Holiday season: working? Contract: holiday entitlement – pay – sickness pay – retirement pension. Rights. Also resp: hours – what job involves.

* A slave in NT times: lots of resp – no rights.
* Slavery for a moment: Under Roman Law: slave: not a person – a thing – property.
  + Different kinds of slavery but at the bottom end: living conditions were brutal, and their lives short[[1]](#endnote-1)
  + Often – riveted metal collar – owners name – so if ran away – returned.
  + Ran away & caught – branded: “fugitive” on forehead.
  + If your master tired of you: sold – or disposed of to fight lions or gladiators in arena.
    - Hard life
* X come along – collided w Roman world – train: radical.
  + Slaves: human beings – not just human but equal worth – value.
  + **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus
    - /Mean: /slave - /MF. Means: /primary identity. New identity more impt: “In Christ”.
  + Imagine! Think how that must have felt to the millions of slaves all over the Roman empire. Might be a slave, /define me.
    - First bishop of Rome – Clement of Rome[[2]](#endnote-2) – appointed after Peter: former slave. Look what is possible! In X we truly are all equal!
  + Remember celebrations when Barak Obama pres? Black ppl – civil rights movement – under Rev Martin Luther King – finally come to fruition – leader of free world!

Why talking about slavery?

**v19** Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

* Roman Citizen - /slave – belong to no one. But…
  + Made myself a slave. What? Out of your mind Paul?
    - Climbed down the ladder – instead of using rights as a citizen – given them up and become a slave to everyone.
* Why?
  + To be more effective at winning people to Christ. That’s whole point of this psg: Willing to give up all his benefits as a Roman citizen – for the sake of the gospel – so that more and more ppl can hear about Jesus.
    - Trying to win as many as possible (v19)
    - Win the Jews (start v20)
    - Win those under the law (end v20)
    - Win those not having the law (end v21)
    - Win the weak (v22)
    - I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. (end v22)
* See how impt the gospel is to P? Winning ppl is so impt: worth giving up everything he was entitled to.
  + I wonder: do we have much of that? Do you? Interested in winning ppl over?
  + How much do we treasure the gospel? Jesus? Our desire to tell others – directly proportional to how much we treasure him.
    - For Paul: treasured J – gospel – so much – worth giving up everything else.
  + Jesus - parable[[3]](#endnote-3): man one day finds a box of treasure in a field – goes away – sells everything he has – buys that field.
    - The size of the treasure is so great – worth giving up everything for temporarily – to gain something far better.
  + P: discovered greatness of that treasure – worth giving up everything else to win others.
    - Even if that’s not esp our calling, ought to be there somewhere. No desire to tell others, /know – forgotten – how great the gospel is.

Been here last few weeks – might wonder: what’s to do with previous topic? FSI? Clear link:

