

# Slavery references in the bible theology religion essay



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100% Textbook 70% Slavery in Scripture An Introduction Why take the time to provide a doctrinal statement regarding the interpretation of slavery references in the bible? First of all, false biblical teaching regarding the issue of slavery has been a means of justifying the enslavement of black people in America. Long before there were departments of cultural anthropology and Egyptology to provide pseudo-scientific cachet to the justifications of systematic discrimination against blacks, theologians and preachers supplied the rationales that were used to sanctify slavery and to make the oppression of Africans the "will of God".<sup>[i]</sup> Secondly, the purpose of American slavery was to utilize the near free labor of the slave to create wealth<sup>[iii]</sup> to which the slave or his successors would never receive access. In order for this economic separation to be maintained, race must become a perpetual caste, keeping American wealth out of black hands in perpetuity. With the demise of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself, systematic institutionalized discrimination accomplishes this task. As a consequence of this and other factors to be discussed, blacks do not hold an appreciably higher percentage of American wealth than they did at the onset of the Civil War<sup>[iv]</sup>. The creation of the systems necessary to maintain this inequality: systems of education, employment, law enforcement, urban planning, politics, media and theology produce effects in black people; emotional, psychological and spiritual effects. Paul teaches in Romans 12: 1-3 that an accurate self-concept is critical to one's ability to live the Christian life. The maintenance of enforced inequality and the power [through education, media and theology] to attribute its effects to black inferiority create definite spiritual effects as men, women and children attempt to address the anger,

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frustration, helplessness and fear produced by this system. This system limits opportunity directly through access to safe neighborhoods, quality education, hiring and promotion, political power [these comprise social conditioning] and indirectly through the maintenance of the systems that create and maintain inaccurate and stereotypical thinking regarding blacks [psychological conditioning]. These same systems [e. g. media, social sciences] possess the power to explain the black situation in America as primarily a consequence of poor decision-making or moral weakness rather than the product of a longstanding strategy which finds its roots in the slavery system of old. The unwillingness of the black church to forthrightly address these realities and their effects upon the spiritual life deprive the black Christian of the spiritual resources to deal with these realities, with devastating effects upon Christian discipleship as well as institutional effects upon marriage, the family and the community. Thinking [v3], Minds [v2], Bodies [v1]

Romans 12: 1-3 (AV) 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Sober thinking [v][v3] is the antecedent of knowing the will of God [v2]. Knowing the will of God is necessary in order to provide the reasonable service to God [v1]. This transformation [renewing [vi]] of the mind is the spiritual means by which the carnal mind becomes capable of providing

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useful service to God. The ability to change a person's self-concept has spiritual repercussions. What was once accomplished by whips and chains is now achieved via social and psychological programming. The manufacture of spiritual losers [i. e. spiritual warfare] is a major product of the modern technology of race that finds its roots in the theological justifications of racial exploitation in American slavery. When Jesus healed a person, he applied divine power to the specific problem at hand. If a person was blind, He healed that blindness. In like manner, the church must directly address the issues that make such a great contribution to the spiritual problems of black people. The black church has been both afraid[vii]and theologically unable to apply the Word of God directly to the major social issue that afflicts black people. As a consequence, in spite of the many churches in the black community, the community itself is not only unchanged, but is getting worse because of the collapse of the primary institutions of marriage and family. The methods designed to undermine the thinking of the African slave so that he would become a more productive worker must be dismantled by the church by correcting the version of theology and of Christianity[viii]that is still in use and still performing the same functions that it did in the 18th and 19th centuries. Slavery is Inconsistent with the Creative Purpose of GodSlavery is counter to the entire concept of man's role in creation. This is one way we know that slavery is not God's intent for mankind. Genesis 1: 26-28 (AV)26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he

