

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST?

An Exposition of Jude 1-2

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Please note: This is part-two of a five-part series titled, “*Earnestly Contend for the Faith as a Slave of Jesus Christ.*” As reflected in above title, this message examines Jude 1-2. Afterwards, the application focuses on what it means to be a slave of Jesus Christ and raises the question, “*Who are you serving?*”

I. Introduction:

At Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural, shortly before his assassination in 1865, he spoke of how both parties earnestly disapproved of war, and yet war came. He continued, “Neither part expected the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it had already attained. Each looked for an easier triumph. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other.”

And with that, Lincoln let his own feelings show through as he spoke of how strange it was, “that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces.”

Ultimately, the African slaves were set free. Theoretically, it became early as the first day of the year, 1863, in what has come to be known as the Emancipation Proclamation.

“The word spread,” in the words of one historian, “from Capitol Hill out across the city, down into the valleys and fields of Virginia and the Carolinas, and even into the plantations of Georgia and Mississippi and Alabama. “Slavery Legally Abolished! Read the headlines, and yet something amazing took place. The greater majority of the slaves in the South went on living as though they were not emancipated. That continued throughout the Reconstruction Period.”

When one Alabama slaved was asked what he thought of the Great Emancipator whose proclamation had gone into Effect. “I don’t know nothing ‘bout Abraham Lincoln cep they say he sot us free. And I don’t know nothin’ about that neither.”

“How tragic,” writes Shelpy Foote, author of *The Civil War*. “A document has been signed. Slaves were legally set free. The word is emancipated. And yet most continued to live out their years, and many of their children some of their years, in fear, saying, ‘I don’t know nothing’ ‘bout that neither.’ In a context of freedom, slaves chose to remain slaves, though they were legally freed. Even though emancipated, they kept serving the same master throughout their lives.¹

Transition:

Ladies and Gentlemen: If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, having placed your faith in Him knowing that He is God and died on the cross for your sins and rose again, then

¹ Chuck Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart*, 524-5.

you have been set free. You have been set free to intimately know Him, set free to love Him, and set free to obey Him.

But what is keeping us from doing so? Can we like Jude honestly describe ourselves as slaves of Christ?

Do our actions represent obedience to our Savior?
Or do we marginally serve Him?
Or have we taken ownership of God's commands whereby our selfish desires are marginalized?

In part 2 of our series, titled, *Earnestly Contend for the Christian Faith as a Slave of Jesus Christ*, we are going to explore verses 1-2. After we examine what this greeting means, we will then ask ourselves, "What does it mean to be a slave of Jesus Christ. After we answer this question we will then ask, "Whom do you serve?"

II. EXPOSITION OF VERSES 1-2:

*¹ Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,
To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:
² Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.²*

- A. Let's take a closer look at the first portion of verse 1: *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James*,
1. The author of this letter begins by first drawing attention to his own name: Jude.
 2. Jude, a name that occurs 43 times in N.T. is an English form of "Judas," the Greek form of "Judah." Just like James it is an English form of the Hebrew name "Jacob," a popular name among Jews of the period because of its patriarchial connection, "Judah," the name of Jacob's fourth son, draws attention to the tribe of Judah.³
 3. The word "Jude" not only draws attention to the history and nature of the Tribe of Judah in O.T., but from a Jewish mindset, it also reminds one of the national hero of the Jews, Judas Maccabaeus, who led a revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century B.C.
 4. Though there are at least six individuals named Jude in the N.T., only two are likely to have written this book:
 - a. Once contender among scholars is the Apostle Jude who is mentioned in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13, who is perhaps also known as Thaddeus (Matthew 10:3).

²The New King James Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Jud 1-2.

³ Edwin A. Blum, "Jude" in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 381.