* Question in pagan city of Cor: can we eat FSI? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.
  + Theologically, no big deal - /believe in those pagan gods anyway. So in some circumstances it would be fine.
    - All depends: some people – really upset if you do – associations so strong – might believe in heads: OK. But heart feels wrong.
    - Give up right to eat – out of love - /stumbling block.
    - So sometimes yes – sometimes no.
* Prob: some ppl: Paul – so inconsistent – chameleon – changes behaviour depending on who he’s with.
  + Maybe with Jews: kosher food. Greeks: pig roast.
    - True: I’m free – not under Law – but I want to win ppl to X – so give up rights sometimes – to fit in w others - /offense.
  + When it comes to evangelism: P: when I’m with Jews – trying to win them to X – behave like a Jew. That was his bg – knew understood culture - /offend them unnecessarily.
    - Gospel is offensive enough already – admit you’re a failure and are helpless and hopeless w/o saviour. All attempts to please God on own: failed. Pretty offensive. /Add to that by behaving in ways that will offend them.
  + So: with Jews – become like a Jew – try and win them – adopt their customs – be like them – think like them - give up some of my freedom in X – put myself back under law – so as not to offend the ppl I’m trying to reach w gospel. Means giving up my freedom, but it’s worth it.
  + With those /under Law – Greeks – pagans - /have Jewish Law – I became like them – to win them. Limits to that. /Saying moral compromise - /deny gospel!
    - Flexibility in stuff around gospel – speak language of ppl – understand.
  + Sikh procession – float - every year – lovely ppl. Problems:
    - Singing – chanting diff language
    - Banners – diff language
    - Fliers – ppl – places – unfamiliar to me. /becoming like the British to win the British. Trying to explain their foreign culture.
  + Reflected: 2 things
    - How do we sound to Brits? Do we sound just as alien? We must speak the language of ordinary ppl. That’s why /KJV. Careful with hymns – even familiar ones – my pref: sing – but I know many /words.
    - Xn should – and does – look – sound diff all over world. Hindi service at DBI. Yes! Joyfully Indian – not colonial British!
* [[4]](#endnote-4)Jews, Pagans. Now weak: **v22** To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.
  + Weakest: slaves. B/c like a slave to win slaves to X.
    - Opp of slaves were citizens. How could you tell by looking? Roman citizens wore Toga – annoying – hot, uncomfortable. Why? Showed status. /Slave. /Freedman. Citizen. Honour.
* **Acts 16** – city of Philippi.
  + **v16** – female slave – demon possessed – fortune teller. P and Silas: cast demon out of her in name of J.
  + Owners (**v19**) – very upset – good income from her. Grab P&S – march off to court – stripped – beaten with rods – prison.
  + Eventful night – midnight worship service - earthquake – jailer and family get saved (and baptised!). Morning: magistrates: go now.
* **Acts 16:37** They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.
* **v38** The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed.
  + Alarmed b/c couldn’t just go round beating up Roman citizens. Rights. Fair trial.
* They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city.
* Why didn’t they realise P was a citizen?
  + /Wearing his toga. Why wasn’t he wearing his toga?
  + Because he’s out evangelising slaves **(v16)**. And the last thing slaves want is some entitled toff in a toga telling them what to do with their lives. P /want that.
    - **1Cor 9:22** To the weak I became weak, to win the weak.
  + When I’m trying to win slaves – dress like a slave – talk like a slave - /wear toga. And he won slaves for X.
    - And he got beaten up for it too.
* Might ask: why not just tell the magistrates – hey, I’m actually a citizen?
  + If you were a slave – someone came to you – telling you about J – first sign of trouble: use my citizen card. Feel?
    - Prob think: /blame him. But: turns out he’s not one of us after all - /have to put up with the same stuff we do.
  + But instead – lets himself be beaten too – knowing he could get out any time – why? Coz that’s what they had to put up with. And he wants to live w them – bring gospel to slaves. That brings respect.
* How far are you willing to go to win people for X?
  + Ch planting: want to reach working class area for X? Got to be there. Living there – sharing same troubles – same heartache – same fears.
    - No good driving to community centre in housing estate somewhere – nice ch service – drive off again and say we’re trying to reach so and so area. /Work.
    - Got to be w people – understand the ppl – love the ppl – experience same things: live into their lives: perpetually no phone credit – trying to make sure there’s enough credit for the gas & electric key –
  + /Anyone having romantic notions of ch planting. Go in – mini Park ch – estate gets saved. Hard work – massive commitment – financially costly – even more: emotionally exhausting.
    - Man with 3 ex’s; 1st went off with someone, 2nd went off with the same man, 3rd had a lesbian affair then left; youngest son 6 died - brain cancer – soon after another son died in a motorbike crash.
    - Tragic lives. Where start? Being there. Hard.
* Paul wanted to reach slaves – so lived like a slave among them, even tho he wasn’t one.
  + Massive sacrifice. But that’s what Jesus did:
    - Lived among us – came to the poorest of the poor – weakest of the weak – used all possible means to save some. Gave up all his rights, to save us.
  + Friends, never forget we follow a dishonoured slave. To die on a cross: worst thing imaginable. You want to follow Jesus? The way of the cross is giving up our rights for the love of others.

Quiet – respond in your own heart – HS at work?

* Know you’re pretty hard-hearted - proud?
  + Soften proud hearts. Help us become weak to win the weak.
* Love comfort?
  + Evang anyone /priority? Help us see clearly how small our love is. Come alive to us: shine light of gospel in us - love you more.
* Too busy?
  + Courage to re-order lives around kingdom principles.

*Sing: When Love Came Down To Earth*

*Pray:*

*Come lay your heavy load - chasing after success, honour, power, fame, wealth*

*Down at the Master's feet;*

*Your shame will be removed,*

*Your joy will be complete.*

*Come crucify your pride,*

*And enter as a child;*

*For those who bow down low*

*He'll lift up to His side.*

*Thank you for that profoundly counter-cultural, world-changing truth.*

*AMEN*

Discussion questions

Paul was prepared to behave differently to be more effective in sharing the gospel among different people. What might be different in how we share the gospel…

In a care home?

In a church service?

In a youth group?

Think about: clothes – kind of words – length of message – illustrations

Have you been to a church service in a foreign country? Was it much different to here? Do you think it reflected their culture?

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Clement_I> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Matthew 13:44 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cut for space: **v21** (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) Mean? In Gk – play on words – lost in translation! Pagans: lawless. I became lawless too. But although I’m free from Jewish law – I’m still not completely free to do what I want. Bound by love – Christ’s law: love each other. That’s the thing that constrains my behaviour. True: for Xn person – what controls behaviour? /Law. I’ve never murdered anyone. Not b/c law says so. No: b/c love of X in me screams no! [↑](#endnote-ref-4)