

## **Are You His Doulos?**

Do you claim to be a born-again Christian? If you truly are one, than you are or are on the way to becoming, a doulos of Christ Jesus. You cannot become a redeemed Christian, one who has been given eternal life with God, unless you are His doulos! Saying “on the way to becoming a doulos,” is merely recognizing the fact that salvation begins with justification, which is always followed by the sanctification process. This process can be well expressed as ones doulos relationship with Jesus. Through the divine foreknowledge of God and His sanctifying grace, He initiates in the believing redeemed soul, this perfecting process as a bond slave to Christ Jesus for the rest of physical life. If this relationship is not in evidence, then something is tragically wrong, for without it, no salvation took place!

The evidence of a genuinely saving faith is not as simple or as easy to achieve, or to discern as many choose to believe. To say “I believe in Jesus,” or “I have faith in Jesus”, and to not understand the awesome life-altering commitment that this needs to mean, if it is to be effectual, is a travesty of worldwide proportion afflicting billions of souls. In order to know what it is to be born-again, one must understand far more about the nature, the purpose and the means of the salvation that God has provided. The “hit and run” evangelical, who fails to mention the “fine print” portion of the contract that deals with humility, repentance, and obedience, regardless of his or her good intentions, has only superficially introduced a potential believer to the mystery and blessing of what being “saved” is all about.

How can anyone be saved unless they realize that they are in dire need of a Savior? Can this need be sufficiently recognized until and unless one, in complete humility and submissiveness, is aware of their utterly hopeless and sin-racked condition for which divine justice demands eternal punishment? No, it cannot! Only a soul in this condition is at the starting point of the one and only path that leads to salvation, and that it is through Jesus, the One and the only One who can save one from eternal damnation.

Milestones along the way, such as recognition of the Lordship of Jesus, should greatly solidify our gratitude, faith, love, a repentant spirit, and obedience. The saved soul, as it proceeds through God's sanctifying process necessarily adopts permanently, all of these qualities. They then manifest in the life-long characteristics of a doulos of Christ Jesus.

What is a "doulos" one may ask, and how does one become one? Doulos is the Greek word meaning slave. Nearly all translations try to soften this fact by using such terms as "servant", or "bond servant". In the minds of many "doulos" is associated with the Hebrew word "ebel" meaning servant in bondage, or bondman. We find in Exodus 21:2-6 God's law as given to Moses regarding the manner of bondage permitted among Hebrews. *"<sup>2</sup> If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. <sup>3</sup> If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. <sup>4</sup> If his master has given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself. <sup>5</sup> And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out free: <sup>6</sup> then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever."* The interesting aspect of this manner of servitude was that it had a maximum limit, and that the servant could choose to remain in servitude. However, if he did, it had to be for the rest of his life, and he had to be officially sealed to that family through confirmation by a judge and by the hole in the ear in which it was customary to place a ring, probably a signet ring identifying the household to which he belonged. What a beautiful prophetic analogy this is to those who belong to the family of Christ as His doulos.

1. The head of the household "bought" the servant, just as Jesus bought all who would be of His family. He bought and paid for us through the shedding of His blood and His suffering on the cross.
2. The master's purchase of the person was actually a rescue. The person was most often hopelessly in debt, a debt that he could never repay in any other way. He was broke, broken in spirit, and inevitably headed for great disaster, absent

- someone to rescue him. It's those who are hopelessly in spiritual debt through sin, those broken in spirit because of the crushing weight of their sins, that our Lord purchases and thereby rescues, if they will but come to Him,
3. The bondslaves could not be held for more than seven years or until they had earned out their debt, which ever was shorter. This aspect of the analogy does not apply. Once His, one is eternally His. Jesus paid for the sins of the entire world, but the payment is effectual only for those who choose Him as their Lord and Savior so as to become His *doulos* forever.
  4. However, the analogy resumes, if they chose to continue to be the master's bond slaves. That choice was for life. Once saved always saved, and forever residents of His heavenly household. Even though one might choose a life-long commitment, the master also had to accept the servant and agree to the arrangement. Through His divine foreknowledge, our Lord also is a Chooser of whom ever He accepts into His Heavenly realm.
  5. The petitioning *doulos* had to "plainly say, I love my master." One who chooses to be a *doulos* of Jesus must love Him sincerely and openly express that love. Can any of us be a slave of Jesus and not love Him? If that love is not in us for Him, then whatever servitude there is, comes from fear or deception, and has no relevance in the matter of salvation.
  6. It was required that a judge be involved in this transaction. The authenticity of the servant's commitment had to be determined by a judge before the transaction became official. Our Great Judge sees in our hearts the sincerity of our commitment and officiates over our transactions with Christ Jesus.
  7. This having been determined, an indentifying seal had to be provided to the servant. The seal was an earring. The master would pierce the earlobe of the *doulos* and offer a permanent ring on his ear, a ring which identified who his master was. To be known as, and to be called Christian, is the equivalent to the wearing the earring seal of our belonging to Jesus. Our Christian faith and service, our position as *doulos* to Jesus, should be unmistakably evidenced to the world by our walk, our love, our works, our obedience, and our very countenance as we navigate the troubling waters of the world.