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them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Image[6754] and Likeness [1823] of God There is debate as to the meaning of these words: image and likeness. Do they refer to the moral nature of God, His self-consciousness, rationality, or even human versions of his ability perceive reality empirically? Whatever the terms image and likeness reference, it is certain that they do not add up to slavery or subjection or chattel property in the hands of another. Slavery is inconsistent with the purposes of God in the creation of mankind. Dominion [7287] This word means to rule, to dominate, to tread down, to subjugate. Rather than to be the subject of rule under slavery to men, mankind was created to rule the earth. God specifies the extent of the rule of the man and the woman: Genesis 1: 26 (AV) 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. The practical outworking of the image of God in man was the exercise of dominion over the earth. The domain of the rule of mankind is limited to the earth itself and to lower creation, but no authority is given man to dominate his fellow man. Subdue [3533] The word to subdue means to bring into subjection, or to bring into bondage. Rather than to become the subject of such control, man was to place the created world under his own control. Human slavery is a reversal of the plan of God whereby man becomes the servant rather than the ruler of his environment. Slavery is a Result of the Fall of Mankind Genesis 3: 16-20 (AV) 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy

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conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. The fall of mankind changed the relation of man to the earth. The arable ground and its animal life was now hostile to mankind. The fall also corrupted the relations between human beings: the man and the woman have become opponents seeking to undermine and control one another. In the next generation, the first murder will occur and before long, the capture and sale of men. Slavery is the attempt to shift the burden of the curse of the fall upon others. The hard labor required to make the earth productive, the nursing and raising of children, the daily drudgery of upkeep and maintenance to the home and the community was placed upon slaves so that the privileged could mitigate the curse under which all of mankind was placed by God. Slavery can be voluntary or involuntary. When voluntary, slavery is an alternative to something that is considered even worse than slavery itself. This is the type of slavery that is found in the scripture. Slavery can be an alternative to death in the case of those who have been defeated in warfare. Slavery has been an alternative to death, especially for women and children (Num 31: 6-12; Deut 20. 13-18). Slavery for the purpose of payment of debts may be either voluntary or involuntary (Lev 25. 47-55; Ex 22. 2-3). Slavery may be a penalty for committing a crime <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

(Ex 22: 2-3 ). One can also be stolen and forced into slavery or stolen and sold to another as a slave (Ex 21. 16; Deuteronomy 24: 7; 1Tim 1. 8-11). The slavery that is regulated in scripture includes enslavement due to war or due to economic reasons. A distinction is made between the bondage of genetic Israelites and foreigners. The bondage of the genetic Israelite is temporary, the enslavement of the foreigner could be permanent and hereditary, although even this was not mandatory. The conversion of the foreign slave was anticipated in the bible (and foreign slaves born into the household were expected to be circumcised), but this did not change the permanent character of their bondage. The enslavement of persons who were stolen or purchased from others who had stolen them was prohibited under pain of death (Ex 21. 16; Deuteronomy 24: 7; 1Tim 1. 8-11). This means that the slavery that was common in the United States would not be subject to biblical regulation because first, it was based upon kidnapping either by whites or by Africans who sold them to whites. Many so called African wars were conducted for the express purpose of acquiring slaves for future sale[ix]. Secondly, it was based upon coercion without any antecedent debt, either financial or as a consequence of the defeat of war. In other words, American slavery was a form of theft. Third, America slavery was primarily limited to one race, for whom the institution was justified on the basis of a divine curse, the so called curse of Ham. Fourth, the American system was characterized by brutality and sexual abuse, which are prohibited in scripture against slaves. The regulation of slavery in the O. T. was the regulation of a system that was an evil due to its derivation from the basic sinfulness of mankind. War and poverty are continuing human conditions that will only end with the final conquest of sin in the world. In regulating slavery God was

