

3-1-1976

Biblical Servanthood: a Pattern for Christian Life and Ministry

Wayne Schock

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BIBLICAL SERVANTHOOD: A PATTERN FOR
CHRISTIAN LIFE AND MINISTRY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Divinity

by
Wayne Schock
March 1976

APPROVED BY

Major Professor:

Wayne M. Car...

Cooperative Reader:

Bruce A. Hicks

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Between secular and Christian codes of conduct there has always been a distinction regarding the ideal behavior and attitude. This is especially true in regards to how we see ourselves in relation to others. Friedrich Nietzsche, in the last part of the nineteenth century, proclaimed a new philosophy of man which claimed that the strong were justified in the exploitation of the weak, that the weak were in fact to be used by the strong and to serve the strong. He differentiated between "slave-morality" and "master-morality", and idealized the latter, and judged the "slave-morality" to be inferior and for the weak. The noble soul is the one who honors himself and exerts his power over the "herd".¹ The noble soul is the one who strives to be superior and succeeds.

This philosophical concept was carried into the realm of psychology by Alfred Adler and his theory that striving for superiority is universal to all individuals. He states,

Individual Psychology has shown that the striving for superiority and perfection is not limited to the characterization of certain individuals, nor is it brought to them from the outside; rather, it is given

¹William T. Blackstone, Meaning And Existence (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), pp. 265-270.

to every person and must be understood as innate, as a necessary and general foundation of the development of every person.²

However, as even Nietzsche realized, this "master-morality" stands in stark contrast to the Christian ideal, for within the Bible it becomes very clear that the person who would be a follower of Christ, must be a servant.

Mark 10:43-45 says,

"But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

The relationship which is affirmed and idealized by Nietzsche, that the weak necessarily serve the greater, is rejected in Scripture and a higher ideal is affirmed, that the strong uphold and serve the weak, and the person who has gives to the one who has not.

In spite of the fact that most Christians and many non-Christians would agree that Nietzsche's thesis is wrong and that the idealization of the "master-morality" is against Scriptural teachings, they still find themselves acting in accordance with its teachings. Selfishness and egotism seem to be characteristics of all men, and even the best of Christians can and do at times act in a self-centered way. Keith Miller in his book, Habitation of Dragons, relates an incident in which a young couple having marital problems were wasting his time by making appointments with him for

²Alfred Adler, Superiority and Social Interest (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 39.

counseling and then breaking them at the last minute. He writes,

I wanted to call and tell them that one of their problems was "self-centeredness." And further I wanted to inform them that I was very busy myself . . . and then it hit me: how important I must think I am if a thing like this can make me as mad as it did. Here were two people in the agony of struggling to keep their home together - with no telling what other complications - and I was incensed that they were treating me like a common servant . . . when that is what I have committed my life to be: a servant to Christ and His suffering people. But my behavior told me that secretly I must want to be treated like a big shot writer and counselor.³

Thus it appears that even those who view themselves as Christ's servants fall into the danger of setting themselves up in positions of authority in relation to their area of ministry.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The problem has to do with how one approaches his area of ministry, whatever that ministry might be. The problem may be simply stated in the question, "What should my attitude be towards this ministry?" It is the contention of this writer that any other attitude except that of a servant is based on the wrong motives. When God calls a person to a particular task or ministry, He calls that person not only to be His servant, but the servant of His people. The purpose of this study is not only to defend from the Bible

³Keith Miller, Habitation of Dragons (Waco: Word Books, 1970), pp. 107-108.

the thesis that the Christian life and ministry is one of service and that the Christian is to have the heart of a servant, but also to show from selected Bible passages what such servanthood entails.

Justification of the Problem

Such a study is profitable for several reasons. First, it will make us more aware of our responsibility to service, especially for those called to professional forms of ministry, but also for the laity. Many pastors seem to fall into the trap of feeling that they must at all costs make their church grow. They attend all sorts of church growth seminars and learn business principles and marketing techniques so they can sell Christianity. While these principles and techniques may be used to advantage for growth, the key focus of the church, the pastor, and the layman should be to meet the needs of people. If needs are met, the church will grow both physically and spiritually. If needs are not met, then all growth is superficial and the church will become merely another social club. Robert Schuller, noted church growth leader, says, "The secret of a growing church is so simple--find the hurt and heal it!"⁴ For him the first test of goals and programs is the capacity to solve problems which people have. He asks the questions, "Would it help

⁴Robert Schuller, Your Church Has Real Possibilities (Glendale: Regal Books, 1974), p. 4.

a lot of human beings? Would it solve a lot of human problems?"⁵ If it does meet needs (both physical and spiritual), and does serve people, then it can be considered a program or goal for the church.

Harold Fickett Jr., pastor of the Van Nuys Baptist Church, also agrees. Concerning his church he says,

We are convinced that first and foremost, we are a service institution. If there is a job that needs to be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and for His glory, we are convinced that it is incumbent upon us to do that job.⁶

It is truly a sad time when a minister of a local church forgets that he is there to serve God and people and begins to see himself as running an organization. It is not that organization and administration is not a part of the service rendered by the minister, but it must not become the focus of the minister's job. As will be shown in the chapter which follows, the very meaning of the Greek word translated minister means "one who serves."

A second reason such a study is profitable is that it will give us an opportunity to discover what the characteristics of a true servant are and what attitudes motivate him for service. Many times when we think of a servant, we think of someone who is weak and is forced to serve his master. Yet as we study the Bible we can see that this is

⁵Ibid., p. 75.

⁶Harold Fickett, Jr., Hope For Your Church (Glendale: Regal Books, 1972), p. 116.

not the ideal for this relationship. The ideal seems to be service out of a loving heart. Nor is the servant to be weak; in fact the stronger and more capable he is, the better he may fulfill his task.

Another reason why such a study is important is the frequent mention of the servant relationship in the Bible. According to Young's Analytical Concordance, the terms slave, servant and service occur a total of 1,371 times.⁷ While not all of the entries are relevant to the study at hand, the frequency of occurrence of the servant relationship in the Bible makes it an important concept to understand.

It is hoped that in the context of this study, a pattern of servanthood will emerge whereby it will be possible to see the responsibility that followers of Christ have to serve others and the characteristics and attitudes which such a servant has.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will be limited to the context of Scripture recognized as canonical by most Protestant denominations, specifically the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as found in the Authorized King James translation of the Bible.

For this study the New American Standard Bible, copyrighted by Lockman Foundation in 1971, will be used as the

⁷Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, n.d.), pp. 861-865.

English translation along with the King James Version. When reference is made to the original languages, Biblia Hebraica, edited by Rudolf Kittel, will be the Old Testament source, while the United Bible Societies Edition of The Greek New Testament, will be the New Testament source. Should variant reading become relevant, the reading determined most probable by these two sources will be used.

This study will also be limited to the two Hebrew terms most often used in the context of service and servanthood: אָבַד (ābad) "to serve", and שָׂרַת (šārat) "to minister" or "attend", and the three Greek terms: διακονέω (diakoneo) "to serve", δουλεύω (douleuo) "to be a slave", and παῖς (pais) "servant" or "son"; along with their various derivatives.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Since this study will include word studies of the terms listed above in the second chapter, definitions of these terms will be postponed until that time.

It may be important, however, that the terms pattern, life and ministry be defined, since these are the ideas to which this study is addressing itself in relationship to the concept of servant.

According to Webster's Dictionary, pattern may be defined in several ways. For this study two of these definitions are of importance. The first is that a pattern is "a person or thing so ideal as to be worthy of imitation or

copying." It is further defined as a "model, guide, plan," or "definite direction, tendency, or characteristic; as, behavior patterns."⁸ Thus the focus of this study will be to discern from Scripture a model of servanthood.

Secondly the two terms Christian life and ministry should be defined. By life is meant the particular life style characteristic of any individual. Thus Christian life refers to the particular style of life which is, or should be, common to all Christians. By Christian ministry is meant those aspects of Christian vocation generally referring to professionally paid personnel.

ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that the Bible is the infallible word of God. It contains no error concerning any doctrine or point of theology and as such it is the final authority in all matters of debate and teaching. It, in totality, is the word of God and represents God's communication to those to whom it is written as well as to us of this age. It can neither become irrelevant nor obsolete.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

This study will combine both inductive and deductive approaches to select portions of Scripture. The study will begin with a word study of each of the Hebrew and Greek roots

⁸William Allen Neilson (ed.), Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary (2nd ed.; New York: Library Guild, Inc., 1965), p. 1315.

which are related to the terms slave, servant, and service in the English translations, within their cultural and historical settings. For this various dictionaries, encyclopedias, and concordances will be consulted. From this material a pattern will begin to emerge regarding what servanthood means. These points will be made and commented upon as they arise. The next step of the study will be in the form of exegesis of selected Old and New Testament passages which will shed light upon the servant-master relationship in its various settings, or which bring out the call to service or servanthood. Points of application relevant for the development of a pattern of servanthood or which support the thesis of this study will be made and commented upon as they arise in each passage studied. Due to the many portions of Scripture which refer to the servant relationship, it will be necessary to be selective in relation to passages covered. Only those particularly relevant to the topic at hand, or representative of several such passages will be treated. Finally, there will be a summarization of the findings as a whole and a sketch of the servant pattern as it has been found in Scripture.

ORGANIZATION

Chapter two contains the word studies of the terms most often used for the servant relationship and service concept in both the Hebrew and the Greek along with the historical and cultural settings. The major Hebrew term

עֲבָד (ebed) will be discussed in detail along with the less frequent term שָׂרָט (šārat). The Greek terms διακονέω (diakoneo), δουλεύω (douleuo), and παῖς (pais) will be discussed, including the distinctions and development of meanings of each term.

Chapter three will discuss three selected Old Testament passages: (1) a passage dealing with the social relationship, man to man; (2) a passage dealing with a religious relationship, man to God; and (3) a passage dealing with a theological relationship, Messiah to God.

Chapter four will do the same as chapter three only with regard to the New Testament. It will not follow the categories as found in the Old Testament section, but will rather look at representative passages regarding the teachings of Jesus, Paul and Peter on this subject.

Chapter five will summarize the findings of the study and make a sketch, drawing upon the material discussed, of a pattern for Christian life and ministry based on the servanthood concept. The supporting evidence for the thesis will be concisely reviewed, and final application made.

Chapter 2

WORD STUDIES OF RELEVANT GREEK AND HEBREW TERMS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will be organized as follows: first a brief paragraph reviewing all of the Hebrew terms used in the Old Testament to refer to servant or service; then a focus on the two major Hebrew terms; then a brief review of all of the Greek terms; and finally a focus on the three major Greek terms in the New Testament.

REVIEW OF HEBREW TERMS

In the Old Testament there are a number of Hebrew terms which may carry the connotation of service or servant. Among these are the terms נָעַר (naar) "a young man, lad", שִׁפְחָה (šiphāh) "a maid-servant", שָׂכִיר (śākîr) "hireling", אֲנָשִׁים (ʾānāšîm) "men", and even בָּנִים (bānîm) "sons". Along with these there are several idiomatic expressions which may be used in more technical senses such as לִפְנֵי (laʾmôd lipnê) "to stand before", מָצָא יָד (māša yād) "to find the hand", גָּמַל (gamal) "to recompense", and פָּלַח (pālah) "to serve, worship".¹

¹Aaron Pick, The English and Hebrew Bible Student's Concordance (Bible Study Classic reprint, n.d.), pp. 402-403.

While all of these may carry the idea of service in a specialized sense the two significant terms for this particular study are עָבַד ('ābad) "to serve", and שָׂרַת (šārat) "to minister, attend", or in their noun forms עֲבָד and שָׂרָת .

MAJOR HEBREW TERM NO. 1-- שָׂרַת

Of these two, שָׂרַת is the least frequent and has a somewhat more specialized usage. It is used to refer to a higher form of ministerial service (as opposed to menial or common service, עָבַד). It is in this sense that Joseph became the personal servant of Potiphar (Genesis 39:4), and later when he was thrown into prison, he was put in charge of the two imprisoned royal officials and ministered to them (Genesis 40:4). It may also refer to royal officers (cf. I Chronicles 27:1; 28:2; II Chronicles 17:19; 22:8; Esther 1:10; Proverbs 29:12). It is used to refer to Joshua as the chief assistant to Moses (Exodus 24:13; 33:11), and of Elisha as the assistant to Elijah (I Kings 19:21). It also is used in Psalm 103:21 to refer to the service angels render to God.

A second and the usual usage of this term is in regards to service in ritualistic worship. It is used to refer to the vocation of the Levites (cf. Deuteronomy 10:8; 17:12; 21:5). An interesting usage is found in Isaiah 60:7 in which the sacrificial ram ministers to the people. This term is used to refer to the vessels of instruments of

ministry in the tabernacle (Numbers 4:12) and the temple (II Chronicles 24:14).²

Thus it can be seen that this term has both a social or secular usage, as well as a religious usage. In most contexts the focus is on the action of giving aid or help rather than the relationship of servanthood. The key idea is that of helping, aiding, or assisting, be it the secular idea of Joshua aiding Moses or the assistance which the sanctuary vessels gave the priests in the performance of their office. Even the reference to the Levites refers to the aid which they are to give to Aaron and his sons in the performance of his office (cf. Numbers 3:6; 8:26; 18:2).

Unlike the term עֲבָדָה which will be studied next, this term focuses on the act of aid or assistance while עֲזָרָה focuses on a specific personal relationship.

MAJOR HEBREW TERM NO. 2--עָבַד

The most common terms in the Old Testament used to refer to servant, slave or service come from the Hebrew verbal root עָבַד ('ābad) "to work, serve, do, labour."³ However, it should be noted right at the start that in the noun form עֶבֶד "servant", this concept of "work" or "labour",

²Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 1058.

³Ibid., pp. 712 ff.

has been weakened and has been replaced to a great degree by the idea of a specific relationship.⁴

The expressed or unexpressed and implied counterpart of עֶבֶד is not one who is inactive but אֲדָמָה, the "master." The עֶבֶד is the "worker who belongs to a master." The whole rich development of the עֶבֶד concept commences with this element of relationship.⁵

The relationship is always person to person except in one instance which will be noted later. Within the Hebrew cultural framework,

The slave was to be considered a part of the family. He was protected from physical abuse. He shared in the religious rites and wealth of the family, as if an immediate member of it.⁶

However, it should be noted that this type of relationship was not shared by all of the cultures of this area. The Old Testament regulations regarding the institution of slavery are unique because they guaranteed the integrity of the man or woman based on the sovereignty of God over his

⁴W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 9.

(Note: This article was reprinted in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament using the same material but a different translator. Both references will be used and noted according to the one quoted. While other sources were consulted, this article appears to be the most comprehensive treatise of this term. The organization of this study leans heavily upon it.)

⁵W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, "παῖς," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 657.

⁶Arthur A. Rupprecht, "Slavery," Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), pp. 626-627.

born of slaves (Exodus 21:4); by being caught as a thief and having nothing to pay for the stolen object (Exodus 22:2-3); and by voluntary decision to remain a slave (Exodus 21:6). It should also be noted that there was provision for the slave to gain his freedom by a number of ways (cf. Exodus 21:2-27; Leviticus 25:25 ff; Deuteronomy 15:12-23).⁹

A very significant observation regarding the status of the slave should be made. The slave or servant is not necessarily relegated to a lower status in society just because he is a slave. Rather the servant's status is based upon the status of his master. If one is the servant of a great man then that servant will be given the recognition of that great man (Genesis 24), but if he is the slave of a slave (cf. II Samuel 9:10) he is given only the recognition of a slave (Genesis 9:25; Lamentations 5:8). This brings up an important aspect of the slave-master relationship which is illustrated in Genesis 24. The hero of the story is never referred to as anyone other than the servant of Abraham; his name is never given. Yet this story illustrates a freedom in service which is based on the religious communion between the master, the God of the master Abraham (vv. 12, 27, 42, 48), and the servant.

Within that setting an utterly free type of service is possible; the אֲדָמָה acts in his business of wooing a bride for Abraham's son as effectually as

⁹Merrill C. Tenney (ed.), Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), pp. 798-799.

though Abraham himself were present. He is the full representative of his master and remains nevertheless the submissive, nameless servant who does not even permit himself the humanly very understandable respite at the scene of his successful mission (vv. 54 ff.)¹⁰

Thus we can see that the servant becomes the personal representative of his master and is accorded the same treatment in the transaction of business as the master would receive if he were personally present. It should also be noted that the fact that the master is not present has no influence on the servant's sense of faithfulness and responsibility. He acts the way he would act if the master were present, if not actually imitating how he would imagine the master acting.

The עֶבֶד in the service of the king. With the beginning of the monarchy under Saul, there appears to be a shift from a clan based system of defense to a national system of defense.