We find that all five writers of the Epistles, that is John, James, Jude, Peter and Paul each referred to themselves as *doulos*. They fully recognized Jesus' Lordship, not only as God, but also as their personal Lord, and therefore their Master. This is the divinely decreed relationship between Jesus and every redeemed Christian, that Jesus is both Lord and Savior. He suffered and died for us, He paid in full for each of us who make Him our Lord as well as our Savior. Having risen from the dead, for those who accept His gift of salvation, He becomes Lord and Master, and we become His bond slaves, His *doulos*, in every sense of the word. Those who believe that they are saved by accepting His gift of salvation, but see no essential need to become His *doulos* in order to be saved, have missed the essence of what salvation is all about. If Jesus is not Lord and Master of all of who you are, then He is not and cannot be your Savior. Lord and Savior is who He is, all in one entity. He will not be bifurcated, no matter how much of modern evangelism tries to do so, that is tries to position His Lordship as anything but our Master for whom we work in love and in humble unquestioning obedience.

God's whole purpose for creation was to provide for Himself and for His glory, a family of mankind to each be likenesses in His image. Those He created in this manner chose to disobey (sin) and thereby soiled that image. In His divine foreknowledge He knew this would happen, and therefore provided a process through which man could be cleansed and restored to the required perfection. By His divine wisdom Jesus became the means of that achievement. His suffering death and resurrection paid the judicially decreed price for all the sins of the world so that God's justice could be satisfied. However, justice becomes satisfied and cleanses only the souls who truly believe on Jesus and what He achieved. There is no doubt that the moment one genuinely believes in the ordained manner, one is truly saved to eternal life.

However, a genuine believer is also one who has committed his or her life to Jesus as Lord and Master and to whom one is to be obedient for the rest of one's life. That is, one takes on the duties and obligation of a *doulos*. At that moment of initial belief however, only God knows with certainty whether or not that belief is genuine, and thereby

affecting justification. Once that pledge of true faith has been made, the spiritual penalty for all past, present and future sins has been eliminated, and that person has been set apart from the world. It is then that the process called sanctification is begun through the now indwelling Holy Spirit. This justified person is the same sin-filled, wicked, evil being he or she ever was. Justification only removed the penalty of sin, not it's propensity to sin. It is the sanctification process provided by the power of indwelling Holy Spirit that removes the power of sin over the soul.

The visible working of the Holy Spirit in this manner evidences the validity of one having been justified, and the justified soul becomes a *doulos*, a bond slave to the Master and Lord, Christ Jesus. What else is in the sanctification process, or what could it ever be, other than the ever-strengthening commitment to love and obedience, and to the living out a life consistent with that commitment? However, knowing the meaning of obedience and living a God-honoring life does not come by osmosis. God's Word as He provided it is for our learning of these things, and must be studied and applied if we are to be effectual in our service to Him.

Jesus demands many things of those who are His own. Those who won't comply are simply not His, and never were. An overriding theme of the New Testament Epistles, as well as the Gospels, is the necessity for every soul who seeks salvation to become a *doulos*, eternally dedicated to serve the Lord Christ Jesus. Today, this and even the Gospel message are under-played, if played at all, in most Christian churches. The Epistle of James provides a wealth of evidences attesting to this requirement. In his very first words he identifies himself as "*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...*" The servant here, as in all of the Epistles, is "*doulos*" in the original Greek. Then he speaks most compelling regarding works as being both the evidence and the necessity that validates a saving faith and belief. Three times (Chapter 2:17, 20, 26) James defines faith without works as being DEAD THAT IS INEFFECTUAL, NOT HAVING BROUGHT ABOUT SALVATION! We might even say that James is mocking the works-less "believer" when in verse 19 he says "*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*" The works of which

James speaks might be summed up as what a doulos of Jesus would be expected to perform on a day-by-day basis.