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recognizing it as an imperfect alternative to even worse evils that was in need of regulation to prevent excesses.[x]Exodus 21: 1-2 (AV)1 Now these are the judgments [ordinances rw] which thou shalt set before them. 2 If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. God's regulation of the institution of slavery does not mean that He is in agreement with it. God regulates a number of human activities that have no origin in His plan for mankind. God regulates divorce, which He hates Mal 2. 16 c. f. Matt 19. 8. Polygamy was not God's plan for mankind as demonstrated in the Garden of Eden. God allowed and regulated it as an alternative for the protection of women. In the New Testament, God instructed the church to return to the original standard (1Tim 3. 2 " the husband of one wife"-with respect to Dr. Mounce). Note that God regulates polygamy (Ex 21. 9-11); but He does not regulate homosexuality (Lev 20. 13). He regulates manslaughter (Num 35), but he does not regulate murder (Ex 21. 13). God does not regulate sin. God implemented laws in Israel not only for ceremonial purposes and types, but to maintain order among sinful individuals. Law in this sense recognizes forensically the moral limitations of mankind and places restrictions upon the expression of the sin nature. Under the function of law, certain behaviors are allowed but limited, other actions are prohibited altogether. Biblical limitation upon a behavior does not make that behavior into a virtue. The bible regulates drinking alcohol, but that regulation does not make it a virtue. God regulates divorce which provides a limited solution that pre-empted even more extreme solutions that would corrupt God's purpose and function for marriage in society. The same regulation is applied to manslaughter, where the next of kin was justified in seeking justice in the <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>



form of capital punishment (Gen 9. 6), but a way of escape was mercifully provided to the guilty to avoid the escalation of bloodshed beyond the requirements of capital punishment. In each case we find God regulating an imperfect solution in the place of ever worse alternatives. In no case do we find God in the position of regulating sin, which is the situation found in American slavery. To demand that individuals submit to kidnapping and enforced racial servitude under brutality and rape is not in view in the commands to slaves in the N. T. Such a situation would put God in the position of violating His own character and justifying crime and racial prejudice, not to mention the abuse of the scriptures by their false application in the pronouncement of a racial curse, a thing unheard of in scripture or reputable theology. Therefore the N. T. commands to slaves cannot be applied to American slavery except to condemn the institution as criminal. Slavery is a Violation of the Commandments God provided Israel with a codicil of the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, which outline the principles necessary for Israel's efficient survival and function as a nation. The commandments summarized the principles which enabled the nation to coexist with God who dwelt in the midst of the people. The consistent violation of these principles led to the judgment of Israel and the temporary loss of its evangelistic agency in the world. Slavery is in opposition to several of the Commandments and thereby is not only a violation of God's intent in creation, but also of His design for the rehabilitation of human civilization[xi]. The very context of the giving of the Commandments is an admonition regarding slavery: Exodus 20: 1-2 (AV) 1 And God spake all these words, saying, 2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Deut 26. <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

6-10)The principles of the Commandments are the key to human freedom, which is a product of true spiritual freedom. The proper attitude about God: His Person [Commandments 1-3] and His Works [Commandment 4], create the spiritual freedom that issue into physical or national freedom. Israel was free because God had made them free. It was not His intent that they be slaves or that they make slaves of others. Israel was to be God's agency of evangelism in the world. Slavery is an artifact of the Fall, the inevitable result of man's attempt to gain freedom from God. Exodus 20: 3-11 (AV)3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; 6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. 7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. 8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. The American brand of slavery required the violation of the Commandments. God regulated slavery in order to prevent this from occurring in Israel. Exodus 20: 13-14 (AV)13 Thou shalt not kill. 14 Thou shalt

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not commit adultery. Mankind is entitled to life (thou shalt not kill) and therefore he must also be entitled to protect his own life. A right that cannot be defended is not a right. This is why the slave was released for as much as the loss of a tooth (Ex 21. 26-27). The law of murder applied for the loss of any life including that of slaves. This regulation protected the slave from excessive brutality. It was this type of brutality which characterized the African Slave trade, from capture, to the Atlantic Passage[xii], to the daily life of the slave.[xiii]Lev 24: 17And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. KJVLev 24: 22Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the Lord your God. KJVThe inherent, inalienable right of a person to his own life is taken away by murder. God provided Adam and Eve with life and with a commandment regarding their behavior in the Garden. Having provided those instructions, He left them free to make their own choices. God did not deprive mankind of the freedom to succeed or to fail. God was free to enslave man, but He refrained from doing so. The slave of Jesus is a slave by choice. However, there is one who delights in enslaving men. Heb 2: 14-16 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. NASUnregulated slavery deprives a man of his life through the threat of death and the reality of physical brutality. It is for this reason that God regulates the institution. American slavery was characterized by rape[xiv]. The black race is genetically identified with Europeans not because of intermarriage (Deut 22: 28-29) but because of wide scale rape spread over centuries. In the <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