- b. The second choice and the one that is perhaps more generally accepted by evangelical scholars is that Jude is the brother of the apostle James and the half-brother of Jesus. In fact, in Matthew 13:55 the brothers of the Lord are named: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas.”
5. Why the need to say that Jude is the half-brother of James? Perhaps it is to distinguish himself from another Judas. Consider the following:
- S. Maxwell Coder writes: "On the very threshold of a book written about apostasy appears a name which brings to mind a traitor who stands forever as the worst apostate the world has ever known."⁴
6. Perhaps the need to say that He is brother of James is to link himself with the authority and leadership of James, who was an influential leader of the Jerusalem Church. Immediately that would give clarification and authority regarding Jude’s identity and thus, his encyclical letter.
7. Notwithstanding these possibilities, what I personally find striking is that following his name, he immediately describes himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ”, then describes himself as a half-brother of James.
8. Why use the title, “bondservant or slave of Jesus Christ” if he is Jesus’ half-brother?
9. Why a slave? Certainly we could agree with the following statement by C.S. Lewis? “Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. Aristotle said that some people were only fit to be slaves. I do not contradict him. But I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters.”⁵
- a. Why a slave? It might be because Judas, like his other family member, did not believe in the messiahship of Jesus until after the Resurrection. Consider Acts 1:12-14. Therefore, perhaps in combination of his past denial and revelation that He is the God-Man, Jude describes himself first of all as a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. Put it in perspective: would you ever like to describe yourself to as a slave to your sibling?
- b. Why didn’t Jude say he is the half-brother of Jesus rather than say He is a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James?
- c. Well, I suggest to you it is because there is no spiritual benefit to be the half-brother of Jesus. Blood relations, no matter how incredible it would be, do not save you from the penalty nor from the power of sin.

⁴S. Maxwell Coder, *Jude: The Acts of the Apostates*, p. 7.

⁵ C.S. Lewis in “Equality” from *Present Concerns*, quoted in *Christianity Today*, February 3, 1989, p. 31

- d. However, to say he is a slave of Jesus Christ is to say that He is subservient to the Lord whom he has come to know as His Savior and God.
- e. But let's not leave it there. Did you know that for a Jew it is an honor to be described as a slave to God? In fact, Douglas Moo, one of my favorite N.T. scholars as I'm sure I'm one of his favorite theologians, philosophers, ethicists, and cultural apologists (haha!)

“But persons from that culture who knew Old Testament (as Jude’s readers apparently did) would have detected an important overtone in this phrase that we can easily miss. For, as noted, ‘servant of the Lord’/ ‘servant of God’ is a standard Old Testament phrase. When Jude puts ‘Jesus Christ’ in place of ‘the Lord’ or ‘God,’ then he is communicating something of immense importance about Jesus—that he has a relationship to Jude similar to the relationship of the Lord to Moses and David.”⁶
- f. Did you know that the nation Israel was referred to as a bondservant to God?
- g. Did you know that some of the great men of the Bible were known as His bondservants: Moses (Joshua 14:7), Elijah (2 Kings 10:10); and David (Psalm 89:3; cf. 2 Sam. 7:5-8)?
- h. Do you know Him as your Master? Or perhaps a better question is...does He know you as His servant?

C. You know, it is possible to be this type of servant. Consider D.L. Moody:

A large group of European pastors came to one of D. L. Moody's Northfield Bible Conferences in Massachusetts in the late 1800s. Following the European custom of the time, each guest put his shoes outside his room to be cleaned by the hall servants overnight. But of course this was America and there were no hall servants.

Walking the dormitory halls that night, Moody saw the shoes and determined not to embarrass his brothers. He mentioned the need to some ministerial students who were there, but met with only silence or pious excuses. Moody returned to the dorm, gathered up the shoes, and, alone in his room, the world's only famous evangelist began to clean and polish the shoes. Only the unexpected arrival of a friend in the midst of the work revealed the secret.

When the foreign visitors opened their doors the next morning, their shoes were shined. They never know by whom. Moody told no one, but his friend told a few people, and during the rest of the conference, different men volunteered to shine the shoes in secret.

⁶ Douglas Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 225.