The need of repelling the professional army of the Philistines made it necessary in Israel, . . . for the king who normally had at his disposal only a voluntary army, to form for himself a paid standing army (I Samuel 14:52). Whoever entered the latter seceded from natural tribal membership and became עֶבֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ (I Samuel 18:5; 22:9; II Samuel 2:12,13, etc.)¹¹

However, it would be inappropriate to refer to this matter as slavery, since this service was probably based upon an agreement

¹⁰W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 10.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 10-11.

whereby the king also bound himself to reciprocal duties (I Samuel 22:7). What is significant in this relationship is the fact that all previous relationships of this type are superseded and the עֶבֶד is clearly spoken of as belonging to the king and to him alone.¹²

עֶבֶד as a description of political submission. At times the term עֶבֶד is used to express the idea of political submission. In this respect even kings may be described as servants of a greater king or ruler under whom they serve as a puppet type of monarch (cf. II Samuel 10:19; II Kings 16:7). As in the previous usages, עֶבֶד still denotes one who is subject to and belongs to a master. At times humiliation is implied by a subservient nation as they lament the fact that their own ruler is himself a slave of someone else and thus they are slaves of a slave (cf. Lamentations 5:8).¹³

עֶבֶד as a humble self-description. From the language of the court, the reference to oneself as a servant carried over into everyday polite speech. Also there may be the addition of other descriptive terms to emphasize the element of humility and meekness as in Hazael's reference to himself as a servant and a dog in the presence of Elisha (II Kings 8:13) or Mephibosheth's similar statement to David (II Samuel 9:8).¹⁴

The sanctuary servants. As previously mentioned, there is only one reference in which the servant relationship is

¹²Ibid., p. 11. ¹³Ibid., p. 12. ¹⁴Ibid.

applied to a non-personal object. This is the case of the Gibeonites of Joshua 9. Here Joshua dooms the Gibeonites to be עֲבָד לְבֵית אֱלֹהִים, servants of the house of God.¹⁵ It would thus seem that the exception proves the rule that in passages referring to servants, even where there is no reference to a specific owner or lord, an owner must still be implied, except in this one instance where the relationship is specified as to a non-personal object. It should also be noted that those who are captives of war are to be considered slaves, and provisions are made for part of them to become servants for the priests (cf. Numbers 31:28-30). Thus even though the Gibeonites are servants of the sanctuary, it would seem that they are directly responsible to the priests.

Summary observations on the secular usage. From these five categories of man to man slave relationships, several important observations may be made.

First, the essential characteristic of a slave is a sense of belonging to someone; he is not his own. The ideal relationship seems to be that in which the slave is considered a part of the family and is based on love for the master, as is seen in Exodus 21:5. But in the case of an unloving master, provisions are made so that the slave retains his humanity and does not become a mere possession or a beast of burden. The object of service is not the work that is accomplished, but

¹⁵Ibid.

the master who bids the work be done.

Second, in the ideal relationship, the servant may act as the personal representative of his master in the transaction of business in the master's absence, as in the case of Abraham's servant. The master may invest in the servant his own authority in the making of decisions and carrying them out. But even in these actions the servant is directly responsible to his master and must not regard his assigned task lightly.

Thirdly, a person is never the servant of two different households or masters at the same time. One relationship will inevitably supersede or make void the other, as in the case of the servants of the king.

Fourth, the attitude of a servant is one of humility and obedience. There is very little reference to an expected reward or exaltation for good service and a humble spirit, because these are characteristics that are expected.

Fifthly, the attitude of the owner toward the slave should be one of love and justice as to a member of the family. There is no right to mistreat a slave or to treat him as less than human.

With these observations in mind we will move on to investigate the next type of servant-master relationship, that of man to God.

Religious Usage: Man as Servant of God

Zimmerli notes that the passages using $\neg \neg \neg$ which

make reference to man as a servant of God, are similar in grammatical construction to those in which the master is a man.¹⁶ This servant relationship may be expressed in five different types of usages: (1) to refer to professional forms of service in worship, i.e., priestly or Levitical; (2) עֶבֶד as the humble self-description of the pious; (3) "Servants of Yahweh" in the plural as denoting the pious; (4) עֶבֶד יְהוָה in the singular as a description of Israel; and (5) עֶבֶד יְהוָה as a title for specially distinguished figures.

Professional service to God. This usage deserves attention because it refers to the specific vocation in service of worship to God. In this sense there is both the professional priesthood, which actually serves God in the rituals connected to the religion of the people, and the Levites who served in care and transportation of the religious objects and tabernacle. In Numbers 18:7 we find that the priests are those who serve around the altar and within the veil. No one else may presume to come near to do this on pain of death. In the same chapter in verses 21-23 we can see the type of service rendered by the Levites, in relationship to the tabernacle.¹⁷

Humble self-description of the pious in God's presence.

The connexion with the secular usage can be seen most plainly in the pious man's meek description of himself

¹⁶Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷Brown, Driver, Briggs, op. cit., p. 713.

as he stands in the presence of his God. Just as the inferior, in speaking to the superior, refers to himself humbly as 'thy servant' in the third person, this manner of speech is all the more appropriate when man stands in the presence of God.¹⁸

Within this relationship various emphases may be expected in different situations. On the one hand the lowly status of the speaker as he stands before his great Lord might be uppermost, while at other times there might be a certain claim upon the Lord from the expression of humble submission.

He who confesses allegiance to a master withdraws himself from the dominion of all other masters, and so with inner justification can request the master whose allegiance he owns to be careful for his part to preserve his power and to protect his servant. In this sort of situation the honour of the divine Lord is at stake (Psalm 143:11 ff.). If in this supplication approach to the Lord man's own performance is stressed (but I am your worshipper) then the self-description **עַבְדְּךָ** acquires a strongly active tone. If, on the contrary, the already experienced favor of God is emphasized, then the name **עַבְדְּךָ** marks the attitude of thankful self-surrender.¹⁹

Zimmerli goes on to make several statements regarding the servant-Lord relationship in Old Testament faith. First he states,

O.T. faith springs from the encounter with Yahweh the jealous Lord (Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Nahum 1:2). . . . The thought 'no man can serve two masters' embraces not merely the moment of the worshipful turning towards God but the whole of life. Alongside it no other **עַבְדְּךָ**-status is conceivable. The seriousness of this attitude becomes manifest on both sides. Yahweh claims the total obedience of his servant

¹⁸W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 13.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 14.

and the latter even in the hour of bitterest trial may claim the protection of this exclusive allegiance.²⁰

Thus it can be seen that the man to God relationship supercedes all others and determines the forms and extent of all other relationships.

His second observation regarding Old Testament faith is that,

O.T. faith is aware of a primal inclination of Yahweh to Israel arising from the free grace of Yahweh. . . . The servant status of the pious man is to be understood from within the sphere of this relationship which was created not by man but by Yahweh.²¹

From this it can be seen that even as it was not because Israel was a nation worthy to be chosen by God, but God chose it by His grace, so also the pious man realizes, that it is by grace alone that he becomes a proper servant of God.

Finally in respect to the relationship between Old Testament faith and servanthood, Zimmerli states,

O.T. faith realizes that the encounter with Yahweh took place in the midst of history and that it points to an historical goal. The servant character remains not within the timeless sphere of individual piety, but gains special importance where Yahweh in his historical meeting with his people calls individuals to some special service.²²

Zimmerli summarizes his comments by stating that the servant state is not one which the pious man has gained by his own achievement through sacrifice and good works alone. Rather the pious is able to call himself servant, because it is felt that this is an echo of a call which has already been uttered by God Himself.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²¹Ibid., p. 15.

²²Ibid.

The petitioner dares, on the strength of a word from Yahweh which was directed to him, to approach Yahweh as a servant. The words which the O.T. worshipper hears become, however, again and again a word of commanding guidance on the part of the covenant God. . . . The servant is he who is obedient.²³

"Servants of Yahweh" referring to the pious. In close similarity to the use of עֲבָדָיו to refer to the individual, is its usage in the plural to denote the pious as a whole. Servants of Yahweh have the following characteristics: they are those who "seek refuge in Him" (Psalm 34:22); they "love His name" (Psalm 69:36); they are "bound to Him in אֶהְיֶה לְךָ", loyal love (Psalm 79:2); and they walk before Him "with all their heart" (I Kings 8:23). There are also instances in which the servants of the Lord are exhorted to praise Him (Psalm 113:1; 134:1; 135:1), and this also may be a characteristic of His servants.

עַבְדֵּי יְהוָה as a description of Israel. With Isaiah the term "servant of the Lord" took on the added reference of the nation of Israel as a whole. In Isaiah 41:8,9 we can see this concept brought out:

But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts, and said to you, 'You are My servant,' I have chosen you and not rejected you. (N. A. S. B.)

While in the Servant Songs as a whole there is a great debate raging among Biblical scholars as to who the Servant is, it

²³Ibid., p. 15-16.

seems fairly clear that in this passage Servant refers to Israel as a nation. Concerning this problem of identifying the servant in these passages, John Bright states,

The figure of the Servant is a very fluid one; it seems to refer now to one thing, now to another; and any attempt to interpret it too rigidly will do violence to the evidence and almost certainly distort what the prophet wished to say. . . . In many places throughout the book the Servant is merely Israel (e.g., Isaiah 41:8; 43:10; 44:21; 45:4), so much so that the prophet can call the Servant blind and deaf (Isaiah 42:19) because that is exactly what Israel has been.²⁴

Zimmerli agrees with this usage and comments,

Israel the עַבְד־יְהוָה has been created by Yahweh (Isaiah 44:2,21), chosen by him (41:8 ff.; 44:1; 45:4), fetched from the ends of the ends of the earth (41:9), and is the seed of Abraham the friend of God (41:8). . . . She is urged to be fearless (44:2). Yahweh promises to help, indeed, the help of ransom secured to the blood relation (48:20). There is no talk of any initiative to be taken by the servant Israel herself. If 42:19 refers to Israel then she is even declared to be utterly blind (cf. 43:8). The witnessing to the power of Yahweh which she is summoned to undertake is that of a passive recipient of a gift. 'To return'--that is the sole activity to which the people is summoned (44:22); to return in view of the saving deed which Yahweh alone has accomplished.²⁵

עַבְד־יְהוָה as a title for distinguished figures.

Throughout the history of His people, God has made contact with them and held them to history as the place where He is near and the place where responsible decisions are made. Thus it is not surprising that God again and again raises up figures in history who are recognized as servants of God.²⁶ Within this

²⁴John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 150.

²⁵W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 18.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19.

category there are five distinct divisions of classes or individuals: (1) the patriarchs, (2) Moses, (3) kings, (4) prophets, and (5) Job.

(1) With regard to Abraham as servant we can see in Genesis 26:24 that Yahweh's promise to Isaac is for the sake of His servant Abraham. Isaac is referred to as a servant of God in Genesis 24:14 by Abraham's servant who is looking for a wife for Isaac. In references to Jacob as servant, it is difficult to distinguish whether the patriarch is meant or the nation (see above), but if we compare Ezekiel 28:25 with Genesis 28:13 it seems quite clear that at least in this instance the patriarch is the intended meaning.

Israel finds the beginnings of its history embodied in the figures of the patriarchs. In them the gracious character of Yahweh's revelation, which began long before Israel was a people, is expressed most clearly. Thus it is to be understood that wherever the fathers are spoken of as servants of Yahweh, the idea of a gracious relationship to Yahweh is clearly presupposed.²⁷

(2) With reference to Moses the term עֶבְדִּי is applied forty times. In the context of Numbers 12:7 we see that Moses is differentiated from all others in that with him God speaks mouth to mouth. God refers to him as "My servant Moses," the one who is faithful. Zimmerli makes a very striking observation:

Moses stands on the threshold of the people's history. . . . Moses is the vizer, the true steward of Yahweh. . . . Moses is only Yahweh's servant. But in what he powerfully accomplished Yahweh was so obviously present that the people's responsive faith submits to Moses

²⁷Ibid., p. 19.

and to Yahweh in him. An essential feature of biblical revelation comes out here. God's history is not transcendental heavenly history. It stoops to earth and appoints men with their deeds and words as its signs. Moses, Yahweh's servant, embodies in his activity such a part of divine history. Obedience or disobedience to his word is decisive for men's attitude to Yahweh. Moses is much more emphatically than the patriarchs an active servant-figure.²⁸

In this respect we can see Moses act in regards to the shaping of the law (Joshua 1:2,7; II Kings 18:22; Malachi 4:4; etc.), he acts in regard to the division of the land (Joshua 1:13,15; 8:31), he prescribes cultic matters (II Chronicles 1:3; 24:6), and promises peace to come (I Kings 8:53,36).

(3) The king, as a servant of Yahweh, has the special duty of saving the people of God out of the hand of their enemies. However, not every king did this. David was the ideal king who was chosen by God, and obeyed Him. I Kings 11:34 brings out this relationship between God's choosing and obedience in David: "My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes." Zimmerli notes,

The more their history runs into disaster the more intensely O.T. faith clings to the figure of David, the servant of God as a token of promise. It waits for the day when this servant will again be king (Ezekiel 34:23f.; 37:24f.). It reminds Yahweh of the oath which he swore to his chosen servant David (Psalm 89:3; cf. v. 20). It speaks of the indissoluble bond which Yahweh made with his servant David (Jeremiah 33:21f., 26).²⁹

A significant reference is made in Jeremiah 27:6 to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, being the servant of God and in the context, whoever resists him resists Yahweh. So God

²⁸Ibid., pp. 19-20. ²⁹Ibid., p. 20.

may choose an alien to perform some special service or mission of a limited nature in relation to his chosen nation.

(4) The prophet is the other profession which the Old Testament refers to as servants of God (Jeremiah 7:25). "The prophet is Yahweh's word messenger."³⁰ In I Kings 18:36 we can see this in Elijah's prayer at the offering of sacrifice on Mt. Carmel, "O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word."

Yahweh's history is again present in the midst of men through his authorized messenger. . . . These messengers are the great admonishers of the people sent by Yahweh, . . . there comes to the fore a definite active mission on the part of the servant. The parallel with the royal court can be specially clearly seen here. To the heavenly court of Yahweh belong these servants who perform his commissions of earth.³¹


In relationship to the prophets a term similar to אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים in usage developed. It is the term, אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים in usage developed. It is the term, אִישׁ-הָאֱלֹהִים "man of God" (cf. Elisha, II Kings 5:8).

(5) In the book of Job there are several statements made by God calling Job "My servant," (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:7 ff). It is observed that,

. . . the active obedience of the servant of God is here vigorously stressed. Job's fear of God, which was vividly depicted in the introduction, proves itself in faithful obedience, since in spite of all the temptation of Satan he does not renounce God with a curse. Hence God acknowledges Job by graciously naming him his own servant as against the calumniating speech of Satan (1:8; 2:3),

³⁰Ibid. ³¹Ibid., p. 22.

and the self-righteous speeches of the friends.
(42:7f.).³²

Summary observations on the religious usage. From these usages of the term  in the man to God relationship, several observations may be made, some similar to the ones made in regards to the man to man relationship, and some which bring new light to the concept of servanthood.

First, it is noted that there is a sense in which servant of God applies to a professional office, that of serving God in worship as a representative of His people, and serving His people as a representative of God. This is an important observation and a key to the understanding of the offices of priest and prophet.

Second, it is noted that the servant of the Lord, in renouncing any similar relationships to other lords, has a claim upon the Lord for protection with the Lord's honor at stake. In Psalm 143:11,12, we hear David pray,

For the sake of Thy name, O Lord, revive me.
In Thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.
And in Thy lovingkindness cut off my enemies,
And destroy all those who afflict my soul;
For I am Thy servant.

A third observation is that the servant is chosen by God. God is the instigator of the relationship, not the servant. All men are unworthy to be servants of God, and it is only by God's graciousness that this relationship may be established.

³²Ibid., p. 23.

Fourthly, this relationship supersedes all others of this type. God is a jealous Master and will not allow anyone to supplant His lordship. He is either master of all or not Master at all. He is either Lord or there is no servant relationship.

A fifth observation is that the Lord calls His servants to perform in historical events and encounters and they obey. In these events the servant is God's representative and messenger to the people.

Finally, the servant, if he is to be a servant, must remain faithful in spite of trials. The test of servanthood is faithful obedience in all that the Lord asks to be done, no matter what the cost, or where the way may lead.

With these thoughts in mind we will now move to a more unique usage of the term **עֶבֶד יְהוָה** which has deep theological importance. Not only does God call those who would be His people to be His servants, but He personally shows what such servanthood means in the Suffering Servant of God in Isaiah's Servant Songs.

Theological Usage: The Suffering Servant of God

This usage is limited to what are known as the Servant Songs of Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; 61:1-3).³³ Zimmerli notes that, "The O.T. usage of **עֶבֶד יְהוָה** reached its fulfillment in the suffering servant passages in

³³J. Barton Payne, The Theology of the Older Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 254.