scriptures rape was treated in the same manner as murder and kidnapping (Deut 22: 25-27). The provision of the death penalty for these offenses is a clear statement of God's attitude towards them. American slavery compounds these offenses under one debased system of crime. God made provision for women under slavery for their protection in this area (Ex 21. 9-11). Exodus 20: 15 (AV) 15 Thou shalt not steal. 17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. Not only is the individual entitled to his life, he is also entitled to the fruit of his labors. This commandment against theft indicates that man is entitled to have property. The one who has no right to life neither has any right to property. The slave cannot own property because the slave is property. In this is seen why controls were placed upon slavery to limit it to situations where other solutions were unacceptable. The slave was indeed chattel under biblical law (Ex 20. 20-21). However given his alternatives, slavery was preferable. By contrast, American slavery was in itself the worst case scenario: It was not as a consequence of war, financial insolvency or criminality on the part of the slave. It was a system of oppression created exclusively for the financial benefit of others without regard for scripture or moral principle[xv]. In the tenth commandment, the bible states that not only does a person have a right to his own property and employees, but that he ought to be free from the covetous designs of his neighbor upon that which is his. The very desire of men's hearts to take what belongs to another is abhorrent to God, much more the taking of the man himself. As was stated earlier, because of the lack of any antecedent reason for American slavery [warfare, financial insolvency or even crimes

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committed], the institution constituted blatant theft of the deserved wages of the Africans and their heirs. American slavery was justified by a virulent racism which not only sought to enslave blacks, but to keep all blacks regardless of their slave or non-slave status, separate from the wealth that they and their brethren produced [other than wages which are held to a fraction of white wages[xvi]]. This racism was systematized in both the laws and the social practices of American society. These practices became so entrenched that the existing laws that pertained to all free Americans were not found sufficient to guarantee the basic freedoms of the freed slaves and new laws had to be created.[xvii]Although slavery is not God's intent for mankind, the biblically regulated categories of slavery served a purpose which stabilized society and mitigated even worse potential measures on the part of men. By contrast, American slavery was based upon racial discrimination where blacks were singled out as designated by God to be slaves[xviii]. Some argue that the commands of the NT which require that slaves submit to their masters applies to the American institution as well. To command slaves to be obedient under such a structure would require God to some extent sustain the justifications beneath the American institution, not to mention its many excesses. It is not consistent to say that God regulated a system without simultaneously making a statement that He sustained it as useful for some purpose. Both martial and economic forms of slavery fit this paradigm. However slavery based upon kidnapping, false doctrine and racism for the purpose of profit is requiring logically that God ratify these underlying elements and thus contradict His own commands regarding the institution of slavery. Further there is no biblical justification for racially based slavery. Such an unnatural arrangement by its very nature requires

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crime for its continued existence. Examining the Texts<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 7: 21-24 (AV)<sup>21</sup> Art thou called being a servant [1401]? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.[xix]<sup>22</sup> For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. <sup>23</sup> Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. <sup>24</sup> Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. Paul was giving instruction to the Corinthian churches in response to questions that were put to him. In this passage he advised them that the believer should remain in the social relation in which he was called, or born again. There were cases where this would not be possible, for example the unmarried could marry if the alternative would be fornication (1Cor 7. 1-9). In like manner, slaves should be content in their status but if the opportunity to become free became available [perhaps through purchase], then freedom is to be preferred [see endnote xviii below]. The underlying principle is that regardless of one's social relation to other men, the believer is first and foremost the servant of God. His fidelity to the law of God supersedes every commandment of human law and social custom. In as much as human society did not require the compromise of biblical principle, the believer was to be at peace with his social situation. The individuals spiritual and psychological well-being was to derive from his relation to God and not from his social situation. This passage should not be used to condone slavery. Although there were interpreters who read v21 to mean that the slave should seek to remain in slavery even if freedom were made available,[xx]there are many who see this interpretation as contrary to the context, to Paul's theology and to the scripture itself. Even the regulated slavery of the biblical era was not a desirable state and freedom was

