

26. Learning to Serve One Another as a Slave

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to regard one another as more important than self. We saw that Christ tells us that we are to be concerned about others and to regard them as more important than self. Christ modeled this attitude for us by being obedient to death even to death on the cross because of His concern for us. We saw that we are to follow His example.

In Galatians 5:13-14, we read, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” These two verses give a summary of the entire Bible. Matthew 22:37-40 says, “Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Then, John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” As we compare these verses, we see that we have been given liberty by Christ to actually fulfill both the Old and New Testaments by serving one another in love. Today, we are going to see that we can show our physical and spiritual children how to use the liberty that we have in Christ to serve one another in love.

The word that is translated “serve” is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament. We will look at several of these uses to see how we serve one another in love. First, we start with a warning in Matthew 6:24 which says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The word that is translated “mammon” means *treasure or riches*. We see that we either choose to serve God or we choose to serve riches. One or the other will be our master. That means that the only way that we can truly serve one another in love is to serve the Lord and not riches. Any riches that the Lord gives us are for the purpose of serving others in love.

Second, Acts 20:19 gives us the attitude that we need to have if we are going to serve one another in love. That verses says, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews.” In this verse, we see that the attitude that will make it possible for us to serve one another in love is an attitude of humility. Christ gave us an example of humility when we read in John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Christ chose to become a man and live among us. An attitude of humility will give us an attitude that will make it possible to live among people and serve them whether they are rich or poor or whether they are strong or weak.

However, the humility of Christ did not end just when He came to dwell and live among us. That same attitude also led Him to be willing to suffer death on the cross. Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider

it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Christ showed His humility by becoming obedient to the Father and dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. When we serve one another in love, we will be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of others especially the spiritual development of others.

Third, Romans 7:6 says, “But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” The law told people what they had to do to serve one another. In contrast, as Christians, we are to do much more than the law requires because we are motivated to serve others by the love of Christ. That happens as we know, act and yield. Romans 6:6 tells us what we are to know when it says, “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” We need to know that we are no longer a slave to sin if we are going to serve one another in love.

Romans 6:11 says, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The word translated “reckon” means that we are *to put it to our account that we are dead to sin and alive to God*. If we are dead to sin, we will choose not to obey our former master. If we are alive to God, we will choose to act as those who are alive to God and do those things that please him.

Romans 6:13 and 16 say, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God...Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” In these two verses, we see that the way that we are able to act to please God is to continually yield our lives to the Lord so that we are able to act in the power of the Holy Spirit to serve others in love.

Fourth, in Romans 14:17-19 we see several things that the Holy Spirit will cause to be present in our lives as we serve one another in love. Those verses say, “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” We see that if we are serving Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as we serve others, we will serve by living a righteous life. We will also serve with a life that is filled with peace and joy. This will cause us to serve others by doing the things that make for peace and the things that will build up other Christians.

Fifth, in Ephesians 6:6-8 we read, “Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.” In these verses, we see that our desire will be to do the will of God from the heart as we serve one another in love. We will serve others in the same way that we serve the Lord

because we are doing what we do to carry out the will of God.

Sixth, when we serve one another in love, we will serve as a part of a team. In Philippians 2:22-25, Paul talks about the way that he, Timothy and Epaphroditus had served the Lord as a team. Those verses say, “But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.” Here, we see that when we serve one another in love that we work as a team and minister to one another as full partners in ministry.

Seventh, we read in Colossians 3:22-24. “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Here, we see that when we serve one another in love, our desire is actually to please God even more than the people who we are serving. This will cause us to do what we do from the heart. As 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” When the love of Christ controls our hearts, we will do all that we do to please the Lord, because we look to Him for our reward and not to the people we are serving.

Eighth, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” In these verses, we see that we are becoming mature disciples that result in us serving one another in love. We see in the earlier verses that:

1. We make true decisions for Christ. (verse 5)
2. We learn to follow leaders that showed us how to follow the Lord. (verse 6)
3. We become examples for others to follow. (verse 7)
4. We become reproducers. (verse 8)

As we show our physical and spiritual children how to make this transformation in their lives as they follow our example, we see that they will also develop a mature:

- Faith – they will turn from other things and will turn to God.
- Love – they will serve the living and true God (by serving others).
- Hope – they will have an eager expectation of the return of Christ.

May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children become healthy reproducing Christians with a mature faith, love and hope.