Deutero-Isaiah."³⁴ This study will not attempt to deal with the various views proposed concerning authorship of these passages, nor will it attempt to relate these passages to their fulfillment in Christ. There will not be an attempt to answer the question, "Who is the Servant of God in these passages?" Rather it will be assumed with the New Testament writers (cf. Acts 8:34 ff; I Peter 2:22 ff; etc.) that unless otherwise qualified, as in Isaiah 49:3, that these have reference to Christ. The goal of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of servanthood by looking at the perfect example of the Servant of God.

These passages are extremely rich in providing food for thought in regards to servanthood. John Bright makes the following observations:

The servant announces that he has been elected of old for a purpose and kept in reserve till the fullness of time (Isaiah 45:1-2). . . . there is revealed to him the full sweep of his mission: not only to call Israel itself back to its destiny under God, but also to proclaim the true faith in the entire world.³⁵

This mission can be seen in Isaiah 49:5-6:

And now says the Lord, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him
(For I am honored in the sight of the Lord,
And My God is My strength).
He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant

³⁴W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 23.

³⁵Bright, op. cit., p. 147.

To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the
 preserved ones of Israel;
 I will also make You a light of the nations
 So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Minyard Barnett states, "It has been said that the
 Servant of Jehovah in the Biblical sense is a person or insti-
 tution endowed with a mission."³⁶ Barnett sees the earthly
 vocation of the Servant introduced in Isaiah 42. There is a
 threefold content to this vocation: teaching, healing, and
 saving. As the teacher He brings justice (טִיבָה) to the
 Gentiles (v. 1), in truth (v. 3), through instruction (תּוֹרָה)
 (v. 4). As the great healer He does not destroy, but heals.
 He opens blind eyes, showing that He brings deliverance from
 spiritual bondage. As the Savior, He is to liberate the
 people from prison and darkness.

This is nothing less than to bring universal illumi-
 nation to the moral darkness of the world, universal
 liberation to the bondslaves of ignorance and error.³⁷

The sphere of His mission is not limited to the nation
 of Israel, but is universal. He will be a light to the Gen-
 tiles (Isaiah 42:6).

The manner of the vocation of the Servant of Jehovah
 is one of mercy and quietness; for he tenderly gives new
 life to bruised, feeble Israel, and his voice is not
 heard boisterously crying in the street. His manner of
 presenting his message is quiet, gentle, and humble.
 "He brings what commends itself, and therefore requires

³⁶Minyard Merrel Barnett, "The Influence of Isaiah's
 Servant Idea Upon New Testament Thought" (unpublished Doctor's
 dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1939),
 p. 29.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 32-33.

not forced trumpeting." With his unassuming manner of life and speaking he exercises a tender pastoral care.³⁸

He has been endowed with God's own Spirit (v. 1) and is supported by God, and because He is supported by God it is certain that He will be successful. But His mission is one of quiet labor and infinite patience, and not of conquest and glory. In spite of discouragement the Servant will not give up until the victory is won (v. 4). He proclaims the good tidings of God's redemption (Isaiah 61:1-3), and intercedes with God day and night for the victory of His purpose (Isaiah 62:1,6-7). He is willing to endure and accept the suffering that His mission is certain to place upon Him (Isaiah 50:4-7).

But in 52:13-53:12 the very ultimate is said of the servant. . . . Here we read of the suffering and the victory; here we are given finally to understand what the Servant is to be. It is utterly unheard of--so much so that onlookers (53:1; 52:15) cry out: "Who could have believed what we have heard?" Here is an unlovely figure, scorned of men and seemingly cursed of God (53:2-4). It would seem incredible that in this unlikely quarter, in this "root out of dry ground" (vs. 2), there should be manifested the very redemptive power of God (vs. 1). He endures brutal persecution (vss. 4-6), so brutal that belatedly it dawns upon men that no sin he could have possibly have committed could account for it. They understand that he is suffering vicariously for others; he is bearing their sins. Finally we see him led off like a lamb to the butcher, done foully to death, yet making no complaint (vss. 7-9). It is clear that he has suffered innocently, indeed that he has made of his very life a sin offering for the misdeeds of others (vs. 10). It is utter humiliation and defeat. But just when the Servant has laid himself down to the death, God announces the victory. The Servant will be highly exalted (vs. 12); he will be satisfied to know that his sacrifice has borne fruit (vs. 11); he will be permitted to see his "offspring" (vs. 10)--the numerous progeny he has begotten into the Kingdom. The victory of the Servant lies beyond suffering. Indeed the discharge of his

³⁸Ibid., p. 34.

mission is impossible without suffering, for suffering is the means by which that mission is to be accomplished.³⁹

Oscar Cullmann also picks out the emphasis on suffering. He states,

The most important essential characteristic of the ebed Yahweh in these texts is that his vicarious representation is accomplished in suffering. The ebed is the suffering Servant of God. Through suffering he takes the place of many who should suffer instead of him.⁴⁰

Summary observations on the theological usage. With these thoughts in mind we can observe the following things in the concept of servanthood.

First, the servant is obedient and willing to suffer in the place of others even to the point of death without ever uttering a complaint.

Secondly, there is a grave seriousness about his mission or calling. He is to bring justice, truth, light, and salvation not only to Israel but to all nations.

Thirdly, the servant never has a fatalistic, discouraged or complaining outlook, rather there seems to be a looking to the future at which time he will see the fruits of his labor and be in his rightful place.

Finally, the outward appearance is no basis for judging the worthiness of quality of a servant of God, rather humility and obedience are the essential factors.

³⁹Bright, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

⁴⁰Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 55.

CONCLUSIONS OF OLD TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

At the end of each section several observations were made with reference to characteristics of servants or of the servant relationship, each with a focus on bringing out some principle which may be applied to those who would be servants of God.

In summarizing these observations, we might say that a servant of God is one who has entered the relationship of belonging to Him. The relationship is established by God in love and justice and the servant responds in love, but also in humility and obedience. The reason that the relationship is just is that God has paid the price for His servants. This relationship supersedes all others and demands total and complete loyalty and faithfulness in spite of trials. The servant is given specific missions and tasks, which include the following: acting as the representative of God in His dealings with men, relating God's message to men, and showing God's compassion to men to the extent of partaking in their suffering, even to the point of death. In return however, the servant has claim upon the Lord for protection and can be confident that faithful service will bring lasting rewards. Finally, it is not necessarily those who are best qualified by the world's standards that God chooses to use, but those who are completely yielded and dedicated to Him. The servant's sole desire is to serve his Lord. In the words of that familiar chorus,

To be used of God, to sing, to preach, to pray;
 To be used of God, to show someone the way.
 I long so much to feel the touch of Thy consuming fire;
 To be used of God is my desire!

This is the servant's prayer.

REVIEW OF GREEK TERMS

As in the Hebrew, there are several Greek words which may be used to refer to service or servanthood in varying degrees and in various situations. The first such term is *θεραπεύω*, "serve, be a servant". It is used in Acts 17:25 to talk about serving God with human hands. But more generally it is translated "care for, wait upon, treat (medically), heal, restore."⁴¹ This term emphasizes willingness for service and the respect and concern expressed by it.⁴²

Another term is *λατρεύω* which is generally translated "to serve," in a religious sense. Thus it can mean "worship," and it may include within the context an indication of the manner in which we are to serve or worship (cf. II Timothy 1:3; Hebrews 12:28; Romans 1:9; Acts 26:7; Luke 2:37; etc.).⁴³

λειτουργέω generally means "to perform a public service" or "office" and was used to refer to the service of the

⁴¹William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 357.

⁴²Herman W. Beyer, "*διακονέω*," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), p. 81.

⁴³Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 468.

priests at the altar (cf. Hebrews 10:11).⁴⁴ It may also refer to the many things the religious man does to serve God (cf. Acts 13:2). It may allude also to service in general to the church (cf. Romans 15:27).⁴⁵

The term *μίσθιος* is used to refer to a "day laborer" or a "hired man" (cf. Luke 15:17,19,21). The focus seems to be on the wages or rewards.⁴⁶

The term *ὑπηρέτης* carries the meaning of "servant, helper" or "assistant". It is used to refer to the court officers of the Sanhedrin (cf. Mark 14:54, etc.), a synagogue attendant (cf. Luke 4:20), and apostles as servants of Christ (Acts 26:16; I Corinthians 4:1). They are called ministers of the word (Luke 1:2).⁴⁷

This study will focus on the two most frequent terms used for servant or slave, *δίακονος* and *δοῦλος*, along with the term *παῖς* which is not used often in the New Testament, but which is important because of its usage in the Septuigint (LXX) as the Greek translation for *עַבְדִּי* in relationship to many of the *הוֹדִי עַבְדִּי* passages which are rendered *παῖς* (*τὸ ὁ Θεοῦ*).

MAJOR GREEK TERM NO. 1--*παῖς*

Of the three Greek terms relevant for this study

⁴⁴Beyer, op. cit., p. 81.

⁴⁵Arndt and Gingrich, op. cit., p. 472.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 525. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 850.

παῖς is the least common in the New Testament. It may be translated either "child, boy, girl, youth" or "servant".⁴⁸ It appears in a quote from Isaiah 42:1 from the LXX in Matthew 12:18 and is used to show the prophetic fulfillment of the Servant of God of Isaiah in the person of Jesus Christ. Several other passages show the influence of the LXX upon the apostles as Peter refers to Jesus as παῖς in his sermon in Acts 3. The prayer for boldness in Acts 4 also refers to Jesus as παῖς. Jesus is also called παῖς in Luke 2:43, but the context clearly shows that it is in reference to his boyhood rather than His servanthood.

παῖς has a secular usage meaning "servant" apart from its religious messianic implications stemming from the LXX (cf. Matthew 8:6 ff.; 14:2; Luke 12:45; 15:26), but apart from its theological importance it is not as significant as the other two terms.

MAJOR GREEK TERM NO. 2--διάκονος

Secular Usage

The basic meaning of the verb form διακονέω has the rather technical sense of "to wait on someone at table" or more generally, "to serve, care for" or "help" someone.⁴⁹

Distinct from all the other Greek terms already mentioned,

has the special quality of indicating very personally the service rendered to another. It is closest in

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 609-610. ⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 183-184.

meaning to ὑπηρετέω, but "in διακονέω there is a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love."⁵⁰ Carrying the rather comprehensive meaning "to serve", it is often used to refer to the work of women in the sense of "to provide, care for."

As such in Greek eyes it was not very dignified. Ruling and not serving is proper to a man. . . . The formula of the sophist: "How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?" expresses the basic Greek attitude. . . . For the Greek, the goal of human life is the perfect development of individual personality. This determines the nature of service to others. Logically, the sophist argues, a real man should simply serve his own desires with boldness and cleverness.⁵¹

The Greeks do see the importance of service rendered to the state in positions of public office and leadership in which the statesman is expected to rule not for the sake of his own desires, but for the good of the citizens. While this demands certain renunciations on the part of the statesman, it does not entail any true emptying of self for the sake of others. "Service is not one of the powers which hold heaven and earth together, and it does not lead to sacrifice."⁵² Thus for the Greek in the freedom and wisdom which he idealized, there can certainly be no question of existing to serve others.

It should also be noted that with the Greek and Roman empires many of the slaves were prisoners of war who were forced to enter a new culture.

It is always said that the Graeco-Roman system was less humane than that of the earlier New East because

⁵⁰Beyer, op. cit., p. 81.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 82. ⁵²Ibid.

of the cultural remoteness of the slave to his new home.⁵³

Judaism, however, stands in sharp contrast to the Greek way of thinking about service and has a deeper understanding of what it means to serve. There is nothing essentially unworthy in serving in the Eastern mind. "The relation of a servant to his master is accepted, especially when he serves a great master. This is supremely true of the relation of man to God."⁵⁴ Due to the close relationship between the religious and secular usages, the observations will be summarized at the end of the study of this term.

Religious Usage

The commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18), included full readiness for and commitment to service of one's neighbor. However, later Judaism, under the influence of Pharisaism, tended to obscure this commitment in three ways: (1) by dissolving the unconditional command of love and service to one's neighbor, by distinguishing between a righteous and unrighteous neighbor; (2) by developing the idea that service is less a sacrifice for others and more a work of merit before God; and (3) by bringing about the idea that it was wrong to serve an unworthy man.⁵⁵

⁵³Rupprecht, op. cit., p. 626.

⁵⁴Beyer, op. cit., p. 83. ⁵⁵Ibid.

New Testament Usage

Within the New Testament we can see that Christ reacts against the tendencies of the Pharisees to obscure the Old Testament commandment of love for neighbor, and deepens it by associating it with the love of God.

Jesus' view of service grows out of the OT command of love for one's neighbour, which He takes and links with the command of love for God to constitute the substance of the divinely willed ethical conduct of His followers. In so doing, He purifies the concept of service from the distortions which it had suffered in Judaism. Jesus' attitude to service is completely new as compared with the Greek understanding. The decisive point is that He sees in it the thing which makes a man His disciple.⁵⁶

Even in the New Testament, this term still is used many times in the technical sense of "waiting at table" (cf. Luke 17:8). However, there appears to be a new twist in regards to the position of servants in relation to the master in the Christian relationship. In Luke 12:37 Jesus uses vigilant servants to illustrate preparedness and brings out that their reward for vigilance will be that their master will wait upon them as they recline at table. In Luke 22:26 ff. Jesus raises the question, "Who is greater, the one who reclines at table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table?" In the Greek mind the answer is obvious, the one who is served is the greater. Christ does not argue, but merely affirms that He is among them as one who serves. Thus the uncontested leader of the disciples,

⁵⁶Beyer, op. cit., p. 84.

. . . is not merely bringing about a radical change in the academic estimation of human existence and action; He is instituting in fact a new pattern of human relationships.⁵⁷

Within the context of the New Testament the term comes to have a fuller sense in referring to active Christian love for one's neighbor and because of this it becomes the mark of true discipleship to the Lord Jesus. With the servant relationship a Lord or master is presupposed, not one with whom I may order the relationship as I please, but rather a Lord under whom I place myself as a servant. This relationship is directly opposed to all that the rulers and great ones who exercise authority over the nations of this world would champion, but yet it is commanded by the one who exemplified it and whose followers we are (Mark 10:43-45). A significant observation is made by Beyer:

The aim of Jesus and His disciples is not to set up human orders in this world. Their concern is with the kingdom of God and the age of glory. But the way to this goal leads through suffering and death. This determines at once the attitude of all whom God calls to His kingdom. The point of suffering is to be found in the service therein accomplished. This makes it sacrificial. For the Christian, then, there is only one way to greatness. He must become the servant (διδάκονος ὑμῶν), indeed, the slave of all (πάντων δοῦλος).⁵⁸

Another usage of the term διακονεῖν is in reference to the use of a gift or gifts which God entrusted to individuals for the building up of the church and ministry to the community of believers. In I Peter 4:10, this fact is mentioned and each is encouraged to be a good steward of the manifold gifts of

⁵⁷Ibid. ⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 85-86.

God. The exercise of these gifts are to be through the power of God and for His glory alone. Thus while the servant serves, it is by God's power and for God's glory. There can be no thought of religious pride or meritorious righteousness due to works. An important concept must be realized, in that the person who is serving for the edification of the community is serving not only his brothers, but also Christ, in whatever form of ministry he performs (cf. I Corinthians 12:4 ff.).

In this sense even the preaching of the gospel may be described as a service rendered to the community for it is referred to as a ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). The service of the preacher in the ministry of the Word is to offer the spiritual bread of life with a view to the salvation of his brethren by proclaiming the Word of reconciliation, even as others served in a physical sense by waiting tables and providing physical food and care for the community.

The noun form, δακκος, developed a rather technical usage. Not only did it refer to one who waited at tables or a servant of a master, but also came to refer to a specific office in the church, that of a deacon. The office of deacon was one which involved specifically administration and practical service. This office is closely associated with the office of bishop and has many similar requirements for those who would hold such an office (I Timothy 3).

Observations

From the religious and secular usages of this term we may draw together some important observations about servanthood.

First, service toward God is essentially linked with service to His people and their needs. The commands to love God and one's neighbor are both based on the same attitude toward the relationship: love which makes itself known in service.

Second, we are given a lofty example by which to pattern our lives, even Christ, the one who came not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.

Third, the attitude of service which is set up as the ideal for the Christian, stands in sharp contrast to the Greek and Roman view of what is to be desired for a good life.

Fourth, the servant is many times called upon to do the mundane type of humiliating service, and yet his status is regulated not by the task, but by the status of his master. Thus if he has a prestigious master, he will hold a place of importance in relation to others.

Fifthly, the servant is generally called upon to do what he does best and to do it to the best of his ability for the sake and glory of his master and the betterment of his household.

At times this service takes on administrative and leadership type of responsibilities which require special requirements in regard to life style and personal traits such as honesty, discretion, and a good background or record.