Perhaps the episode is a vital insight into why God used D. L. Moody as He did. He was a man with a servant's heart and that was the basis of his true greatness.⁷

D. Let's consider the next portion of verse 1b: **To Those who are called, wrapped in the love of God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.**

1. Jude's directs this focus to Christians when he addresses this letter "to those who are called."
2. Jude describes God's people by using three expressions:
 - a. "*to those who are called*" also reflects on the past—God's sovereign call to salvation in His electing grace (cf. Rom. 1:6; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:24; Eph. 4:4; 2 Peter 1:3).

This appears to be main clause with the next phrases elaborating on what it means to be called.

- b. The second phrase: "*wrapped in the love of God the Father*" refers to the present.
 1. The way I understand it is that the way "loved" is used here indicates that God's love was manifested in the past but also continues in the present. What this means is "As those who are called and therefore who belong to the people of God, we enjoy the experience of God's constant love for us."⁸
- c. The third phrase, "*kept by Jesus Christ*," expresses the most positive assurance regarding the future, for He preserves those who trust Him till His coming (1 Thes. 5:23; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). This means being "carefully watched and guarded."

1. Douglas Moo puts it this way: "As those who are called and therefore who belong to the people of God, we enjoy the experience of God's constant love for us.... 'Being kept for Jesus Christ' means that God throughout this life exercises his power on behalf of Christians to preserve them spiritually intact until the coming of Jesus Christ in glory [participle is in perfect tense, implying that being kept is a continuing state that believers are placed in through their faith in Christ]."⁹

⁷ Gary Inrig, *A Call to Excellence*, (Victor Books, a division of SP Publ., Wheaton, Ill; 1985), 98.

⁸ Moo, *NIV Application Commentary*, 223.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

2. Interestingly this word is also used in Jude 6 and Jude 13 where it refers to God preserving the fallen angels and the apostates for Judgment. And it also used in an exhortation in Jude 21 where it says, “*Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*” Here we are to maintain ourselves which presents a twofold work that is to occur in our lives: doing and undergoing. We obey God while at the same time God preserves us.

a. Douglas Moo puts it this way:

“We naturally pay great attention to the grace of God in conversion, and we joyfully anticipate the day when God’s grace will be manifested again in the return of Christ. But it is easy for Christians to forget about God’s grace of preservation, as he is daily and powerfully at work in and among us.”¹⁰

3. Doesn’t it remind you when Jesus prayed for us in John 17:11 when he says, “*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect [or keep; hereson] them by the power of your name-the name you gave me-so that they may be one as we are one.*”

E. So stepping back and looking at this portion of verse 1 again what may we conclude: The knowledge of God’s calling, loving, and keeping brings believers assurance and peace during times of apostasy.¹¹

F. Now because we are called, loved, and preserved by God, we are the recipients of God’s blessings: mercy, peace, and love.

Let’s now turn to verse 2: “May mercy, peace, and love be lavished on you!”

1. Jude prays that God’s special blessings be multiplied in the lives of these believers.

a. Why did he highlight these three divine provisions? Consider the words of Tom Constable: “We need God’s mercy in view of our exceedingly sinful condition. We need His peace in view of the subtle and stimulating temptations that surround us on every hand. We also need His love to sustain and encourage us in our spiritual warfare. Jude’s readers needed all this help in view of the false teachers’ influence, which he proceeded to discuss.”

b. N.T. Scholar Wand put it this way, “They are not self-acquired Christian virtues, but the gifts of God, which, the author prays, may be abundantly bestowed upon his readers. Nevertheless, by a divine alchemy, the gifts of God are transformed into human characteristics.”¹²

¹⁰ Douglas Moo, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 227.

¹¹John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 2:919.

¹²J. W. C. Wand, *The General Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 196.

2. God's mercy, which is a very rich concept in the Bible, is His compassion expressed in the face of dire human need. But mercy is not only something God gives on those with needs, but it also a quality God expects His people to display. In fact, as you are conscious of God's mercy to you, delight in showing mercy to others.
 - a. I think the reason why Jude prays that mercy will be multiplied is because God's mercy can sustain them in times of difficulty.
3. God's peace gives a subtle calmness when evil abounds (Rom. 15:13; Phil. 4:7). Moreover, because of Christ we can be at peace with God.
4. God's love can protect and assure us in the face of peril. The love Jude means here is God's love for us.
5. These three divine provisions, "**mercy, peace, and love,**" are needed by Christians living in an immoral, rebellious atmosphere of apostate teaching where false teachers are creeping in the church in stealth form.