Thus as we see that belief alone does not fully express salvation, might we not again relate this observation with the fact that Jesus is both Lord and Savior? We are told that by grace through faith we are saved, and simply to believe is to be saved. This would seem to relate to the Savior aspect of Jesus. However, the Lord aspect of Jesus requires this additional element before there can be effectual salvation, that is obedience to the Lord. Calvin put it well when he said, “we are saved through faith alone but faith is never alone.” By very definition, a Lord or Master is one who sets rules, issues commands and requires obedience from those over whom He is Lord. It’s inescapable, that a saved soul is under the authority of Jesus as both Lord and Savior. It is implicit in the meaning of “belief” or “faith” that there be acceptance of the Lordship of Christ Jesus. Where James speaks of works, we should also realize that he is not merely referring to feeding the poor, etc. but serving in loving obedience to our Lord and Master. This element, obedience is seldom heard from the pulpit or hardly anywhere in evangelical circles. Do you ever even find it in the modern church songs?

Notice, in James 2:21-24 *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”* What he says about Abraham, as an example regarding of a “saving” kind of works. *“...And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God....”* Here, if we elaborate a little, we find a wonderful example of what James is telling us about faith and works as well as Gods sanctifying process working its way to fulfillment. Let’s start with Genesis 12:1 *“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee:”* Did Abram obey? Yes he did. Led by his father Terah, he departed from his home in Ur.

(Acts 7:4) He didn't leave his "kindred" or go directly to Canaan. How could he, unless God raised him up spiritually. How could he see Canaan that was over 600 miles to the west on the other side of the Arabian Desert? Instead, he went 600 miles north up the Euphrates River to Haran where he remained for five years, until his father Terah died.

It was then and only then that God showed him Canaan, which had as its eastern boundary, the Euphrates River. Then, as ordered, he headed southwest into where God had told him to go. However, because of a local famine he soon left the land of his blessing and went south into Egypt. There he deceived the authorities on two different occasions both about his wife, in order to save his own life. God treated him well in spite of these "pragmatic" deceptions. He left Egypt a very rich man, probably the richest in all of Canaan as we will see a little later when he takes his own army of 318 armed and trained servant "army" to save his nephew Lot, and his family who had been taken captive from Sodom, his home.

Genesis 14 tells the story of how five Hamite kingdoms including Sodom had been conquered by an alliance of four Shemite kings, and all the people, including Lot and his family were taken captive. Abram, with his 318 man army routed the armies of four kings, rescued Lot and his family, and returned to their homes all of the captives along with all of their goods. Scripture then tells us of his homage and tithing to Melchizedek (king of righteousness) the king of Salem and the "the priest of the most high God" (Genesis 14:18-20). There we find Abram's refusal to take any spoil or reward, but instead praising "the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" For more on this "King of Salem" see the study called "Milchizedek"

Here we finally see evidence of Abram's having been justified and his sanctification in progress. After this, God swore a unilateral covenant regarding Abram's seed and the land. As this fascinating saga continues, we see Abram advancing and backsliding in the development of his faith, as evidenced by the Hagar episode. The first climax of the story occurs in Genesis 17, when the then 98-year-old Abram becomes Abraham and Sari becomes Sarah, sacramentally reflecting or signifying this great covenant. The covenant

promised that Abram would be the father of many peoples. Thus Abram, meaning “the father of height”, became Abraham, meaning “father of multitude” Sari, meaning “princess” became Sarah, meaning “chiefteness or queen,” (as we find “Sarah” translated in Isaiah 49:23.) Of course, the great climax of Abraham’s journey was his unhesitating act of obedience when he proceeded to fulfill God’s commandment to sacrifice his son Isaac. That was an act of absolute and unquestioning faith, the establishing Abraham along with Moses as the “doulos maximus” of Hebrew history.

What was the means by which Abraham and all the other Old Testaments saints were saved? It was by faith as evidenced by obedience, which we might call the highest form of works. How is one saved today? In exactly the same way! God hasn’t changed! What has happened is that there has been an increase in knowledge regarding the subject. We now have the benefit of the New Testament where we find Jesus revealed and the process of salvation being made far easier to understand. Jesus is and always was the Savior, positionally. He always was that aspect of the Triune Godhead dealing most prominently and definitively with man and his salvation.

Before we move on we should look again at James 2:24 *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”* Does this say that Jesus ‘sacrifice on the cross was incomplete, that faith plus works are necessary for salvation? No, not at all! It’s simply that a justifying faith cannot be without works, but only by works of a kind that demonstrates the validity of the faith. Matthew Henry had a good observation “We see then in verse 24, how that by works a man is justified, not by a bare opinion or profession, or believing without obeying, but by having such faith as produces good works. And to have to deny his own reason, affections, and interests, is an action fit to try a believer.”

