't waste it becoming (ginomai, transitioning) back into slaves (doulos) of humankind (anthrōpos).

The Apostle Peter wrote something very similar to Paul's thinking in his own letter...

- **1 Peter 2:16 For you are free**, yet you are **God's slaves**, so don't use your freedom as an excuse (**epikalumma: a cover up or veil**) to do evil. I don't know if you have ever experienced this, but it is so frustrating when believers use their position or authority to behave badly and hurt others to just coverup or distract us from what's really happening. They just want their own way, and they will twist God's Word or intimidate us into submission. **I've heard it, in the past leaders would misuse a phrase from Psalms and apply it to themselves! They would say, "Be warned, the Bible says, 'Touch not my anointed.'" Psalm 105:15. The psalmist was warning warring kings to not mess with God's people nor the spokesmen who deliver his messages.**

Yoke of Slavery

A yoke was a wooden frame placed over the necks of two animals (mostly oxen) so that they can pull a load together.



The New Testament writers used the yoke as an object lesson of being bound together thus carrying the shared weight of a burden.

The yoke of the Law – The Apostle Peter said to the first Christian Council, “So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.” [Acts 15:10-11](#)

The yoke of Sin – Paul to the Galatians, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and **do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**” [Galatians 5:1](#).

Jesus himself gave an example of both the yoke of the Law and of sin, when he told the crowds that His yoke and the burden He brings is easy and light. We just don't think of it as being slaves of Christ!

“Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” [Matthew 11:28-30](#).

To quote an 82 year old-school rocker, Bob Dylan, “**you're gonna have to serve somebody.**”

Who is your master?

It may be sin, which is either ourselves or the devil.

Or, it may be God, creator of all things.

I lived my life, not being raised as a believer and coming to Christ as a teen. I saw the way my family lived and experienced the results of their decisions. But, more than that. I've been in ministry, first as a volunteer youth leader, then full-time ministry pastor in one position or another for 25 years. I've also served in a VP position in a nonprofit for 16 years working with pastors and volunteer directors all over the country.

I've seen the best of what our decisions will yield, and I've seen the worst. I walked with families through death, divorce, suicide, addictions, abandonment, unfaithfulness, heartache and heartbreak. In hospitals and hospice, homes and prison, I have seen what life looks like when we choose the wrong master, when we are slaves to ourselves, our desires, our choices. **I have also married, tarried or buried those who chose to be slaves of Jesus – and it matters.**

Notes

Scriptures

Galatians 5:1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Galatians 5:13-14: You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: Love your neighbor as yourself.

1 Corinthians 6:12: I have the right to do anything, but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything, but I will not be mastered by anything.

1 Corinthians 8:9: But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble.

1 Corinthians 8:12: And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ.

John 13:3: Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.

Philippians 2:6-8: Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

John 8:34: Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.'

1 Corinthians 7:20-23: And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it. Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you.

1 Peter 2:16: For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.

Galatians 5:1: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Matthew 11:28-30: Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.

Euphemisms – servant or bond slave... these are all the same Greek root word, “doulos,” a slave.

- **2 Timothy 2:24** A **servant of the Lord** must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.
- **Colossians 1:7** You learned it from Epaphras, our dear **fellow servant**, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf...
- **Revelation 1:1** This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show **his servants** the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John...
- **Revelation 10:7** When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced it to **his servants** the prophets."
- **Revelation 11:18** The nations were filled with wrath, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward **your servants** the prophets, as well as your holy people, and all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. It is time to destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth."
- **Revelation 15:3** And they were singing the song of Moses, the **servant of God**, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.
- **Revelation 19:5** And from the throne came a voice that said, "Praise our God, all **his servants**, all who fear him, from the least to the greatest."
- **Revelation 22:3** No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and **his servants** will worship him.
- **Revelation 22:6** Then the angel said to me, "Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell **his servants** what will happen soon."

Direct translation – God's slave. Greek root word, “doulos,” a slave.

- **Galatians 4:7** Now you are no longer **a slave** but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.
- **1 Peter 2:16** For you are free, yet you are **God's slaves**, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.
- **Jude 1:1** This letter is from Jude, a **slave of Jesus Christ** and a brother of James. I am writing to all who have been called by God the Father, who loves you and keeps you safe in the care of Jesus Christ.
- **Romans 6:22**: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have **become slaves of God**, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."
- **1 Peter 2:16**: "Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves."