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obviously preferable. However, the status of slavery was one in which God could be served and glorified and it was a life in which the believer could experience the peace and victory that fellowship with God provides. Then and now, God is bigger than slavery and he is able both to use and to bless the slave while within the institution. Ephesians 6: 5-9 (AV)5 Servants [1401], be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants [1401] of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: 8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. This is another example of the divine management of the institution of slavery in biblical times. As stated earlier, slavery was regulated by God to make it an alternative to even more dire alternatives in use to address situations arising from warfare, financial insolvency and crime. The worse aspects of slavery were forbidden by the Mosaic Law. In this passage, masters are warned regarding mistreatment, even verbal mistreatment of slaves. Consequently this passage cannot be applied to American slavery which violated its regulated counterpart in nearly every respect. Its slaves were kidnapped, they were transported in the most barbaric manner imaginable with little concern for life. They were treated with savage brutality including rape and murder. They were singled out for slavery because of their race which was deemed subhuman. They were determined to have been cursed by God through the deliberate adulteration of the <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

scriptures. They were not enslaved as an alternative to death in warfare, or to pay debts or for crimes but to provide profits. God would not attempt to manage or to regulate a system such as this since this system is essentially criminal. Its participants would have been subject to the death penalty in Israel. This passage does portray that the relations between master and slave were to be governed by spiritual principles: the master was to be respected for his position socially and as a brother if he was a believer. The master was to treat the believing slave as a brother in Christ. Both persons must recognize that they were both slaves to Christ and to him they would have to give account for their service. We will address the issue of God's vindication of the slave who bears up under slavery in 1Pet 2 below. See also Col 3. 22; 4. 1. 1 Timothy 6: 1-2 (AV)<sup>1</sup> Let as many servants [1401] as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. <sup>2</sup> And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. Paul adds a dimension to this instruction by teaching that the relations between saved individuals have evangelistic impact as they are a reflection upon the Lord Himself. The ability of the Word of God to transform the most difficult of human relationships is evidence of its power and efficacy. The transformation of these relationships was to be made a point of doctrine. In the United States an anecdotal, unscientific observation of the church would appear to indicate that racial segregation is still practiced in American churches. This is an indictment of American Christianity and an illustration of the debilitating effect of racial prejudice upon both blacks and whites.[xxi]See also Titus 2. 9-  
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10. Philemon 15-16 (AV)15 For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; 16 Not now as a servant [1401], but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? The book of Philemon has long been used as a justification for American slavery. As we have already said, the bible cannot be used as a justification for American slavery because although God does regulate slavery in scripture, He does not regulate sin and crime, which are the status of American slavery when viewed in light of biblical standards for the institution. In Philemon, Paul does not attempt to overthrow the institution of slavery. What he does overthrow, however, is the concept that a man can truly be the Master of believer in Christ. Many believers have perished because they were not willing to call a man Lord. 1 Corinthians 7: 23 (AV)23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. Matthew 23: 9-10 (AV)9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. In this passage of Philemon, Paul admonishes the slave owner to recognize the social order of heaven as it relates to those who are the slaves of Christ. Philemon was to maintain his role as the slave owner, but as we have noted above, without the evil excesses practiced by the pagans. The slave owner was to regard himself and the slave as those who would one day give an account to God for the witness of their relationship to the world. Onesimus was to return to Philemon and honor the social relation which included his status as a slave. To this he was to add the consideration to Philemon that was to be shown to a brother in Christ. The book of Philemon did not condone the slavery