James term “works” has a different meaning than it did for Paul in Romans 3:28 where he is referring to the deeds of obedience to the Mosaic Law through one’s own effort. James “works” refer to an obligation to God and man that are commanded in Scripture and that must proceed from a sincere faith, a pure heart, the grace of God, and the desire to please



Christ. Can we not see how that expresses what being a Doulos is all about? It is works of obedience! It's these works, and I believe none other, that demonstrates a true saving belief as Matthew Henry so well expressed.

Many who claim to be Christians reject the idea of "doulos-ship." To claim belief, faith and love for Jesus, and "try" to lead "good" lives are considered adequate for salvation even in many main line Christian churches. Is it "over kill" to claim the necessity of obedience, as in being a doulos to Jesus? Is that an excessive and unnecessary commitment for the bringing about of salvation? If that is your belief, is it strong enough that you are willing to risk the pains of eternal hell by holding fast to it? Has your study (not just reading) of Scripture been so intensive and so deep that your certainty is founded in it, or is it derived merely from "feelings" or the persuasions of others, or what is currently popular theology?

There is much in Scripture that speaks compellingly to this issue of servitude, if one but searches a bit. Look at Matthew 11:29, 30 *"<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* Here Jesus says to take His yoke, and that it is light. This word yoke is "zugos" in the Greek and in this context means "servitude, law or obligation." Isn't our Jesus here telling us to accept servitude to Him? Isn't the law or obligation" here simply expressions of obedience to Him as our Lord and Master? Notice He speaks of this as being "easy" and the burden as "light." The thought of being a bondservant or bond slave doesn't seem like it would be easy or light. However, remember love for the master is a pre-requisite for being his doulos. Love makes all burdens lighter.

I remember a famous story about Boy's Town, a mid-west Christian home for homeless boys. It is said that one day a boy came there carrying his younger brother on his back, apparently from a considerable distance. It was commented that his brother must have become very heavy. To this the boy replied, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother." And so it is with the burdens of a doulos of Jesus. Love and gratitude for who He is and what He

did and does for us will make all of His burdens seem light. We can see from verse 28 of Matthew 11, which precedes the call, that Jesus is appealing to all who are burdened by their sins, those “...*that labor and are heavy laden...*” The burden of yet unforgiven sins, and their on-going consequences can be unbearably heavy for those who understand their condition and their need for a Savior. Jesus promises them rest from these burdens if they will accept His offer, the much lighter, easier burden of being His doulos. Notice He says, “...*My burden is light...*” Might we not see this as a sort of play on words? Jesus is the “light” that makes the burden light.

Now let’s see what Jesus says in John 14:15 “*If ye love me keep my commandments.*” Jesus the Lord and Master is indicating that if our love for Him is real, we will live by His commandments. Each will obey Him as a doulos! It doesn’t mean to keep them on the coffee table or bookshelf, but keep them in our hearts and minds in daily application. In John 14:23, Jesus repeats this idea when He says, “...*If a man love me, he will keep my Word...*” In John 15:10 Jesus says, “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.*” In verse 14 He says, “*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*” This “if” is a conditional participle, meaning that you are not his friend if you do not do whatever He commands. These all sure sound to me like a calling to a Master/doulos relationship! Can one who is not a friend of Jesus spend eternity with Him? Is the Bema seat judgment of saved souls in heaven going to result in two groups, those who love him and are His friends, and those who do not love Him and are not His friends? Hardly!

Evidence abounds throughout Scripture that saved souls, each and everyone, is His doulos. There are no “loop holes” to that command. You can sing His praises with booming voices amidst ear-shattering amplified music, you can wave your arms and exude great passion and seemingly inspired expressions of love during Sunday service, and you can enjoy the sermon, serve the church, and the fellowship in many ways. These are all beautiful and delightful to God, if they emanate from a Spirit-filled heart. However, unless grateful loving obedience to Him is the keystone of the spiritual archway through which you walk moment by moment, something vital is missing. Love

of Jesus is not an emotion. It is a commitment, and that to obedience as His doulos. Serving Him as His doulos is not only compelling evidence that you have been justified, but also that the sanctifying process is proceeding as it should be in all saved souls.

If many ever read this, some will scoff at the amount of one's life I suggest be willingly committed in order to pass through the narrow gate. Each of us must choose for ourselves how much is enough to satisfy their own assessment of what God has said regarding the matter. I pray that yours is one in accordance and in compliance with the full word of God. Whoever chooses to water it down, better save some of that water, because they will need it where they are going in order to wet their parched lips as did the rich man when he begged that Lazarus bring him some. (Luke 16:24)