Doulos is it a Servant or Slave?

Calvin and John Knox and other translators putting together the Geneva Bible, who **made a decision not to translate *doulos* "slave."** **The reason? There's too much stigma with the concept of being a slave. It's too strong a downside. It's too humiliating, too belittling.** So they opted to cover the word by replacing it with "servant," "bondservant," and eliminated the word "slave," except when the New Testament talks about an actual, physical slave, or an inanimate object, as I said, like slaves of sin or righteousness. They said it's just too negative.

Paul, a 'Slave' or 'Bondslave'?

The translations that use "bond-servant" are **actually trying to distance themselves from the KJV, which simply uses "servant,"** which isn't really the right word to translate δούλος today, since **"servant" in modern English implies a free person in distinction from a slave bound to an owner.** But many translations are a bit twitchy about using the word "slave" in these cases due to the extremely negative connotation attached to this word today (thanks to our history of race-based slavery).

Jewish views on slavery.

What the Bible says we are being freed to! Why freedom? What is our freedom for?

Are we free to do whatever we want? What is it that we actually want?

The Bible tells us that we are being freed to several things:

1. ****Righteousness****: Romans 6:18 says, "You have been set free from sin and have become **slaves to righteousness.**"⁴ This suggests that freedom in Christ leads us to a life of righteousness.
2. ****Service in Love****: Galatians 5:13-14 states, "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" This implies that our freedom is for serving others in love.
3. ****Holiness and Eternal Life****: Romans 6:22 tells us, "But now being made free from sin, and become **servants to God**, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."³ This means our freedom leads us to holiness and eternal life.

4. ****Freedom in Christ****: Galatians 5:1 says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."⁵ This suggests that our freedom is for living in the freedom that Christ provides.

5. ****Approaching God with Confidence****: Ephesians 3:12 states, "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." This implies that our freedom allows us to approach God with confidence.

6. ****Living as God's Slaves****: 1 Peter 2:16 says, "Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; **live as God's slaves.**" This suggests that our freedom is for living as God's slaves, which means living according to God's will.

doulos: a slave

doúlos (a masculine noun of uncertain derivation) – properly, someone who belongs to another; a bond-slave, without any ownership rights of their own. **Ironically, doúlos ("bond-slave") is used with the highest dignity in the NT – namely, of believers who willingly live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers.**

Bob Dylan's

Gonna Serve Somebody, August 20, 1979 (45 yrs ago)

You may be an ambassador to England or France
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You might be a socialite with a long string of pearls

**But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes indeed
You're gonna have to serve somebody
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody**

Might be a rock 'n' roll addict prancing on the stage
You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage
You may be a businessman or some high-degree thief
They may call you doctor or they may call you chief

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes, you are
You're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)

You may be a state trooper, you might be a young Turk
You may be the head of some big TV network
You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame
You may be livin' in another country under another name

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, yes, you arre

You're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)

You may be a construction worker workin' on a home
Might be livin' in a mansion, you might live in a dome
You may own guns and you may even own tanks
You may be somebody's landlord, you may even own banks

But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Yes, you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil or it might be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)

You may be a preacher preaching spiritual pride
Maybe a city councilman takin' bribes on the side
May be working in a barbershop, you may know how to cut hair
You may be somebody's mistress, maybe somebody's heir

But you're gonna have to serve somebody
Yes, you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)

Might like to wear cotton, might like to wear silk
Might like to drink whiskey, might like to drink milk
Might like to eat caviar, you might like to eat bread
May be sleeping on the floor, sleepin' in a king-size bed

But you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Yes indeed, you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

You may call me Terry, you may call me Timmy
You may call me Bobby, you may call me Zimmy
You may call me RJ, you may call me Ray
You may call me anything, no matter what you say

You're still gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Yes, you're gonna have to serve somebody (serve somebody)
Well, it may be the Devil and it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

John Lennon's mock response – Serve Yourself, 1980.

You say you found Jesus Christ;
He's the only one.
You say you've found Buddha,
Sittin' in the sun.
You say you found Mohammed,
Facin' to the East.
You say you found Krishna,

Dancin' in the streets.

Well there's somethin' missing in this God Almighty stew,
And it's your mother, (your mother, don't forget your mother, lad.)
You got to serve yourself,
Ain't nobody gonna do it for you.
You got to serve yourself,
Ain't nobody gonna do it for you.