G. So, in summary, as we look at these first two verses what do we see?

Jude, who describes himself as a slave of Christ, the brother of James, writes to Jewish Christians, people who have been called, who are loved by God the Father, and preserved by Jesus Christ, and prays that mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to them.

Why does Jude write these words? I suggest that the words of ministry are there because of the overwhelming danger that they face. God promises to watch over them at every moment, keeping them safe for Christ's sake even though there are wolves in sheep's clothing that have surrounded them. Therefore, he begins by saying that God will keep them as you strive to keep yourself earnestly contending for the faith.

III. HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

In his epistle, Jude, the brother of James, under direction of the Holy Spirit describes himself as a slave of God. Likewise, James, the half-brother of Jesus also describes himself. "*bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ* (James 1:1)." Likewise, the apostle Peter describes himself as a "*bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 1:1). The apostle Paul uses the same description in Titus 1:1, "*Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ*

In each of these verses we see that "*bondservant*" is used to describe these N.T. authors. Since these descriptions aptly describe James, Peter, Paul, Jude, and John, all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have to ask ourselves the following questions:

- What does being a "*bondservant*" literally mean?
- For whom are you serving?
- What are qualities distinctive of a bondservant to the Lord Jesus Christ?
- How can you be a better slave to the Lord Jesus Christ?

1. What does being a “bondservant” mean?

- A. **Being a bondservant comes from the Greek word “δοῦλος” (*doulos*). It literally means “slave” or “servant.” It can be used to refer literally to “a slave, a man of servile condition.” This word can also be used metaphorically to describe one who gives himself up to another’s will; it is one whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among others. It is a servant-type disposition that is devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests.**
- B. Once again we have to recognize that being a servant of God is a privilege and honor. The Greek version of the O.T. described Israel's great leaders who occupied positions of privilege and honor with the same word Jude uses for slavery. (e.g., Moses [Deut. 34:5; et al.]; David [2 Sam. 7:5; et al.]; and the prophets [Jer. 7:25; 44:4; Amos 3:7])¹³
- C. And once again, the idea of “servanthood” went beyond Israel’s leaders to the nation itself. According to Isaiah 41:8-9, 43:10-13, and 44:1-5, Israel as a nation received a unique call from God to be His servant, one who is a witness to the power, greatness, and glory of God to all the nations of the world.
- D. But the nation Israel is not the only one called to be God’s “servant.” In the prophetic words of Isaiah in 42:1, even the Messiah himself is identified as the “*Servant of the Lord*.” He would be a gentle servant, one who would not raise His voice on the streets or bruise a reed (Isaiah 42:2-3), yet the power of the Holy Spirit would be on Him. Ultimately through Him the gentile world will have the opportunity for salvation, and the light of His salvation will shine to all corners of the earth (Isaiah 49:6). In fact, in Isaiah 50:5-7, the Messiah is graphically described as one who will do the will of the Father no matter what humiliation, suffering, or disrespect He receives. And the *Gospel of Matthew* implies that the actual ministry of Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophetic words of the “*Servant of the Lord*” (Matthew 12:17-21; cf. Isaiah 42:1-4).
- E. **Therefore, the upshot is that for James, Peter, Paul, Jude, and John, to be servant of Jesus Christ is to follow hard after Jesus Christ, following His example by inward conformity and outward obedience, “subjecting” every aspect of their lives to Him for His glory; it is a title of honor! It is a lifestyle that sincerely says in inward affections and outward conformity, “Not I, but Christ.”**

2. Who Are We Serving?

- A. The most central reason why this kind of slavery is not bad is because of the Master believers serve. As stated by my senior pastor Rev. Bruce Bumgardner, “*Slavery is not bad when you have the right master.*” We are talking about being a slave to Jesus Christ!