practiced by the pagans, but regulated that slavery as an alternative to even <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

worse conditions that could ensue without it.[xxii]1 Peter 2: 18-20 (AV)18 Servants [3610], be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. This scripture addresses the issue of the attitude and behavior of the slave towards the oppressive slave owner. This scripture opens the issue, by application, of the relations between American former slaves and their former masters. What should be the attitude of American blacks towards American whites in view of our history and the character of our present relations? In Peter's passage the slave is told to submit with respect to the slave owner, recognizing his right to his position. The slave is told to especially maintain this attitude with the oppressive owner as this provides a greater testimony and is praiseworthy on spiritual grounds as the slave is demonstrating trust in God and spiritual strength. This passage has also been used as a means of behavioral control of black people: even as the ostensibly Christian slave owner oppressed the slave, the slave was reminded of his responsibility to accept such treatment with a view towards heaven. In addressing the issue of the former slaves attitude and behavior we must first recognize the reality that the slave and his descendants were never to enjoy the compounded wealth produced by his forbears. This fact is evidenced in the paltry participation of blacks in the wealth of America even to this day. These facts are explained as they were in the days of slavery as the result of a constitutional inability on the part of black people. Today this is called " bad decision making" or " wrong choices". The idea that there are <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

institutional restraints in effect in education, housing, law enforcement, business, and media is vociferously denied[xxiii]even as the evidence is produced by scholars decade after decade[xxiv]. How does the believing black person address these frustrations? At the same time, there is an intergenerational legacy to slavery in which maladaptive thinking and behavior learned in slavery and under Jim Crow has become a part of the human capital of many black people.[xxv]Negative thinking regarding oneself, the opposite sex, regarding one's personal sense of destiny and powerlessness are ghosts which should not but do impact the function of black people in their interactions with both blacks and whites. Therefore we have the external tension between the existence of intentional, structural racism and the demand that we pretend that it does not exist. On the other hand we have the internal tension between negative psychological baggage regarding black self-worth and the very human desire to attain to ones best destiny. Both the external and internal realities are counterpoised against the demands of scripture. Peter implies that the resources to deal with injustice are provided in the new birth. 1 Peter 2: 18-20 (AV)18 Servants [3610], be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. The believer has a conscience towards God." Suneideesis, "conscience," does not occur in the gospels, unless John 8: 1-11 be admitted into the text. Nor is it a word familiar to Classical Greek. It is compounded of sun, "together with," and eidenai, "to know;" and its fundamental idea is "<https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

knowing together with oneself." Hence, it denotes the consciousness which one has within himself of his own conduct as related to moral obligation; which consciousness exercises a judicial function, determining what is right or wrong, approving or condemning, urging to performance or abstinence. Hence, it is not merely intellectual consciousness directed at conduct, but moral consciousness contemplating "duty," testifying to moral obligation, even where God is not known; and, where there is knowledge of God and acquaintance with him, inspired and directed by that fact." [xxvi] Although every person possesses a conscience, the conscience of the believer is calibrated by special revelation, that is, the Word of God. Through spiritual growth, the believer becomes able to evaluate right behavior in a multitude of environments. He learns how to serve God in every situation and he learns how to assign proper value to God to self and to others. The mature believer does not choose between self-respect and obedience for God, because God's glory is always to his good. It is God who is able to vindicate the believer and it is in God that the status, esteem and destiny is found and secured.