MAJOR GREEK TERM NO. 3--δοῦλος

Secular Usage

All of the words stemming from this root either describe the status of a slave or an attitude corresponding to that of a slave. In distinction from the other terms already mentioned, the emphasis in this term is always on "serving as a slave". This service is not a matter of choice; the slave must perform whether he likes to or not. He is subject as a slave to the will of his owner and is totally dependent on his lord.

As was already noted, the distinctive feature of Greek thought is freedom based on self-awareness. Dignity is found in freedom. Thus δουλεύειν stands out in even sharper contrast to Greek thought than did διακονεῖν. In διακονεῖν it is at least a service based on love and thus the servant to some extent has exercised some choice in the relationship. Whereas, in δουλεύειν the slave gives up human autonomy and an alien will takes precedence over one's own will. This life style was repudiated because the slave had no possibility of evading the tasks laid on him by his master and he had no right of personal choice. The concept of slavery was the antithesis of freedom or autonomy which the Greeks idealized, just as ignorance was the opposite of wisdom. The one who lacks wisdom is considered a slave no matter what his social status might be. Within the original Greek usage of this term there was no connection with religion. However, as the

religions of the Orient pressed westward, the term acquired significance in the religious vocabulary of the Greeks but its usage in that sphere was extremely limited.⁵⁹

Religious Usage

In the Greek Bible, *δοῦλος* has to a great extent crowded out the usages of the other terms which are somewhat synonymous. Generally when there is reference to service, it is expressed by a word stemming from this particular group. The term is thus freed from the restriction placed on it by non-biblical Greek, to the service rendered by slaves. It is almost always used to translate terms from the root *דָּבַע* and its derivatives. From the close association with *דָּבַע* in the LXX and Greek Judaism we may see that generally it refers to the slave and his status and situation. The major exception to this is the translation of *יהוה דָּבַע* as *παῖς θεοῦ* rather than *δοῦλος θεοῦ*. It is felt that *παῖς* has reference to slaves in the sense of those who from the first stand at the disposal of another.

. . . when *παῖς* is used for *דָּבַע* in the sense of slave it denotes a natural relationship which cannot be materially contested, whereas when *δοῦλος* is used the primary thought is that of the illegality and essential unreason of the service rendered.⁶⁰

Thus it becomes apparent that the translator in his

⁵⁹Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "*δοῦλος* . . .," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 261-265.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 266.

use of $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma \Theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ in Isaiah does not view the service of יְהוָה עֲבָד within the framework of a relationship which is established for the sole purpose of service, but rather service is rendered because he is a part of the house of God; he is both son and servant.

This term is often used to describe the king-subject relationship within the ancient Orient despotic monarchies. In this sense, service or obedience is not often in the form of forced behavior, as it is in obedience to certain restrictions. In the Ancient East, the king is always regarded as the absolute ruler of his subjects. It is essential to understand though that this term is employed only by the subjects or subordinates of a ruler to refer to themselves or to others of similar position. The ruler himself never describes his subjects using this term or relationship.

Another important usage is the ceremonial usage in which this relationship is adopted into the language of worship.

The climax of the historical development is reached when the group comes to describe the relationship of dependence and service in which man stands to God.⁶¹

It is in this usage where the Jewish and Oriental ideal enters into sharpest contrast and possible antithesis to that of the Greek and Hellenistic world. The Greeks felt themselves sons of the gods. To be servants of the gods did not quite appeal to them, perhaps because their gods were

⁶¹Ibid., p. 267.

themselves finite, limited and fallible, and also subjects of fate.

In the LXX δουλεύειν is the most common term for service of God, not in the sense of an isolated act, but that of total commitment to the Godhead.⁶²

Just as in the Hebrew term עַבְדָּה, δοῦλος always implies the exclusive nature of the relationship. The phrase δουλεύειν τῷ κυρίῳ (Psalm 2:11; 99:2; 101:22) is used to refer to the righteous in Israel and expresses their religious awareness in distinction from the ungodly. The men in Israel's history who have satisfied the divine claim on their lives are given the title δοῦλοι (cf. Moses, Joshus 14:7; Joshua, Joshua 24:29, Judges 2:8; Abraham, Psalm 104:42; David, Psalm 88:3; the prophets, II Kings 17:23, etc.). ". . . any other attitude towards God than that of δουλεύειν implies disobedience and betrayal of His cause."⁶³

Other Semitic peoples, as well as the Egyptians, also expressed the attitude of man toward the divine as being one of service. The way they conceived of God was as unconditional majesty and absolutely supreme to man. The deity was Lord and all who worshipped him were his servants.

New Testament Usages

In the New Testament the term δοῦλος carries essentially three usages: (1) it is used in the secular sense, (2) it is used to refer to Christians as slaves to God and to

⁶²Ibid. ⁶³Ibid., p. 268.

Christ, and (3) it is used to refer to Christ as $\delta\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$.

Secular. The most common references to the secular type of relationship are found in the epistles in which either slaves are exhorted to obey their masters or masters are exhorted to be kind to their slaves (cf. Colossians 3:22 ff.; 4:1; Ephesians 6:8 f.; etc.). The New Testament usage lies within the framework of the culture of the times. It does not introduce any new ideas in the secular relationship which are revolutionary or isolated from the general usage in society.

The term serves to denote,

. . . a relation of absolute dependence in which the total commitment of the $\delta\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ on the one side corresponds to the total claim of the $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ on the other, being adequately grounded in the mere existence of the $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ and not needing any particular religious or moral justification beyond this legal basis.⁶⁴

Thus it follows even in the New Testament that the slave is the classical picture of bondage and limitation. However, he is never despised or rejected simply because he is a slave, as he was in the Greek culture and even in the Jewish culture by this time.

Slaves were accepted in the Christian community. It was recognized that in the last analysis it made no difference whether a person was a slave or free (I Corinthians 7:21). The rule of life of the community was love which was based on the truth that each member of the community stood in the same relationship to Christ and were united on the same level in

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 270.

Him. For the slave who had become a Christian, the primary goal must not be the attainment of freedom, although he should take it if he gets the chance, rather it is that as a slave he should live unto the Lord like all the others for whom He had died were doing (II Corinthians 5:15; Romans 14:7 ff; etc.).⁶⁵

Christians as δοῦλοι of God and Christ. In the New Testament the formula δοῦλος Θεοῦ is used very seldom in regards to Christians. Most often it is used as a Christological reference or in connection with Old Testament personages or quotes from the Old Testament. Two exceptions to this are found in Titus 1:1 and James 1:1 where the respective authors refer to themselves as slaves of God. (Paul's usual formula is to refer to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ.) In these two letters it may have been used to form an association in the reader's mind with the Old Testament figures referred to as servants of God, thus to add authority to the writing based on the absolute commitment of the writer to God. This came to be used more in the early church writings than in the New Testament.

In the New Testament itself, Christians are more often referred to as belonging to Jesus as His δοῦλοι. Their lives are offered to Him in total commitment as the rightful and exalted Lord who has rescued them from bondage to sin. Men are assumed to be slaves to sin before they become believers, due to the fact that δουλεία implies obedience to the will of

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 272.

another. Those who are not believers are bound to sin, they are slaves to it, lacking the will to reject its lordship.

The connexion of those liberated from the δουλεία of the world, sin and death to the One who has liberated them links up with the occasional use of the term for commitment to God. . . . the goal of the redemption . . . is obedience rather than autonomy. When Christ undertakes the work of redemption, He makes the redeemed His own possession, giving them directions and goals by which to shape their lives. This commitment is expressed linguistically by calling those who are thus obligated to Christ His δοῦλοι.⁶⁶

The new state of the Christian who is a slave of Christ is fulfilled in righteousness (Romans 6:19), holiness (I Thessalonians 3:13), in newness of life (Romans 6:4 ff.), in love and in self-sacrifice, all of which are implicit in fellowship with Christ. It is especially clear that there is no means for an orderly relationship with God, or service pleasing to Him, apart from unconditional commitment to Him. Whenever the New Testament makes reference to the δουλεύειν type of relationship between Christians and Christ, there is implied both a confession of what has taken place--Christ has redeemed us for Himself--as well as a readiness to accept the consequences of this relationship on the most personal level. Man can only know freedom as he is bound to Christ. It is this relationship which is truly fulfilling. But it is also clear that fellowship with Him implies doing as He commands. If obedience is withheld, then the fellowship is broken. For

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 275.

the slave is in rebellion.

Christ as slave. A key passage for this is found in John 13:1 ff. Perhaps a few things should be brought out regarding the slave relationship and Christ. In this episode, the washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus makes it clear to His disciples that His office consists in His acting as a slave, rather than in striving for glory and power.

He displayed to them the degree of condescension and self-sacrifice which His office entailed. In view of His majesty, only the symbolic position of the slave was adequate to open their eyes and to keep them from illusions in respect to His office.⁶⁷

Foot washing was a duty of a slave, generally a non-Jewish slave at that. Jesus puts Himself in a position of a very low class of slave who would unthinkingly submit Himself to perform His duty.

A second key passage is found in Philippians 2:5 ff. This passage will be covered in greater depth in Chapter Four, but some important comments may be made now. The fact which stands out in this passage is the utter contrast of who Christ was and what He became. Though He was God with glory and power, He took the form of a slave with humility and obedience. Morna Hooker notes that this passage appears to be a succinct summary of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and that the sequence of humiliation and exaltation shows similarity to the development of Isaiah 52 and 53.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 277.

⁶⁸Morna D. Hooker, Jesus and the Servant (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), p. 121.

Observations

The term δοῦλος is used generally in the same types of relationship as δαῖκονος, but with greater stress laid on the subjection of the slave to his master without any personal rights of his own. The following observations may be made.

First, whereas in the Greek mind, δαῖκονος was looked down on in most instances, there were instances in which it was proper (e.g., service to the state). However, with the term δοῦλος there are no such instances. This type of service with utter abandonment of personal choice and autonomy is totally unacceptable. It may be observed that much the same attitude may be seen in today's society, even as was mentioned in the introductory section of this study.

Second, the slave is totally and completely at the mercy and direction of his master. He has no personal choice. Any disobedience is outright rebellion.

Third, in its use in relation to the man-God relationship it denotes total and complete subjection to God and commitment of life to serve Him in whatever way He might require. He is Lord both as a majesty to be worshiped and as a master to be obeyed.

Fourth, as Redeemer He has claims upon us as slaves for He has paid the redemption price. Once we were in bondage to sin, but now we have been redeemed and belong to Him. There is no middle ground. Service to two masters is excluded (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). It is an exclusive relationship.

Fifth, no matter what a person's social status we all stand before God as equals; we all belong to Him and ought to serve Him. The rich are not excused because of their wealth, nor are the poor excused because of their humble means.

Finally, we have a perfect example of what such servanthood means and what it entails in the life of Jesus Christ. As servant He was humble, obedient, righteous and holy, and He showed what true love was: giving of self for others to the point of personal sacrifice.

Chapter 3

DISCUSSION OF SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES

WHICH SHED LIGHT ON THE CONCEPT OF

SERVANTHOOD USING עֶבֶד

IN THEIR TEXT

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the focus will be upon servanthood as a pattern rather than the direct exhortation to Christians to be servants. This stems from the fact that most exhortations to be servants in the Old Testament are specifically addressed to Israel as a nation or to specific individuals. One must be careful in ascribing such specific commands in the Old Testament to Christians today.

Three Old Testament passages will be discussed, which will show some of the key aspects of the servant-master relationship. The three passages which will be studied are Exodus 21:1-6, Psalm 86, and Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Each of these passages have been selected to be representative of the three types of relationships found in the Old Testament: secular (man to man), religious (man to God), and theological (the Suffering Servant of the Lord). Each passage comes from a different section of the Old Testament: the Pentateuch or Law (Exodus 21:1-6), the prophets (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), and

the writings (Psalm 86). Each seems to be fairly representative of the different types of usages as found in the historical, prophetic and poetic writings respectively.

EXODUS 21:1-6

Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them. If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years; but on the seventh he shall go out as a free man without payment. If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife, and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master, and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, "I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man," then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door of the doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently. (N. A. S. B.)

The first thing which must be noted in this exposition is the context. This paragraph is a judgment or an ordinance given by God to the Hebrew people. It follows the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), and is the first of a series of laws governing social relationships. It must also be noted that this ordinance only has reference to Hebrew slaves, not to foreign slaves. This is important, for the foreign slave was a permanent acquisition and need never be set free (cf. Leviticus 25:45-46).

Hebrews became slaves in a number of different ways. Those in extreme poverty might sell their freedom for a sum of money (Leviticus 25:39). A father might sell his children into slavery (Exodus 21:7). If a person owed a debt which he could not pay, he or his family became slaves of his creditors (cf. Leviticus 25:47 ff.). To sum up, it appears that the most

usual cause for Hebrew to become enslaved was due to financial or economic distress of one sort or another. As a slave he served out of a sense of duty. The master had paid a price for him and thus the slave owed him service.

However, there was a protective clause for the slave in the contract. In dire circumstances he need not worry about making a rash decision which might have life long implications. His period of service was to last only six years at the longest. At the end of this period he was to go out a free man. All the property and family which had belonged to him prior to his period of service was to be returned to him (cf. Leviticus 25:38 ff.).¹ In Deuteronomy 15:12 ff. we can see that the owner was also to furnish the former slave with all the provisions to support himself until he again became self-sufficient. There are also injunctions to the owner of the slave to be a good master. The slave is not to be taken advantage of or forced to serve as a common slave, but rather given work with the dignity of a hired man (cf. Leviticus 25:39 f.).

If the slave had a good master who had provided him with a family and an abundant life beyond what he had experienced when he was free or what he could expect when he regained his freedom, the slave could make a choice to remain with his master as a slave. There appears to be a sort of ritualistic ceremony performed. The slave must clearly express

¹There is some debate however, as to whether this refers to the year of jubilee rather than the sabbath year.

his love for his master and the things which his master had given him and affirm that he would not go free (cf. Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:16). Then the master would take him to God, or to the judges who act in God's name.² They witness the transaction. The master then bores the ear of the slave to the doorpost of his house with an awl. Several commentators feel that this act is symbolic of the binding of the slave to the household of the master as well as the willingness on the part of the slave to listen to and obey the master.³

Following this ceremony, the slave becomes a slave forever. He is marked for life and is bound to his master as long as he lives. But his obedience is pledged and his service is performed out of love. No longer is he the poor man who sold himself as a slave with no other choice. No longer does he serve out of a sense of duty because of the price paid for him. Rather he has voluntarily bound himself as a slave, serving out of love for his master because his master is a good master and has provided an abundant life for him, complete with family. He no longer needs to fear the uncertainties of life for he knows that his master will take care of him. He devotes himself wholly and completely to his master and to his service.

This passage teaches a very important lesson as to the

²The Hebrew phrase may be translated either way.

³A. F. Harper (ed.), Beacon Bible Commentary, I (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1967), p. 251; also Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible, A Commentary and Critical Notes, Vol. I, Genesis to Deuteronomy (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942), p. 410.

place of love in the slave-master relationship. The relationship began as a legal agreement, whereby the slave was bound to serve his master out of obligation. But as it progressed, the slave saw that his life with his master brought him joy, love and prosperity. The master provided all of his needs, including a wife. These were things that he had not experienced in his life prior to becoming a slave and should he leave he was expected to give them up. Seeing the goodness and generosity of his master he was influenced to forfeit his own personal freedom of choice and submit himself totally to his master, no longer out of a sense of duty, but out of a heart of love and thanksgiving.

To some extent this illustrates the development of devotion within the life of a Christian. When one first accepts Christ as Savior and Lord, the focus of the repentant sinner's attention is usually upon the price that Christ paid to buy him out of bondage to sin. He begins to serve Christ because he appreciates what Christ has done for him. Although there is a true appreciation and devotion, it is based somewhat on a sense of duty or obligation to try to pay Christ back by service. The person sees Christ's death for his sins and thinks, "If He died for me then I owe Him all of my life and service no matter what it costs." After living the Christian life, however, he finds that God is a good Master. The blessings He bestows far outweigh the cost. He provides an abundant overflowing life for those who are committed to Him and serve Him. He provides all their needs and gives them

blessings beyond anything they had previously experienced. As the Christian life progresses, love grows. Service comes not so much out of a sense of duty, although we still owe Him our service, but more out of a love relationship that has been established.

Clement of Alexandria also pictures the ideal Christian life as a graduated discipline of two stages.

The lower preliminary way is the life of plain and simple faith, wherein the Christian follows the discipline of the church out of hope of reward and fear of punishment without understanding the higher reasons for his actions. Here he is a good docile, law-abiding believer. In a sense this is life under the Law, where the Christian carefully abstains from moral evils, and cultivates personal holiness. The higher way is the life which moves out of the negative discipline of the first stage to the higher plateau of love and knowledge of God.⁴

While it is important not to draw the analogy of the secular relationship between slave and master and the relationship of the Christian to God too far, this passage shows the important place of mutual love if it is to be an ideal relationship.

PSALM 86

A Prayer of David

- Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and answer me;
 For I am afflicted and needy.
 2 Do preserve my soul, for I am a godly man;
 O Thou my God, save Thy servant who trusts in Thee.
 3 Be gracious to me, O Lord,
 For to Thee I cry all day long.
 4 Make glad the soul of Thy servant,

⁴Waldo Beach and H. Richard Niebuhr, Christian Ethics (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1955), pp. 75-76.

- For to Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 5 For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Thee.
- 6 Give ear, O Lord to my prayer;
And give heed to the voice of my supplications!
- 7 In the day of my trouble I shall call upon Thee,
For Thou wilt answer me.
- 8 There is no one like Thee among the gods, O Lord;
Nor are there any works like Thine.
- 9 All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship
before Thee, O Lord;
And they shall glorify Thy name.
- 10 For Thou art great and doest wondrous deeds;
Thou alone art God.
- 11 Teach me Thy way, O Lord;
I will walk in Thy truth;
Unite my heart to fear Thy name.
- 12 I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with all
my heart,
And will glorify Thy name forever.
- 13 For Thy lovingkindness toward me is great,
And Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
- 14 O God, arrogant men have risen up against me,
And a band of violent men have sought my life,
And they have not set Thee before them.
- 15 But Thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.
- 16 Turn to me, and be gracious to me;
Oh grant Thy strength to Thy servant,
And save the son of Thy handmaid.
- 17 Show me a sign for good,
That those who hate me may see it, and be ashamed,
Because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and comforted me.
(N. A. S. B.)

This particular psalm was selected for study for a number of reasons. First, it uses the self-referent, "Thy servant" (אֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ) three times. Thus it illustrates the religious relationship of man to God. "Thy servant" is the humble pious worshipper who comes into the presence of his God (cf. p. 21 above). Secondly, this psalm seems to be fairly representative and characteristic of the psalms which use this term. Indeed many of the phrases and concepts are very

reminiscent of other psalms. This is so true that many commentators claim this is not a psalm of David as it claims, but rather the product of an editor who was very familiar with Davidic psalms who borrowed phrases from here and there and drew them into a unified prayer of a godly man.⁵ This type of higher critical analysis does injustice to the unity which the psalm exemplifies in its purpose and to the claim of Scripture itself. It is a petition to God for help in time of distress and need. Although it does show a great deal of similarity to phrases in other psalms, could this not show the patterns in which the same mind tended to think when calling upon his God for help?

For this study the key will be to understand this petition as a pattern for those who are servants of God as they approach Him to let their needs be known and ask for help. It will be divided into four sections: the character of the man, the character of his God, the character of the petition, and the character of the relationship.

The Character of the Man

The first thing to be noted about the person making this petition is that he realizes his need and voices it to his God. In verse 1 he refers to himself as afflicted and needy. In verse 6 he asks God to give heed to the voice of his

⁵C. A. Briggs, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary On The Book of Psalms (ICC), Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 235.

supplications. This type of calling out for help seems to be rather characteristic of men in general.

When a man is in trouble, his mind is apt to revolve about three propositions: he will first consider his condition and how it came about; then he will inquire the nature and extent of the help that is available; finally, he will put one and two together in an effort to secure the right help for his already determined condition.⁶

The specific problem is not voiced until verse 14, but throughout there are more general references to the need for salvation as well as more personal needs which the psalmist feels. He asks God to make his soul glad in verse 4, to teach him His way, and to unite his heart in verse 11. Thus we can see that not only does the petitioner feel endangered by the arrogant men which have risen up against him (v. 14) and who hate him (v. 17), but this situation has caused him to be sad of soul and somewhat confused and divided in mind as to a solution. In spite of the seeming confusion as to the solution, there is no doubt as to who holds that solution. Thus even with the expression of need, there is confident trust that God will supply the solution to the particular problem as well as personal peace of mind.

The second thing which we note about this man is that he classifies himself as a godly man or a saint (תָּזִק, v. 2).

At first our friend's claim that he was a godly man sounds presumptuous. This is because in our times there

⁶Edwin McNeill Poteat, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. IV, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 463.

is a sort of diffidence about using such a claim with reference to others, and a recoil from using it about ourselves. Such was not the case with this man. The term was used generally to denote those who acknowledged and worshiped God, and specifically to indicate a particular body of devout persons in the community. . . . Our poet represents a very high plane of genuine piety. Understanding thus his use of the descriptive adjective, we are in a position to distill from his prayer the essence of devotional excellence.⁷

This godly man is one who shows loyal love for God and makes it known through trust in God and faithfulness to Him. In verses 11 and 12 we can see that he makes several promises to God which claim that he will show his loyalty and love to Him. He claims that he will walk in the truth of God. The term used here for truth (𐌲𐌹𐌸𐌰) may also be translated faithfulness. By this promise the pious petitioner claims that he will conduct his life in the truth and faithfulness of God. He promises to give thanks to God with all his heart and to glorify His name for all time. The fact that he classifies himself as a saint and a servant of God would seem to indicate that he has already been doing these things. It is because he is a godly man and a servant of God that he even dares to voice his need and call upon God for help. Indeed,

It is the paradox of saintliness that the higher the level of spiritual sensitiveness, the greater the feeling of spiritual need or even of failure. This is why the saint can assert his trust and yet cry for help, can claim godliness and yet seek to learn the ways of God. There is no inconsistency here. It is the man who claims godliness and disavows spiritual needs who proves himself a fraud. Thus our poet proposes to deal by ever-extending knowledge of God with the problem that is inside him.⁸

⁷Ibid., p. 467. ⁸Ibid.

Finally, the psalmist refers to himself as a servant of God. The sense of this usage has been already mentioned, that it is the humble self-designation of one in the presence of his God. As a servant he has the right to call upon his master for help, based on a relationship which has been established. Further comment will be made concerning this relationship later.

The Character of God

Throughout the psalm the writer stresses God's goodness and lovingkindness. In verse 5 He is good, ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Him. It is important to see here that the writer, in classifying himself as a servant of God, focuses on these aspects of God. Through the entire psalm there is not a single reference to God's justice or wrath upon those who oppose Him. Not even the arrogant men in verse 14 call forth a request for God's justice and righteous indignation from the lips of the writer. Rather God is set in sharp contrast to them. They are called arrogant, violent men who hate the servant of God (v. 17) and have risen up against him, and indeed they have not even respect for God Himself. Yet justice is not called down on them. God is called merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth or faithfulness. He is the complete antithesis to the men who have risen up against His servant. It is because of this that the servant can be sure his God will answer him (v. 7) for He is not like men. His confidence is so great that he even talks about the help

and comfort in the past tense as if it had already taken place (v. 17).

The other important characteristic of God brought out in this psalm is His greatness (v. 10). Compared with all other gods, there is none like Him (v. 8). He stands alone as God (v. 10). All others that are worshiped as gods have no valid claim to His title, nor to the worship which is due Him, for they are but counterfeits. The psalmist goes on to affirm that all nations will in fact come and worship before God and glorify His name (v. 9). As God, His works are in keeping with His greatness (v. 10), and no other god does works like His (v. 8). It is with the greatness of God and His ability to perform wondrous deeds, in the mind of the psalmist that he raises his petition to God.

The Character of the Petition

The psalmist uses four different terms or phrases to refer to his petition. It is a cry which he is raising to God all day long (v. 3), it is a prayer (v. 6), and it is a voice of supplications (v. 6). But perhaps the most unique is the idea of lifting up his soul to the Lord (v. 4).

In this psalm the writer voices several different aspects of the petition which are on his mind. He opens by asking God to bow down His ear to hear him and give him an answer (v. 1). He repeats this request a few sentences later (v. 6), and calls upon God to heed the voice of his supplications. He not only asks God to hear him, but expects an

answer and action from Him.

After invoking God's hearing and willingness to answer and act according to his prayer, the psalmist presents it. He is calling upon God to preserve his soul and to save him (vv. 2,16). This indeed seems to be the main concern of the psalmist around which all the other aspects of his petition revolve. This preservation and salvation has two objectives. One is the immediate danger of the arrogant men who have risen up against him. The other has to do with the spiritual turmoil which this problem has provoked within his own soul.

The requests regarding the spiritual crisis within his soul almost predominate over those concerning actual perseverance from enemies. He asks God to make his soul glad (v. 4), showing the saddened state in which his soul had fallen because of the problem around him. He asks God to teach him His way and promises to walk in that way (v. 11). He here is not asking direction for the confusion brought about by this specific problem, but rather that God would guide him in every aspect of his life and conduct. He asks that God would unite his heart to fear His name (v. 11). He fears he has lost some of the single-mindedness of purpose in his reverence for the name of God. He desires singleness of heart in order that from his innermost being, he might have a reverent attitude towards God's name and for God Himself. This is the kind of heart God wants and the psalmist shows the insight to recognize this as a need.

The petitions for perseverance and salvation regarding the actual problem situation seem to be more general in character and apply to the total crisis experience of the psalmist in this situation. He asks God to be gracious to him (vv. 3,16), to turn to him (v. 16), to grant him strength (v. 16), and finally to show him a sign (v. 17). It is interesting to note that the psalmist never presumes to tell God how he feels the situation should be handled. Yet there seems to be a quiet, unvoiced hope that God will deal with characteristic mercy even upon those who have no respect for Him, that perhaps they might too come into a proper relationship to Him, and thus solve the problem graciously rather than with wrath.

A heart that is made at peace with itself by the fear of God, and has but one dominant purpose and desire, will long for God's mercies, not only because they have a bearing on its own outward well-being, but because they will demonstrate that it is no vain thing to wait on the Lord, and may lead some, who cherished enmity to God's servant and alienation from Himself, to learn the sweetness of His Name and the security of trust in Him.⁹

The Character of the Relationship

The stated relationship is that of servant to Master. It is interesting to note that the servant partakes of the same type of character as the Master. He refers to himself as a godly man ($\text{Ṭ} \text{Ṭ} \text{Ṭ}$) while God is continually referred to as being abundant in lovingkindness ($\text{Ṭ} \text{Ṭ} \text{Ṭ}$) (vv. 5,13,15).

⁹Alexander Maclaren, The Expositor's Bible, The Psalms Vol. I, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1905), p. 469.

The two terms are from the same root and have the same kind of implications regarding character. It seems that the servant is influenced by his Master and becomes more and more like Him. Like his Master he too stands in sharp contrast to the arrogant men (v. 14) in his deep humility and submission to his Master.

Within the psalm the writer refers to himself as God's servant three times. Six times he calls God his Lord (יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי). The relationship has been established and it is on the basis of the character of the servant-master relationship that the servant comes and makes his petition before the Lord. Although there are promises made on the part of the psalmist concerning his future conduct (vv. 11,12), the focus is on the fact that this relationship has already been established. He is not saying, "If You help me, I will be Thy servant," but rather, "Since I am Thy servant, help me." He has humbly submitted himself to his God and on that basis brings his request to Him.

The servant humbly bows before his Master in worship and praise and makes his needs known. He is not afraid to come before his Master because he knows that his Master is a good Master, full of lovingkindness and mercy. God is worthy of his praise and one after whom he should pattern his life and attitudes. But beyond this his Master is God Himself, the great God that is above all else. That a man should dare to come into His presence is amazing. Yet to His humble servant, God has made Himself accessible. Indeed the servant is confident

that He will bow down His ear and hear his prayer. Indeed it is only with the humility which is characteristic of the servant relationship that any man dares to approach his God.

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

- 13 Behold, My Servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.
- 14 Just as many were astonished at you, my people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men,
- 15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.
- 1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
- 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him.
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
- 3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face,
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- 4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
- 5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
- 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
- 7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
- 8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living,

For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke
was due?

- 9 His grave was assigned to be with wicked men,
Yet with a rich man is His death;
Although He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

- 10 But the Lord was pleased
to crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his
hand.

- 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

- 12 Therefore I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.
(N. A. S. B.)

As was mentioned previously, there will be no discussion regarding authorship of the Servant Songs of Isaiah nor the identity of the Servant in these Songs since that is beyond the scope of this study. Rather we will deal with this Song specifically in how it adds to our understanding of the servant-master relationship. The study will be divided into four main concerns: the character of the Servant, the character of the Lord, the character of the relationship, and the character of the service rendered. Due to the relatedness of these areas, some overlap is expected.

The Character of the Servant

The term עַבְדִּי, "My Servant" is used twice in this passage of Scripture (52:13; 53:11). As has been already

noted, the key idea of servanthood is that of belonging to a lord or master. This sense is sharply emphasized in the LXX translation of the Hebrew word עַבְד into the Greek term παῖς in the Servant Songs, rather than the more usual translation, δοῦλος . παῖς carries the idea of a more personal relationship; in fact, it may actually be translated "sons". Thus by the time of the translation of the LXX, it was already an accepted concept that the Servant of God in Isaiah was more closely related to God than an ordinary servant. He was a part of the family.

There are several other descriptive titles which the Servant receives. He is the Righteous One (v. 11), who by His knowledge will justify the many by bearing their iniquities. It is on the basis of His righteousness that He is able to justify and bear the iniquities of others. If He were not righteous and if He had iniquities of His own, He would be unable to bear the iniquities of others. His suffering would have been the just reward for His own unrighteousness, and not the vicarious suffering for the transgressions of others. For this reason His personal innocence is affirmed (v. 9). His character is closely tied to his mission. Thus His righteousness is very important.

He is also called a "man of sorrows". This title is more intimately associated with His mission for we find that the sorrows or pains which he bore are in fact our sorrows and pains. Delitzsch notes that he was ". . . a man of sorrow of heart in all its forms, i.e., a man whose chief distinction

was that His life was one of constant painful endurance."¹⁰
 This seems to be one aspect of the Servant which makes Him despised and forsaken by men. They do not recognize Him as bearing their sins but rather see Him as getting the just punishment from God (v. 4).

Several similies are also used to describe the character of the Servant. He is like a tender shoot and a root out of parched ground (v. 2), referring to his humble origins and His lack of stately form or majesty. By the outward appearance, there is nothing which men should desire. He looks like a commoner. "Men so often judge by outward appearances, and miss the best of the blessings God prepares for them. May God teach us to recognize and accept what He offers."¹¹ He is also like a lamb and a sheep (v. 7), referring to His humble, quiet obedience in performing His mission.

There are several other references, along with the one above, to the outward appearance. He was marred more than any man and His form more than any of the sons of men (v. 14). He had no outward majesty of appearance that would draw men to Him (v. 2), in fact his appearance was repelling and some even feel that it refers to leprosy and thus was very repulsive.¹²

¹⁰Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary On The Prophecies of Isaiah (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), p. 314.

¹¹Kenneth E. Jones, The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 138.

¹²Lowell Williamson, "A Study of Isaiah's Use of the Term Servant" (unpublished Master's thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1958), p. 81.

But perhaps the most salient aspect of His character is his humble obedience to His Lord's desires, even to the point of pouring Himself out to death. Although the actual term "obedience" is not mentioned in this passage, we can see that his suffering was according to the Lord's will (v. 10). The Servant was obedient to fulfill that which His Lord desired of Him though it meant His being crushed and put to grief. He obediently suffered, not for Himself, nor for His Lord, but for others because it was His Lord's will. He is the one who obediently serves the needs of others and cares not for His own personal well-being. There is no cry for the justice which would acquit Himself and incriminate others, but rather He goes beyond justice and exemplifies sacrificial love worked out in suffering.

The Character of the Lord

It is important to note here that the Servant relationship, being in essence that of belonging to another, is carried out in this passage through the use of the possessive in relation to the Servant. He is not just a servant, but "My Servant" with the possessive suffix (׀ ׀ ׀ ׀). The Lord or Master then is Yahweh, for it is He who is speaking (cf. 52:5). The focus of the passage is most clearly on the Servant and His ministry; however, there are a few aspects brought out concerning the Lord.

First, He is mentioned in regards to His might (v. 1). The question is raised, "To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" It would appear that the Lord's might and power is

somewhat veiled and not obvious. The question must then be asked, "Why is His power not made more obvious?" The answer seems to be that the Lord's power has come to people in the form of a humble, obedient, suffering Servant who had no hint of majesty in his outward appearance. The idea seems incredulous to men that the great Lord of all creation would make his power and might known through this kind of Servant rather than some glorious, flaming manifestation of power, but that is what He did.

The second aspect of the Lord is that He ordains the service of suffering performed by the Servant (v. 10). It was according to His plan; there was no other means by which the Servant could have pleased His Lord. Though His Servant had done nothing to deserve such suffering, still His Lord submits Him to it. Not without purpose, however. He is to be a guilt offering for others. Again the question, "Why should the Lord do such a thing?" And even as the Servant does not cry out for justice because of His love for others and His Lord, the Lord also has this concern for others. In fact it appears that it is this love that has caused Him to crush His servant and put Him to grief. The Servant is a partaker in this love and willingly joins in the plan. But still the question, "Is there no other way which might be somewhat less radical?" Apparently not. Yahweh was all powerful and all knowing, yet not even He could devise a way to save man from his sins apart from sacrifice to reconcile sinful man with holy God. But there was not an effective nor blameless guilt offering, save

that of His Servant. Thus His love found a way, radical though it might be.

Yahweh is also personally involved in the vicarious suffering, for it is He who causes the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (v. 6). Although it is His Servant who suffers and dies for sinners, it is Yahweh who transfers the burden of sin from sinful man to His sinless Servant. It is He who makes the vicarious suffering efficacious.

Yahweh also rewards the Servant for His obedience. We are told that the Servant will see His offspring, those who benefit from His suffering. His days will be prolonged and the prosperity which was His in the beginning of the passage is once more affirmed (v. 10). Also by the use of the first personal pronoun, Yahweh will allot Him a portion with the great (v. 12).

The Character of the Relationship

As was already noted, the relationship appears to be very close and intimate. Both parties have the same goal, the same desire. This makes obedience easier; if the Servant has the same goals as His Master, there is a bond of love which exudes from the Servant and His Lord which overflows to all people. The Master shows His love for others by sending His Servant to suffer, and then to the Servant by exalting Him to a position of greatness because of His obedience. The Servant shows His love for the Master in willing obedience and His love for others in bearing their sins.

The Character of the Service Rendered

The essence of the Servant's service was His vicarious atonement for the sins of others. He is called a guilt offering (v. 10), reminiscent of the importance of a sacrifice to make atonement for sins. It was He who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (v. 4). It was He who was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. He received the chastening due to us and He was scourged to bring us healing (v. 5). He did all this in quiet humility and then finally he was cut off from the land of the living (v. 8) and poured out Himself to death. Not only does He die for sinners, but he intercedes for sinners. His whole mission was to bear the sins of others and make intercession for them.

Every word stands here as if written beneath the cross on Golgotha. . . . "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)¹³

As has already been noted, the Old Testament usage of the term Servant of God reached its fulfillment in the suffering servant passages of Isaiah.¹⁴ Here in Isaiah 53, we can see exemplified the perfect Servant, one who gives Himself for others because He is obedient to His heavenly Lord and because of the love between them that overflows to others.

¹³Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 340.

¹⁴W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1957), p. 23.

APPLICATION TO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

In this chapter, three key ideas regarding the servant relationship were brought into focus: love, humility, and obedience.

In the Exodus passage we saw that the ideal relationship is built on mutual love. We as Christians have a loving Master. He has paid the price to buy us from bondage to sin. But even more, He provides an abundant life meeting all of our physical and spiritual needs. We do owe Him our service for He has paid a great price for us. But should we continue to see our service to Him as only an obligation due to Him, our service will lose its vitality. However, if we look upon the blessings He provides daily for us as His servants whom He has purchased, we will serve Him out of a higher motivation, because we love Him for His goodness and graciousness.

In Psalm 86 the focus was upon humility as one comes before his Lord and makes his petitions known. In spite of the turmoil and crisis around us which tend to upset us, we can face them with spiritual tranquility when we as servants humbly lift our souls up before our Heavenly Lord and let our petitions be made known to Him. As His servants we have accessibility to the great God of all creation who is in control of every situation. He is not a fire-breathing God of wrath, but one who is slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness to His servant. Thus as we humbly bow before Him, we can be sure that He will hear our prayers and grant us that

which we need both physically and spiritually.

In Isaiah we see a blending of all three of these ideas, but the key focus is on obedience and sacrificial love for others. Obedience to God is many times costly in terms of personal goals and selfish ambition. Too often people focus on the giving up of one's goals and life for God and fail to see the compensation. For what can match the joy of seeing others find forgiveness for sin? What will be able to match that day when those who have joined in His sufferings shall join in His exaltation. Jim Elliot, a missionary who was killed by the very people he was trying to reach with the message of sins forgiven, expressed it as follows: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."¹⁵ It is true that none of us can attain unto the service which Christ rendered on the cross for only He can make atonement for sins. Yet we each have our life to live and to give on behalf of others. We each have our own cross to bear.

CONCLUSION

God continues to work through His servants today even as He worked through His servants in the past. If we learn from them we can see the importance of love, humility and obedience in this relationship. Commitment to be a servant of God means that we belong to Him. We desire His will in our

¹⁵Elisabeth Elliot, Shadow of the Almighty (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 247.

lives, and work towards accomplishing His goals. With this background we will move into a discussion of some selected New Testament passages.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION OF SELECTED NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH SHED LIGHT ON THE CONCEPT OF SERVANTHOOD USING δίακονος AND δοῦλος IN THEIR TEXT

INTRODUCTION

In the New Testament there are many references to servants and service. Jesus used servants many times to illustrate spiritual truths in His stories and parables. In this chapter we will discuss three selected passages from the New Testament which not only show key aspects or characteristics of servanthood, but also give supporting evidence that Christians should consider themselves as servants. The passages which will be considered are Mark 10:42-45, Philippians 2:5-11, and I Peter 2:13-25. These three passages are representative of the servant concept not only in the teaching of Jesus, but as it is developed in the thought of two of His followers, Paul and Peter. There is such a wealth of material on the concept of servanthood in the New Testament that it is impossible to be exhaustive in this study by making comment on each usage of the terms servant or service. These three passages appear to be fairly representative and are the most relevant for this study.

MARK 10:42-45

And calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (N. A. S. B.)

It is this passage which most clearly shows the contrast between those who would be leaders so they could lord it over others, and those who would be leaders so they can serve others. The example of service is Christ, and as His followers we are exhorted to serve others.¹

It is important, first of all, to note the context in which this teaching is found. Jesus and His disciples are heading for Jerusalem (Mark 10:32).² The disciples were somewhat fearful of the consequences of such a trip because they knew the hatred which the Jews had for Jesus and the fact that they were trying to get Him put to death (cf. Mark 3:6). Indeed, if we look ahead, we see that their fears are not ungrounded. This is the last trip Jesus makes to Jerusalem with His disciples. The cross is before Him. It will be only

¹Although some reference may be made to the two parallel accounts found in Matthew 20:25-28 and Luke 22:25-27, the main focus of this study will be limited to the context of this passage in Mark.

²Note: In Luke the setting of this teaching is somewhat different, but the synoptic problem is beyond the scope of this study.

a matter of days until He will bear the weight of the world's sin in His body on the cross. He knows exactly what is waiting for Him in Jerusalem and He plainly and patiently declares the suffering and death that awaits Him there (Mark 10:33-34). The cross was no accident. Jesus clearly knew and understood His mission and not only accepted it but pursued it with a sense of purpose. He has made several references to His coming suffering prior to this time (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:12,31), but the import of His suffering was not understood by the disciples (cf. Mark 9:32) and they did not want to hear about it (Mark 8:32). But Christ was willing to follow God's will though it meant His death on the cross. Here we can see the depth of Christ's self-sacrificing, obedient servant's heart, and the pattern which He establishes for His followers in the passage which follows.

But Christ also makes reference to His coming resurrection and victory over death. It is probably with this victory in mind that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approach Him regarding the possibility of having places of prominence in His coming Kingdom (Mark 10:35-37).³ Indeed they not only wished places of prominence, but the two highest places in the Kingdom. At this point Jesus says, "You don't know what you are asking for." They really do not understand yet what He is trying to teach them. He was trying to teach them about His coming suffering, death and resurrection, and perhaps some of

³Matthew has their mother making the request.

the implications that it might have, and they were wrapped up in their visions of glory. Even as Christ brought the focus back to that which concerned His mission of suffering by asking if they were ready to drink the cup He was about to drink and be baptized with the baptism He faced, it appears that they still did not understand, else they might have been more hesitant to answer so quickly in the affirmative. Jesus finally closes the discussion by simply stating that they will drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism, but that the positions at His right and left are not His to give away (Mark 10:39-40).

But it appears that the other ten disciples have been overhearing the discussion and are not so willing to let the matter drop. They become indignant toward James and John. As one commentator put it,

Here the serpent of jealousy and discord crept into the company. There was the natural resentment that crafty self-seeking always brings. The drive for preferment might be called a number one enemy of the Christian church.⁴

There are several things which call for deep self-searching on the part of each person who is a follower of Christ at this point. First,

It seems quite evident that part, at least, of the disciple's resentment over the private reach James and John made for high places was due to the fact that they wanted the high places for themselves. Their feeling was not purely in moral disapproval of such self-promotion;

⁴Halford E. Luccock, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VII, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), p. 816.

they were angry because they were afraid of being maneuvered out of something they coveted for their own possession. That fear of being outwitted always adds venom to anger at evil.⁵

We too must check out the source of our indignation towards others, to see to what extent these feelings arise from a feeling that we are missing out on what someone else has which either consciously or unconsciously we want for ourselves.

When the Ten heard that James and John had asked for the chief places in the kingdom, they proved, by their indignation, that they also nourished the same ambitious desires which they condemned.⁶

The second thing which calls for self-examination is the attempt to use cunning as a means to self-aggrandizement as an end.

The solemnity of Jesus' warning in the words which follow stresses the viciousness of all such action whenever it may be taken, and for whatever purpose.⁷

This brings us to the key paragraph for this entire study. Jesus called them to Himself to put an end to the strife among them which had arisen due to this contest of prominence.

The Characteristics of Lordship of This World

In His instruction to them He began by stating how it

⁵Ibid.

⁶G. A. Chadwick, The Expositor's Bible, Mark and Luke ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1905), p. 292.

⁷Luccock, loc. cit.

was in the Gentile world. He was not stating something new, but something which they knew and understood. Israel was at that time under the thumb of the Romans. The disciples could see firsthand how it was among the Gentiles. They could look at men like Herod and see the grasping for power which was among those recognized as political rulers. Those who thought of themselves as rulers lorded it over their subjects. They thought of themselves as lords, as masters, and their subjects as their slaves. Their great men exercised authority over the people. They told them what they could and could not do and to a great extent regulated their lives. These were things that the disciples despised in the leaders of the Gentiles who were ruling over their nation. They would have agreed with Christ in saying that this is not the way it ought to be. But this is the exact way in which they themselves were reacting. They would condemn such actions and attitudes in others. But what a revelation it was to them and to us to look at our own actions and see the very things in them that we condemn in the actions of others.

The Contrast Between Rulers of This World and Followers of Christ

Jesus very plainly contrasts the way it is among the Gentiles and the way it should be among His followers. He states, "But it is not so among you," using the present indicative ἔσται. Many people have seen this as an exhortation or a command, "It shall not be this way among you." This is due in part to one of the improbable variant readings which was used

in the translation of the King James Version of the Bible.

Bruce M. Metzger notes,

The future tense, which is supported by A C³ K X II and most minuscules (followed by the Textus Receptus), appears to be a scribal amelioration designed to soften the peremptory tone of the present ~~ἐστίν~~.⁸

Thus, while an exhortation seems to be implied, especially in the use of future forms in the verses which follow, it is more explicit that Jesus is stating a fact. "This is the way it is." In the kingdoms of this world, lordship is the preferred life style. But in Christ's Kingdom, the first ones and great ones are those who are servants. There is a direct contrast between the life style of the rulers and great ones of this world and the life style of those who are great ones and in first place as followers of Christ. The contrast comes at the point of relationship to others and how we view them in relation to ourselves. The ones recognized as rulers of the Gentiles act as lords over others. Christ completely reverses the roles. To exercise lordship means that those over whom a person rules will become his servants. The lord has the right and prerogative to command the servant concerning what he should do in order to meet the needs of the lord. Christ, however, claims that greatness among His followers is achieved by being a servant of the others, to subject our rights to meet the needs of others. Greatness by the world's standards is being in a high position to have authority over

⁸Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 108.

others, to be first, to be "boss". But Jesus says that, ". . . whoever wishes to be first among you shall be the slave of all" (Mark 10:44).

The Characteristics of the Servant Followers of Christ

If we look at the Greek text we find that both of the major Greek terms are used in this passage, δακονος and δοϋλος. The term δακονος indicates a more voluntary type of service and stands in contrast to the rulers who grasp for lordship. The term δοϋλος refers to the one who is completely under the authority of his master. It appears to stand in contrast to the great ones who exercise authority over others.

But now the question must be asked, "Of whom are Christ's followers to be servants and slaves?" In Mark 10:43 we see that the one wishing to be great among Christ's disciples is to be "your" (plural) servant. And in the following verse we see that he who wishes to be first shall be slave of all. In the first reference the servant is designated as a servant of the other followers of Jesus, while in the second reference he is to be slave of all. Whether this refers to all people or to all the followers of Christ is not stated. This is important to note. The disciples were willing to be servants of Christ and to recognize Him as Lord, but they were unwilling to become servants of one another. As Christians it is easy to classify oneself as a servant of Christ, but to see oneself as a servant of other people is too humbling. We are willing to submit to Christ as His servants because of who He is. But we tend to view other Christians as equals or

subordinates and it rankles us to think of ourselves as their servants, for we still tend to see the position of servant as inferior. But again, this is to look at it from the world's perspective rather than as Christ would have us look at it.

The Example of Christ and the Redemption He Provides

Christ sees His own mission as exemplary of the servant ideal. He goes on to say that, ". . . the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). It is interesting to note that the term "ransom" (λύτρον) refers to the price paid for the manumission of a slave.⁹ This brings out an important theological point which is somewhat focused on by Paul in Romans 6. All men are or once were slaves in bondage to sin. But in I Corinthians 6:20 he says, "For you have been bought with a price," Thus in Romans 6 Paul is urging that we no longer present ourselves as slaves to sin, because we have been bought out of bondage to sin. We ought to obey our rightful Owner and Master for we have been set free from sin and enslaved to God (Romans 6:22). From a theological perspective all men are slaves, either to sin for unrighteousness or to God for righteousness. There is no person that is his own "boss" or master. There is no way man could make payment to buy himself out of bondage to sin. But Jesus gave His life

⁹Henry E. Turlington, The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. VII, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), p. 353.

as a ransom for many that they might be free in regard to sin but servants of God. This is the heart of the doctrine of the vicarious atonement which we saw in Isaiah 53.

But, to return to the Mark passage, we note several things in relation to Christ as an example of servanthood. First, He came with a mission to perform, to give His life as a ransom for many. He is perfectly obedient to this mission and pursues it as the purpose for His life, even though He knows of the suffering which is a part of achieving that goal. But of whom is Christ a servant? Is He only a Servant of God or is He also a Servant of men? While most evangelicals would accept Christ as the Servant of God, the one predicted by Isaiah, and that He came as a representative of God to men, they might be more hesitant to see Christ as a Servant of men. This passage in Mark makes no reference to the one to whom Christ is Servant, but only implies who is served. He is God and has come to men, not as one to be served by them, but to serve them. He gives a clear illustration of His service in John 13 by washing the disciples' feet. He performed the duty of a common slave to them as an example of how they should relate to one another as servants. Even though He was recognized as their Lord and Teacher, He did the work of a servant for them. Christ, as the Servant of God, served men even though He was the Lord of all.

Finally we note that in Christ's mission there was ultimate reward. Though He came to serve and give His life a ransom for many, it is for His Master's purposes. In spite of

the suffering and death, He will rise again in victory. Here is a definite application of the Isaiah 53 passage which shows the ultimate victory of the Servant of God. This concept will be brought out in the study of the passage in Philippians 2:5-11.

Summary Observations on Mark 10:42-45

In this passage we see the sharp contrast between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Christ as it applies to the very heart of mankind, how he relates to God and to others. That which characterizes this world is the greedy, selfish, ambitious lust for power which is present no matter how well camouflaged or how subtly and craftily sought. It makes itself known even when a person is not conscious of the fact that he is acting this way. On the other hand, that which is characteristic of Christ's Kingdom is selfless giving for others out of love with a purity of heart. Those who are recognized as rulers and great ones tend to be idealized and such positions are the target of much competition. But in the Christian world, the great ones are those who are humbly submissive to their Lord and Master and who are serving Him and His people as servants by meeting their needs. The first place is reserved for the one who has become slave of all. We may all be surprised when the Kingdom comes into fulfillment at those who are given the places of prominence. The real great ones and leaders are those who are servants, not those who will to exercise authority and leadership. "Leadership is

the Servant is now seated at the right hand of the Father, so those who follow in His footsteps will not find their service for others without reward. The faithful servant will receive the blessing of His Master and enter His joy (cf. Matthew 25:21). Therefore, let us press on to be great Christians, the best we can be, by becoming servants of others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- 9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
- 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,
- 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
(N. A. S. B.)

Theologically, in this passage we come to the very heart of the doctrine of the incarnation. Paul views the incarnation as the very Lord of all the universe emptying Himself and taking the form of a slave. What a reversal in roles. What a contrast with the actions of the leaders and great ones of this world, who if they could, would aspire to the very position of God Himself. We can see this in the deification of the Roman Caesars, and the identification of the Egyptian Pharaohs with their gods. But Christ had the attitude of a servant and became humble and obedient to the

point of death, even death on a cross. We who follow Him are exhorted to have this same attitude in ourselves as Christ had.

In the immediate context of this paragraph we note that Paul is making an impassioned plea for unity among the Christians at Philippi. He begins this chapter with the expression, "If any" (εἴ τις) which is repeated four times with different aspects of the Christian life which are unifying factors in the community: (1) encouragement (support) in Christ, (2) consolation of love, (3) fellowship of the Spirit, and (4) affection and compassion. If there are any of these things, Paul appeals to the Philippians to make his joy complete by being of the same mind, having the same love, united in spirit, and with one purpose. He implores them against doing any thing from selfishness or empty conceit, but to be humble in mind and to regard the other as more important than oneself. They are not to look out only for personal interests but for the interests of others. This brings us to the passage under consideration. The focus becomes Christ because He showed this loving, self-giving attitude which Paul is talking about and urging on his readers.¹¹

¹¹It should be noted that many scholars feel this passage, Philippians 2:5-11, is an early Christian hymn with which the readers would have been acquainted, and which Paul used here to prove his point, and which he himself did not write.

"Against this view, however, we cannot but observe the absolute fitness of the passage to its context. It has not been dragged in but rises naturally out of what has been said before, and prepares the way for all that follows. . . . a passage which expresses so grandly the conviction of Paul may safely be ascribed to Paul himself. Among his other gifts he had that of

The term used here for "attitude" (φρονεῖτε) may also be translated "mind-set".¹² It is noted by one commentator,

. . . in this passage we have the first definition of the test for a Christian: a disposition of mind. Not creeds, sacraments, rites, or correct morals, and certainly not any beliefs in economic or political systems, but a disposition of mind.¹³

This same word is used several times in the preceding paragraph in some different forms but with the same general idea. In verse 2 he exhorts them to have the same "mind" (φρονήτε), and to be intent on one "purpose" (φρονοῦντες). Here in verse 5 the form (φρονεῖτε) may be either indicative or imperative, but the context would certainly dictate an imperatival sense. They are commanded to have the same "mind-set", or "attitude" among themselves as Christ had. The mind-set of Christ in relation to others was that of a slave.

The Character of Christ's Servanthood

The first aspect of Christ's servant role was humility. We find that He existed (ὑπάρχων) in the form (μορφῇ) of God. These two terms are important for understanding who Christ actually was. The term ὑπάρχων "is a philosophical word which denotes the underlying nature, as opposed to chance variations."¹⁴

a poet, as we know from a number of splendid outbursts in his epistles." (Ernest F. Scott, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. XI (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 47.)

¹²Arndt and Gingrich, p. 874.

¹³Robert R. Wicks, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. XI, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 49.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 48.

Just as humanity is inherent in man so Christ existed, in His fundamental attributes, as divine. The phrase ἐν μορφῇ is also significant. We find that the Greeks had two different terms to refer to form: μορφῇ and σχῆμα.

From the N.T. use of the words it would appear that the idea of changeableness and instability is attached to σχῆμα (I Corinthians 7:31; II Corinthians 11:13-15), and that on the other hand μορφή (in instances such as Romans 8:29; Philippians 3:10; II Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 4:19) denotes the inner being as it actually and concretely realizes itself in the individual.¹⁵

Thus we can see that by the use of these words Paul is claiming Christ's deity.¹⁶ This is very significant in understanding Christ's humiliation, His emptying of Himself and taking the form (μορφῇν) of a bond-servant (δοῦλου), being made in the likeness of men. Here the very Lord of all, God Himself,

¹⁵Jac. J. Müller, The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon, ed. F. F. Bruce, New International Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 78, n. 3.

¹⁶"As applied here to God, the word is intended to describe that mode in which the essential being of God expresses itself. We have no word which can convey this meaning, nor is it possible for us to formulate the reality. Form inevitably carries with it to us the idea of shape. It is conceivable that the essential personality of God may express itself in a mode apprehensible by the perception of pure spiritual intelligences; but the mode itself is neither apprehensible nor conceivable by human minds.

"This mode of expression, this setting of the divine essence, is not identical with the essence itself, but is identified with it, as its natural and appropriate expression, answering to it in every particular. It is the perfect expression of a perfect essence. It is not something imposed from without, but something which proceeds from the very depth of the perfect being, and into which that being perfectly unfolds, as light from fire.

"To say, then that Christ was in the form of God, is to say that He existed as essentially one with God. The expression of deity through human nature (v. 7) thus has its

humbled Himself to the position of a slave, and became a man. He did not seek His own interests. He did not regard equality with God a thing to reach after. Equality with God was His, but He set it aside for others. It is impossible for man to fathom the depths of the Godhead, but then for God, in the person of Christ, to empty Himself of His rights as God and become man is almost beyond our comprehension. The Lord became the slave.

But not only did Christ humble Himself to become a man, but he was just a common man, not having any spectacular physical appearance. He was not born into the palaces of the kings of His day, nor did He become a great political leader. He lived with the common people and associated with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15-16), and thus was unacceptable to the religious leaders of His day. And finally He died as a political outlaw, undergoing the most humiliating death of all, death on the cross. Müller comments,

From manger to the cross He trod a path of humiliation, which culminated in the misery and suffering and reproach of a shameful death on a tree. Obedience unto God and surrender and submission to the will of God was maintained by Him unto the end, and the profoundest degree of humiliation was reached in that His death was not to be a natural or an honourable one, but was the painful and accursed death of the cross (cf. Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13).¹⁷

background in the expression of deity as deity in the eternal ages of God's being. Whatever the mode of this expression, it marked the being of Christ in the eternity before creation. As the form of God was identified with the being of God, so Christ, being in the form of God, was identified with the being, nature, and personality of God." (Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. III [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969], p. 431.)

¹⁷Müller, p. 86.

The aspects of humility and obedience are joined together in verse 9. Here we find that Christ humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Obedience is the key ingredient of humility and the chief characteristic of a humble servant. Obedience may be defined as, "compliance to the will of another". Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed, "Not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). He was humbly submissive to His Father and obedient to fulfill His plan even though it meant His suffering and death. His death was not suffered as punishment for something He Himself had done. But it was an act of obedience done on behalf of others. Thus humility and obedience were woven together in the submissive servant who gives Himself for others.

The Character of Service Rendered

The service rendered in this passage is, quite simply, death on a cross. But there is certainly more involved than only this act. Christ's death on the cross is the very heart of the vicarious atonement. Christ's mission as a servant culminated in that event and salvation for man was completed with His death.

The cross is at the heart of Paul's preaching, . . . pointing up not only the kind of death Jesus died but the fact that there was no limit to his self-abnegation or obedience to God.¹⁸

¹⁸Frank Stagg, The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. XI, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971), p. 197.

As Paul notes in Romans 5:19, "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous." Christ's death had ultimate impact on all mankind because through Him righteous God was able to reconcile sinful man to Himself.

The Character of Christ's Exaltation

It should be noted first of all that Christ's exaltation is directly connected to His humiliation and obedience as a slave. The "therefore" of verse 9 provides a significant break in the passage which emphasizes the contrast between the humiliation of Christ as servant, and the exaltation of Christ as Lord. But the "therefore" also indicates that Christ's humiliation was the reason for His exaltation. Because He was humble and obedient, God highly exalted Him. Because He became a slave, God exalted Him to position as Lord and gave Him a name above all others. Here we can see an application of the Mark 10:42-45 passage. Christ became slave of all and now is made Lord of all just as He Himself said, ". . . whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all" (Mark 10:44). For His servanthood He is given pre-eminence.

Characteristic of His exaltation is the name He is given. There is some discussion regarding what this name actually is, but it is certain that the name above all others refers to the dignity which is due Him. H. A. A. Kennedy suggests an interesting possibility. "Perhaps the Apostle has

in mind the Jewish use of שְׁמִי , "the Name," as a referent substitute for יהוה (LXX $\kappa\upsilon\rho\acute{o}s$), Jehovah."¹⁹ While this is an interesting conjecture, it is important to note that the name specifically given to Him is the name conferred upon Him in His incarnation, Jesus (v. 10). Whatever the significance of the name, all will pay homage to Him of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. No one will be excluded. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. No longer is He the Suffering Servant; He has played that role. Now He is Lord of all.

The confession "Jesus Christ is Lord" was the first creed or confession of faith of the early church (cf. Romans 10:9; I Corinthians 12:3). To the Jews such a statement was blasphemy for it identified Jesus with divinity. To the Greeks the term Lord was also connected with divinity and to claim a man was divine was sheer nonsense. The Romans had deified their Caesars and had the confession "Caesar is Lord." To confess "Jesus is Lord" put one in opposition with all three: the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans.²⁰ But here we see that all will bow the knee to Him and confess that He truly is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Thus Jesus Christ will have His rightful place in spite of how men treated Him when He was on earth, or what men do with Him today. But His place as Lord is given Him because first He was a humble and obedient servant.

¹⁹H. A. A. Kennedy, The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. III, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, n.d.), p. 438.

²⁰Keeney, op. cit.

Summary Observations on Philippians 2:5-11

This passage is exhortatory in character. It speaks directly to us as Christians, as well as to those for whom it was originally written. We are to have the same attitude or mind-set in ourselves as was in Christ. The key to this mind-set or attitude is the servant's heart. The salient characteristics of the servant's heart focused on in this passage are humility in regards to position and obedience in regards to mission. Christ exemplified this attitude perfectly and thus is rightly given the Name above every name and confessed as Lord. This fits the pattern of lordship through servanthood as found in Christ's own teaching discussed in Mark 10:42-45.

Paul specifically applies this teaching of the importance of servanthood, both to acts performed and to attitudes held. The problem at Philippi was disunity due to selfishness, conceit, pride, and preoccupation with personal interests (cf. Philippians 2:2-4). Unfortunately, after nearly two thousand years, the church is still plagued with these problems. His exhortation plainly says, "Be like Christ in the attitudes you have for one another and the way you act toward one another." Christ humbled Himself in becoming a man, and by becoming obedient in His suffering and death for others. This is the attitude which Paul exhorts for his readers.

The implication seems to follow that since Christ became a servant but was later exalted, those who claim Him as their Lord will also find a reward for being His servants. However, the exhortation is not focused on the reward as such,

but on the example which is set before them. The goal is Christlikeness.

I PETER 2:13-25

- 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution: whether to a king as the one in authority;
- 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
- 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
- 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.
- 17 Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

- 18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.
- 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.
- 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.
- 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,
- 22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;
- 23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;
- 24 and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.
- 25 For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls. (N. A. S. B.)

In this passage we come to a very clear application of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 to Christ and the implications this application has upon the lives of His followers.

Lewis S. Mudge comments,

A quick glance shows that this passage consists of a loose but undeniable series of references to Isaiah 53,

that these references are intended as a description of Christ, and that the whole is presented as part of an ethical exhortation.²¹

In this exhortatory passage we may note several characteristics essential to Christians. The first is submissiveness in relation to others as God's slaves; the second is suffering for others after the example of Christ.

The Characteristics of God's Slaves

In the context we can see that this first paragraph is addressed to the beloved (v. 11, ἀγαπητοί). Thus Peter has all of his readers in mind. We also can apply this passage to our situation.

Verse 13 sets the tone of the passage which follows with the very first word, ὑποτάγητε, "submit". Submission is one of the main characteristics of the slave, and is the one focused on in this passage. It is not submission because of weakness, but for the Lord's sake. The exhortation is to submit to every human institution, not just those which are of Christian origin. Two particular institutions are cited: the king as one in authority; and governors, as ones having the right to punish or praise. Elmer G. Homrighausen notes,

These relationships are never to be treated casually. Peter makes it clear that Christians are to be subject to all men and to every man for the Lord's sake. The Lord is concerned about secular life; for his sake Christians are to fulfill their divine calling and vocation by relating the eternal to the temporal, the sacred to the secular. . . . Christians are of choice to subject

²¹Lewis S. Mudge, "The Servant Christology in the New Testament" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, Princeton University, 1961), p. 201.

themselves to the whole order of persons and institutions, with freedom and with identity.²²

We also note that submission is not only for the Lord's sake, but also according to the will of God, that He might use our submission, which is the right thing to do, to silence ignorant foolish men. The exhortation is to be submissive, doing what is right, so that those who are sent by God as punishers and praisers of men might see the works that are done and the attitude with which they are done and praise such actions. The reason for such praiseworthy actions is that those who bring accusations of wrong actions and motives might be silenced. Christians ought continuously to live so as to put the lie to any accusations or rumors of evil actions or motives in their lives. In spite of what we say in our testimonies or our sermons about how we live or ought to live, the proof of our relationship to God is how we do live.

The relationship is that of a bonds slave of God (θεοῦ δοῦλον), as we can see in I Peter 2:16. An interesting concept of the slave relationship is brought out in this verse. We are to act as free men, but not using our freedom as a covering for evil, but as bonds slaves to God. God has indeed set us free from bondage to sin, even as Paul points out in Romans 6. But such freedom leaves no room for antinomianism. Our freedom is freedom to serve God as His bonds slaves. Archibald M. Hunter notes that this is,

²²Elmer G. Homrighausen, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. XII, ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 114.

. . . a warning against antinomianism, i.e., the belief that Christians are emancipated by the gospel from the obligation to keep the moral law, a danger of evangelical Christianity in all ages.²³

However, this freedom from sin is not all that is involved here. The slave has freedom to make a choice in how he will act. He may either submit and do what is right, or he can use his freedom as a cover for evil. The exhortation is to prove your slave relationship, which is one of freedom, by being submissive and doing right, not only to other Christians, but in every human relationship.

I Peter 2:17 consists of four short, simple, straightforward commands which are a summation of attitude and conduct in the various relationships of life. We are to honor all men as human beings and give them the courtesy which is due to them as persons. We are to love the brotherhood, those who belong to the same heavenly family as we do. We are to fear God, not in the sense of anxiety or a fear of punishment, but in the sense of having a reverential awe and respect for Him. Finally, we are to honor the king, the governmental authority sent by God to establish order.

Throughout this paragraph (I Peter 2:13-17), Peter shows a concern for the reputation Christians are establishing for themselves. It appears that some accusations are being made (cf. I Peter 2:15, the need to silence foolish men). Perhaps such accusations arose because the Christians were

²³Archibald M. Hunter, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. XII, ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 114.

focusing so much on heavenly objectives that they were neglecting or rejecting governmental authority. While we must keep in mind that when rulers demand our allegiance and loyalty before loyalty to God, we must reject them; yet, there is still a submission to that office or position. Christians are not anarchists.

We might say that the characteristic of a slave of God is to be submissive by doing that which is right. More particularly comes the exhortation to honor all men, especially those in positions of authority, to show love for other believers, and to reverently respect and serve God. The totality of the exhortation might be summed up by saying, "Submit yourselves . . . as bondslaves of God." All the other commands and explanations of this paragraph build on this major thought. From this exhortation Peter moves into a more particular area in the paragraph which follows.

The Characteristics of Jesus as the Example of Servanthood

In I Peter 2:18-25 we see Peter addressing a particular group of believers known as "household slaves" (οἱ οἰκέται). In the culture of the times the house slave had distinction from the regular slave as one who belonged to the family, not as a family member, but as one who lived with the family and went where they went, serving their needs. As such οἰκέτης is milder than the term δοῦλος. It is also interesting to note in I Peter 2:5 how Peter claims that Christians are being built up into a spiritual house. J. H. A. Hart sees this as

suggesting a parallel between house slaves and Christians who are a part of God's household.²⁴ In considering this, it is important to keep in mind that Peter is here addressing a particular situation or institution which, in our culture at least, does not exist. However, in studying this passage we may see how the Servant Songs of Isaiah as fulfilled in Jesus, were applied to specific situations as an example for the Christians in those situations. Since the validity or non-validity of the institution of human slavery is beyond the scope of this study, the problem of its seemingly being condoned by Peter in this passage will not be discussed. Only those aspects of the institution which shed light on the God to man relationship will be brought into the discussion.

First of all, it is interesting to note that this exhortation (directed specifically to those who are house slaves) to be submissive, follows the more general exhortation urged upon all Christians to submissiveness toward God and the leaders He has placed in authority. No one gets left out, neither slave nor free. Perhaps Peter was considering that earlier he had discussed free men, but now was remembering that not all men are in a position to act as free men. Lest they should feel somehow left out of this exhortation, he mentions them specifically.

What is significant here is the term used for master

²⁴J. H. A. Hart, The Expositor's Greek Testament, Vol. V, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 60.

ὁ δεσπότης rather than ὁ κύριος. This is the term from which we get despot. This is the master who has unquestioned and absolute authority and control over his subjects. The term is equated with tyrant. Thus, although the slave has a despot or tyrant as a master, he must still be submissive to him and respect him. It is also interesting to note that the character of the master is not a controlling factor in the exhortation to submissiveness. Irregardless of whether the master is good and gentle or if he is unreasonable (σκολιός), and deals unjustly (v. 19), the attitude of the slave is to be the same.

Such submissiveness finds favor if it is performed with a mindfulness or conscience toward God. Submission may lead to suffering unjustly. If it does, the suffering is to be endured patiently. Credit of favor with God is found when one endures patiently suffering which is inflicted unjustly. But innocence is important, for there is no favor if one suffers for a sin which he committed.

This, then, brings us to the key verse for this passage: "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps." (v. 21) Here we see the transition from the exhortations regarding the personal experiences of the readers in their relationship to others, to the call to follow the example of Christ, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who gave His life for others. Mudge states,

The point of the Isaiah 53 quotation as it is used in I Peter is that Jesus was plunged into the condition of the δοῦλοι and οἰκέται of the ancient world, carrying their full

condition with him to death, and thereby teaching them how to be δοῦλοι θεοῦ.²⁵

This writer would concur that the call to follow the example of Christ is not just to those in the immediate context of the human institution of house slaves (οἰκέται), but extends back to verse 13. All Christians are exhorted to submit themselves as slaves to God and follow the example of Christ.

As we look at this verse in closer detail, we note the fact that there is a specific purpose for which God has called us which appears to be that of suffering innocently with Christ. Hunter comments regarding this passage,

In what is one of the noblest parts of the epistle Peter bids the slaves take as their example in patient suffering the Lord Himself who, to redeem them chose the destiny of the suffering Servant. In verse after verse we catch clear echos of Isaiah 53, the chapter in which Jesus had seen his own passion (and triumph) prefigured; in which, too, the early church had sought the clue to the secret of his death. . .²⁶

Suffering is never without purpose and when done patiently, it will find favor with God.

The term which is translated "example" (ὑπογραμμός) is an interesting word and one which is used only here in the entire Greek New Testament. It has a rather technical usage and refers to the original master copy over which scribes worked in producing duplicate copies. It is also used to refer to the copy which students used to pattern their own writing after when they were learning copying skills. The

²⁵Mudge, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

²⁶Hunter, op. cit., p. 118.

test of a copy was its conformance to the original. A faithful scribe could be counted upon to produce a faithful reproduction. This draws a beautiful picture of how we are to pattern our lives after Christ's. His life is the master copy, the original. We as His followers are to imitate His life. To the point that our lives conform with His, we are successful.

Another interesting phrase is joined to this one: we are to follow in His footsteps. This also paints a beautiful picture of imitating Christ. It depicts a trail which is dangerous and full of pitfalls. Those who travel the trail must have a leader and must carefully study the exact steps that leader takes so that they might place their hands and feet in the exact holds of the leader in order that they might not lose their footing and fall. Jesus Himself walked this earth as a human. He successfully negotiated every pitfall and danger spot. If we continually look to His life to understand how He lived and live as close to Him as possible, then we too can travel life's dangerous pathway successfully.

Christ has left us an example, a pattern. He has left us footprints so we can follow Him. It is the trail of the Suffering Servant that He trod, and that is the way we must tread. We are called for this purpose, to follow that way, the way of suffering for others.

The verses that follow are in essence either direct quotations or a paraphrase of portions of Isaiah 53 which show how Christ's life followed the pattern of the Suffering Servant. From this passage several concepts come out which

help to fill out the pattern which Peter has in mind. Hunter has put this passage in I Peter 2:21-25 in a parallel column with the corresponding portion of Isaiah 53 from the Septuagint:²⁷

I Peter 2:21-25	Isaiah 53 (LXX)
<u>Vs.</u>	<u>Vs.</u>
21 Christ also suffered for us	4 He bears our sins and is pained for us
22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.	9 He did no sin nor was guile in his mouth
23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.	7 And he, because of his affliction, opens not his mouth. (Here probably Peter blends Isa. 53 with his memory of how Jesus actually comported himself in the face of his foes.)
24 Who his own self bare our sins, etc.	12 He himself bare the sins of many (cf. also vs. 11: and he shall bear their sins).
24 By whose stripes ye were healed.	5 By his stripes were we healed.
25 For ye were as sheep going astray.	6 All we like sheep have gone astray.

From this we can see how Christ fit the pattern foretold by God in the Old Testament. He suffered not for Himself but for others; He bore their sins. He was innocent of any wrongdoing Himself, yet He bore the injustice submissively, without uttering a word of complaint. There was healing for others through His suffering and His suffering was used to bring straying souls back to God.

Summary Observations on I Peter 2:13-25

What a pattern is set for our lives here. It is a

²⁷Ibid.

high standard which we are exhorted to attain. The pattern is that of a servant. First the servant is submissive to God. Because he is submissive to God, for the Lord's sake, he is submissive to those in positions of authority over him. We have been set free and we should act as free men who voluntarily use their freedom of action and choice to become God's bondslaves. But to be bondslaves of God has implications in every relationship of life. "There is no relationship in one's life which is not touched by the fact that he is a Christian."²⁸

The second characteristic of the servant in this passage is his suffering. In all innocent suffering there is a redemptive element. The servant is willing to pour out his life and suffer that others might be redeemed. Not that we can redeem them, but we can give our lives that they might know of Christ's redemptive love and sacrifice by seeing it in our lives. Christ is our example and the way He sought men and saved them is exemplary. We are to follow in His steps by living our lives for Him and for others.

APPLICATION TO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

From these three passages we can see the close proximity of the reference of Christ as Servant to His suffering and death on the cross. In the first passage He talks of

²⁸Ray Summers, The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. XII, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), p. 159.

giving His life as a ransom for many. Paul talks of His suffering for us. In all three passages He is looked upon as an example for those who would follow Him. Thus the application to Christians is in terms of giving themselves for others.

This giving for others has several characteristics. The idea of a ransom brings out the benefits for the other person for whom the suffering is endured. There is a redemptive element in all vicarious suffering. We note also that giving of self for others is an act of humility and obedience. Just as Christ was obedient to the point of death on a cross so also we must be obedient in giving ourselves for others, whatever form that giving might take. Finally, we note that this is the purpose for which we are called, to suffer and give ourselves for others, just as Christ gave Himself for us.

CONCLUSION

Servanthood has application in every aspect of life and ministry because it is seen as an underlying principle and motivating factor. Whether we are pastors, missionaries or laymen, we are called to follow the example of Christ in giving ourselves for the needs of others.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This study has been an attempt to defend from the Bible the thesis that the Christian life is that of a servant, and also to bring out some of the characteristics of such servanthood so that a pattern of servanthood for Christian life and ministry might emerge.

In the introductory chapter we noted that in the eyes of the world the common, if not the ideal, relationship a person desires to have with his fellowman is that of master. Even though we as Christians might reject this teaching as being wrong, we many times act according to the desire for mastery or tend to view ourselves as in a position of lordship. Thus there is a need for us to understand that we are called to be servants, as well as a need to understand what this call entails.

The Pattern of Servanthood Emerges

In chapter 2, the five major Hebrew and Greek terms used to refer to the servant relationship were studied in their historical and cultural settings, as well as their usage in the Bible. Several important observations were made regarding the slave relationship which throw light on the Christian's relationship with God. The essential meaning of

the Hebrew term עֶבֶד refers to someone who belongs to another. As Christians, when we commit ourselves to God, we are no longer our own. We belong to Him. Generally speaking, a price was paid for the slave. We too have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Jesus. Whereas we were once in bondage to sin we have been set free in regards to sin, but enslaved to God (cf. Romans 6).

Several aspects of servanthood having to do with society were brought out. The servant was recognized as a part of the religious community and shared in the religious life of the community. He was not put out of fellowship because he was a slave, because the slave relationship did not negate his essential dignity as a human being. The servant's social status was dependent upon the status of his master. Depending upon the respect the community had for the master, the servant could either be proud of his servanthood or ashamed of it. We as Christians have a Lord of whom we can be proud to pledge our lives as servants. We gain status not on the basis of who we are, but who our master is. We as His servants should never feel inferior or ashamed of our servant relationship with God, for to do so shows that we ourselves do not respect Him as a great Lord or Master. With this attitude, how could we expect others to respect Him?

We noted also that in the absence of the lord or master, the servant became the personal representative of his master in the transaction of business. He may have been only a servant, but if his master entrusted him with a mission and

gave him authority to act on his behalf, the servant was able to transact business as if the master himself were present. We, as God's servant, are His representatives to this world. As such, we have a mission to complete, even the business of winning souls for Him. This gives us great responsibility but along with it is the promise of power to be able to perform all that is asked of us.

The slave relationship allows for only one master. It is the same in the Christian life. It is impossible to serve God and our own desires. If He is Lord, no other influence has the right to control our lives. The Christian life is exclusive in that no one may take God's place as Lord, or even be counted as equal to Him, without the relationship being broken.

We saw that the servant had the right to call upon his lord for protection in times of difficulty. We as Christians also have this privilege. We can come before our Lord and make known to Him our problems and be sure that He will hear and answer us. But in coming to Him, the only proper attitude is humility and obedience. The humble obedient worshiper who comes to God with his problems will have his need met.

The servant relationship is initiated by the lord. He is the one who pays a price to seal the contract. As Christians we see Christ's death for our sins as initiating the means by which we can come into a proper relationship with God.

In the Old Testament God chose and called men for specific tasks as His servants to influence the course of history. Today God still calls men and women to special areas of ministry to make an impact on lives for Him. In this special ministry in which one has been set apart for a particular work or task, it is especially important that the servant be sensitive to the leading of the Lord.

The servant's role is not to be taken lightly; it is serious business. The obedient servant is willing to do all that the Lord desires, even though it might mean suffering and even death. He remains faithful under trials and does not complain about doing all that the lord demands. In spite of this the servant is not fatalistic but confident of future victory and blessing. As we consider our lives as Christians with Christ as our Lord, we must take seriously our calling to service in fulfilling the task set before us even though it might mean suffering.

We further note that the outward appearance is no basis for judging the value of a servant. We see from Isaiah 53 that the Servant of the Lord did not have an appearance which caused men to consider Him important, and yet His was the most important service ever rendered. We have no right to judge God's servants, for only the Master has that right. Our evaluation is incomplete for we do not know the task assigned nor the ultimate results.

The contrast between the attitudes towards servanthood in the Jewish culture and the attitude towards it in the Greek

and Roman cultures stands out sharply. The high valuation on freedom of the individual and autonomy idealized by the Greeks and Romans caused them to look with disdain upon the idea of being a servant to someone else. To them a servant was the lowest form of humanity. In Hebrew culture, the servant, while not idealized, was at least considered an equal member of the community. To a great extent our own modern society is similar in viewpoint to the attitude of the Greeks and Romans regarding attitudes towards slave morality and master morality. To be a master is good, to be a slave is bad. This is the attitude of modern man. Just as the Hebrew attitude toward servanthood contrasts with the Greek and Roman attitudes toward servanthood, so the Christian attitude stands in contrast to that of modern society.

In chapter 3, three Old Testament passages were studied which brought out some salient characteristics of the ideal slave relationship. First, we noted the importance of mutual love between the slave and master. We as Christians have a good Master who provides an abundant life, giving us all kinds of blessings. The relationship is not static either, but it grows until one comes to a place of total commitment of love and loyalty. There is no thought of turning back, only the prospects of living with and for the Lord forever, with every day getting sweeter.

A second important aspect was humility in approaching our heavenly Lord. The humble and contrite heart is the one that comes to Him and lets his needs be known and confidently

and patiently waits for the answer. This is the only right attitude in approaching our Lord. From this attitude of humility can spring both praise and petition.

From humility comes obedience. Disobedience implies rebellion. It means that the slave no longer recognizes his master as lord. The Christian in rebellion who does not recognize the claims of Christ as Lord of his life, is dangerously close to apostasy and if steps are not made to rectify the situation, only prospects of judgment await. Obedience, however, finds favor with God and ultimate satisfaction and reward. The slave does not choose his tasks, nor try to perform what he feels ought to be done, but follows the direction of his Lord in all that he does, whether mundane and trivial, or painful and sacrificial.

The Call to Servanthood Goes Forth

In chapter 4, three passages from the New Testament were studied which brought out key aspects of servanthood. But more importantly we examined the evidence which these passages brought forth to support the proposition that Christians are called to be servants.

In the teaching of Jesus, the focus is on the sharp contrast between the relationship idealized by the kingdoms of this world and the ideal relationship in the Kingdom of God. There is an exact reversal of roles. In this world the ideal is to be a ruler, one having power and authority to be lord over others. In Christ's Kingdom the ideal is to

be a servant and a slave, one who gives himself for others. This is the one considered great in Christ's Kingdom and he will be given the place of prominence. But Christ did more than just teach servanthood; we find that He lived it. He claimed that He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many. This He did when He suffered and died on the cross for our sins.

In the study from Philippians 2, we not only have an important theological contribution to the doctrine of the incarnation, but we also find a very pointed application to the practical aspects of servanthood. Paul exhorts us to have the same "mind-set" or attitude as Christ, who humbled Himself by becoming a man, and was obedient even to the point of death on a cross. Here Paul is very practically applying the doctrine of the servant to his readers. He warns them about their pride, ambition and selfishness which is causing disunity among them. He then confronts them with the example of Christ. He exhorts them to have the same attitude towards others as Christ had, the attitude of a slave. The mind of Christ is the unifying factor among His followers. The mind of Christ is that of the humble, obedient slave who gives Himself for others. Because of His humility and obedience, Christ is exalted to the position of Lord. Though this position was His from the beginning, He did not grasp it but emptied Himself and became a slave. He is now exalted for His obedience. Those who follow His example, having His attitude, will also not be left without reward, but by obedience will

gain salvation.

The passage in I Peter brought us to the climax of our study in the application of servanthood to the Christian life. The exhortation to submissiveness to all human institutions is to be for the Lord's sake. It is the will of God that we do right, living blameless, praiseworthy lives that others might see and know that we as Christians are true representatives of our heavenly Lord. If we as Christians live unwholesome and rebellious lives, we not only show our own wickedness, but we cast a shadow on the character of our Lord. Our submissiveness is to be not only to the kind and gentle but also to the harsh and unreasonable. Suffering unjustly finds grace and favor with God. This brings us to the very pinnacle of the doctrine of the servant: it is the mountain of suffering for others. It is one thing to give for others out of our wealth, but to give sacrificially to the point of pain, suffering and even death, is a mountain few dare to tackle. But this is the purpose for which we have been called. We have an example in Christ who has climbed the pinnacle of self-sacrifice, the mountain of suffering for others. He followed that course with never a slip of the foot and should we heed the call to follow Him, we too must go that way. The call is to follow in His footsteps, and at the end of the trail stands a cross. But in climbing that pinnacle, God will use His obedient servants to bring lost souls to Him.

The common element in all three of the passages is the example of Christ. He gave Himself to meet the needs of others.

In the Mark 10:42-45 passage we needed a ransom. He paid it with His life. Philippians 2:5-11 shows what it cost Him in terms of humiliation and obedience. I Peter 2:13-25 focused on His suffering on behalf of others. Behind each passage, whether expressed or not, stands the cross. We are called to follow Him.

Christ by His sacrifice provided the redemption for all mankind. But too few are finding that redemption. We, His servants, are called to expend our lives for others in proclaiming the good news of redemption in order that it might become a reality in other people's lives.

. . . Christian service . . . is not something that is accidental to the Christian, but essential to him, for it is rooted in the basic structure of existence as a slave of Jesus Christ. It is a form of service in which he is not partially but completely committed in the whole of his being before God, and which he discharges not occasionally but continuously in the whole of his existence as a follower of Jesus Christ.¹

Suggestions for Further Study

As I come to the end of this study I realize that much more could be done in this area. There are many more passages in Scripture that talk about servanthood, but I would like to suggest two studies which could be done with profit.

The first is a study of the servant parables of Jesus. Jesus used servants in his parables many times to illustrate various concepts, many of which have to do with the Kingdom

¹T. F. Torrance, "Service in Christ," Service in Christ, Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday, eds. James I. McCord and T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), p. 2.

of Heaven.

The second suggestion is related to this concept of servanthood but would also bring in some new material. A study of the aspects of both servanthood and sonship in the Christian life and how they relate to one another would be very interesting. The contribution of such a study to a person's understanding of his relationship to God would be extremely enlightening.

TO TELOS

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