3. What are distinctive qualities of a slave of Jesus Christ?

- A. Since James, Peter, Paul, Jude, and John are described as “*bondservants of Jesus Christ*,” these qualities reveal the fact that it is possible to be a slave of Jesus Christ.

¹³Cited from Expository Notes of Tom Constable from the Epistle of James at www.soniclight.com cf. Burdick, Donald W. "James." In *Hebrews-Revelation*. Vol. 12 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981. Burdick, p. 167.

- B. Distinctive qualities of a slave of Jesus would...
1. Understand the honor and dignity of this title.
 2. Is resolved to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness. The slave does not ask, "What is in it for me?"
 3. Takes ownership of Christ's commands-even if it cost the believer everything.
 4. Truly recognizes in one's activities that He is serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. In summary, I may be a slave of Christ when my heart passionately seeks to love Him, my mind seeks to deeply know Him, and my will seeks to completely obey Him. Or said differently, when my deep-seated affections (heart), soul (my conscious thought-life), mind (reasons and judgments), and strength (bodily powers/capabilities) are regularly and consistently harmonized together in glorifying God, then Jesus is my Master.

4. How Can I Better Become a Slave of Jesus Christ?

- A. I submit the following applications for consideration:
1. **Change the way you live!** If you are not offering Him your utmost, then you need to make the decision that no matter what it costs you, you are going to commit yourself to being a committed disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 8:34).
 2. Refuse to prostitute your heart, mind, soul, and strength to the idol of self-centeredness and the fleeting temptations and vices of the world.
 3. Remember that it is an honor to be **described** as a servant of Jesus Christ.
 4. **Redirect** your energies, resources, and time to promote slavery to Christ. Don't allow your life to be compartmentalized, divided, and torn. In other words, be all that you can be; be singular in your task!

B. One of the best ways to know whether you actually are a slave of Jesus Christ is how you handle and serve high maintenance people:

People are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered.	Love them anyway.
If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives.	Do good anyway.
If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies.	Succeed anyway.
The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow.	Do good anyway.
Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable.	Be honest and frank anyway.
The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds.	Think big anyway.
People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs.	Fight for a few underdogs anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.

People really need help, but may attack you if you do help them. Help them anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you have anyway.

John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait, Some New Testament Word Studies*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1961), pp. 100ff

IV. CONCLUSION:

What is keeping us from being a slave of Jesus Christ? Have you yielded to someone or something other than Jesus Christ? Do you find yourself yielding to yourself more than to God?

The first thing you must be willing to admit when you begin to examine what controls and dominates you is that you are the one responsible for having yielded yourself to whatever it may be.

If you are a slave of yourself, then you are to blame because somewhere in your past you yielded to yourself. Likewise, if you are slave of God, you do so because at some point in your life you yielded yourself to him. Listen to the words of Oswald Chambers from *My Utmost for His Highest* (March 14th):

If a child gives in to selfishness, he will find it to be the most enslaving tyranny on earth. There is no power within the human soul itself that is capable of breaking the bondage of the nature created by yielding. For example, yield for one second to anything in the nature of lust, and although you may hate yourself for having yielded, you become enslaved to that thing. (Remember what lust is—"I must have it now," whether it is the lust of the flesh or the lust of the mind). No release or escape from it will ever come from any human power, but only through the power of redemption. You must yield yourself in utter humiliation to the only One who can break the dominating power in your life, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. "... He has anointed Me... to proclaim liberty to the captives..." (Luke 4:18 and Isaiah 61:1).

When you yield to something, you will soon realize the tremendous control it has over you. Even though you say, "Oh, I can give up that habit whenever I like," you will know you can't. You will find that the habit absolutely dominates you because you willingly yielded to it. It is easy to sing, "He will break every fetter," while at the same time living a life of obvious slavery to yourself. But yielding to Jesus will break every kind of slavery in any person's life.

Therefore, since time is a succession of moments, in your moment-by-moment living, choose to yield yourself to God. It is your choice, "*Oh' called one, who is loved by God and preserved by Jesus Christ!*"