Matthew 10: 39 (AV) 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. Psalm 43: 1 (AV) 1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. 1 Peter 2: 21-23 (AV) 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Therefore, even under conditions of oppression the mentality of the oppressed believer is insulated, reinforced against the emotional damage <https://assignbuster.com/slavery-references-in-the-bible-theology-religion-essay/>

caused by discrimination or other categories of oppression. He has a conscience towards God. The challenge of the oppressed believer is to achieve spiritual maturity because it is the only sure defense against the mental and emotional debility that injustice produces. The spiritual battle for blacks in America therefore is centered around the availability of sound bible teaching. Missionaries are being sent around the world with the gospel and discipleship training, but here in the United States the availability of sound teaching is at dangerously low levels. Misconceptions regarding the gospel, the Holy Spirit and the ecumenical tendencies of the American church endanger the black community and its ability to thrive spiritually and thereby overcome the spiritual gravity of oppression. The effects of this doctrinal scarcity can be seen in the institutions of the black America: in its marriages and families which are the foundation of community. Illustration: The Space Shuttle Launch Metrics" The two SRB's, [Solid Rocket Boosters] with their combined thrust of some 26, 000, 000 N provide most of the power for the first 2 min. of flight. The SRB's take the space shuttle to an altitude of 45 km (45, 000 m) ..." Each booster has a thrust (sea level) of approximately 3, 300, 000 pounds at launch. They are ignited after the three space shuttle main engines' thrust level is verified. The two SRBs provide 71. 4 percent of the thrust at lift- off and during first-stage ascent." [xxvii] The solid rocket boosters [SRB's] are the equivalent of the Word of God in lifting a people to attain a prosperous destiny (Josh 1: 8). All other sources of power [the state, the community] are ancillary, secondary powers that maintain what the initial power has made possible. It is impossible to do what Peter requires in one's own strength. Human thinking does not even provide a rational process that will justify the logic of 1Peter 2. Only a growing personal

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fellowship with God Himself can enable a person to rationalize and to perform as Christ did in humbling Himself so as to free us from our sins. Jesus endured personal injustice for the sake of others. God has vindicated and will vindicate Christ and he will vindicate you in this life and the life to come.

## **Implementation of these Principles in the Local Church**

**1. It is critical that the pastor communicate that the unique challenges and trauma brought about by racial discrimination be addressed rather than suppressed. The pathologies produced by this historic legacy of discrimination and mental programming will not address themselves but will constitute a brake upon spiritual growth. One of the first objectives of effective bible teaching on the subject of race is to free black believers from the damaging perception that they must pretend that systematic prejudice against black people does not exist, or that salvation will solve the problem automatically, without facing it.**

**2. The pastors and teachers must show that the Word of God contains the solution to the problems that black people encounter simply because they are black people. However, the Bible must be applied directly to the issues and people must be taught biblical ways to address the internal effects of discrimination so as not to hamper their spiritual growth, but to serve as a means to detonate growth.**

**3. The problems associated with race have different manifestations in women vs. men and adults vs. children. Therefore skilled teaching specific to these different constituencies is necessary. For example, children must be taught how to deal with what is taught about blacks in school and how to deal with racial stereotypes on television. Parents must be taught how to deal with their children's emotions as a consequence of their experiences in school. Parents must also learn to anticipate and address the tendency to track black students into special education or general education [non-college prep] programs.**

**4. Believers must be taught that just as self-hatred is an inappropriate response to racial frustration, so also is becoming a racially prejudiced themselves. Another chief objective of dealing with the detrimental effects of American is prejudice is to develop a healthy self-concept that is strong enough to avoid becoming a bitter and prejudiced person.**

**5. Blacks have been trained since slavery to deny the obvious regarding discrimination under pain of ridicule, loss of privileges or worse. Pastors must anticipate emotional reactions to uncovering these issues in the congregation. Often the person having the emotional reaction will not fully understand why they are experiencing what they are feeling. Pastors and teachers must be gradual and systematic in their handling of these issues. For example, deal with a set of race specific issues within the context of a larger category. When you teach about marriage, have a section on " the Special Challenges of the Black Marriage." When you are speaking to teens about how to behave in the adult world, add a section on " How to Interact with the Police." During black history month, do a series upon the black nations in the Old Testament [there are many]. Pastors must be skillful in incorporating bible teaching and training directed at the task of healing black people into the overall preaching and teaching schedule for every age group constituency in the church. For the pastor ministering to the black community in the United States, this is a part of his stewardship.**

Colossians 1: 28 (KJV 1900)28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: