

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE and HANNAH MORE

Topic: SLAVERY

Prepared by Ted W. Fuson and Deborah Upton as the second of seven topical studies in the Summer of 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic for Bon Air Baptist Church

This is the second of seven studies based on Scripture and Eric Metaxas' 7 Men and 7 Women and the Secret of Their Greatness, Nelson Books, 2013, 2015, & 2016.

Some Scripture References on Slavery and Christian Lifestyle:

Philemon 15-17—Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you both in the flesh and in the Lord.

Galatians 3:28—There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 1:8-10—Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of God, which he entrusted to me.

1 Timothy 6:1-2—Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful to them on the ground that they are members of the church; rather they must serve them all the more, since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.

Ephesians 6:5-9—Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ: not only being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord, and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

Colossians 3: 22-25-4:1—Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord, and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. For the wrong doer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

Titus 2:9-10—Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters, and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior.

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Luke 9:23-24—If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.

John 13:35—All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.

Romans 12:1-2—Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

James 1:19-21—My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to be angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humble accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

The topic is slavery.

Here are two excerpts from *Slavery, a Poem* by Hannah More.

I see, by more than Fancy's mirror shewn,

The burning village, and the blazing town:

*See the dire victim torn from social life,
The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!*

100

*She, wretch forlorn! is dragg'd by hostile hands,
To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands!
Transmitted miseries, and successive chains,
The sole sad heritage her child obtains!
Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,*

105

*To weep together, or together die.
By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,
See the fond links of feeling Nature broke!
The fibres twisting round a parent's heart,
Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part.*

110

*Hold, murderers, hold! nor aggravate distress;
Respect the passions you yourselves possess;*

*Thy followers only have effac'd the shame
Inscrib'd by SLAVERY on the Christian name.*

250

*Shall Britain, where the soul of Freedom reigns,
Forge chains for others she herself disdains?
Forbid it, Heaven! O let the nations know
The liberty she loves she will bestow;
Not to herself the glorious gift confin'd,*

255

*She spreads the blessing wide as humankind;
And, scorning narrow views of time and place,
Bids all be free in earth's extended space.*

*What page of human annals can record
A deed so bright as human rights restor'd?*

260

*O may that god-like deed, that shining page,
Redeem OUR fame, and consecrate OUR age!*

*And see, the cherub Mercy from above,
Descending softly, quits the sphere of love?*

Hannah wrote this poem to coincide with Wilberforce's parliamentary effort to abolish slavery. It described the horrors of slavery and put in question Britain's role in the Slave Trade. Hannah More and William Wilberforce by their friendship and commitment to the abolition of slavery and the reformation of morals and manners

changed Britain forever. She needed his parliamentary work and he needed her influence and poetry.

A network of evangelicals called the Clapham Sect worked to make the work of these two Christian leaders effective. She was the most influential woman of her time and he a very well-placed political force in government. Together, by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, they worked to move culture toward respect for all people. There were no riots, no protests, and no murders, just working faithfully to live out their understanding that Creator God did not create people to own other people or to live a life of immoral behavior. What they believed, how they prayed, and how they lived was as effective as that of the first generations of Christians in Greek/Roman culture. They worked for God's kingdom on earth.

In the first lesson notes, Providence, several pages were listed as reference. Here, the entire biographies of Wilberforce and More lead to a mind-boggling study of their Christian worldview vis-a-vis current American culture.

Here is a beginning list of questions or topics for our discussion.

1. Did the writers of scripture believe that some men are superior to others and could therefore, enslave them? What Biblical interpretation leads to supporting slavery?
2. Why are some people skeptical of Christian morality?
3. Is slavery still practiced in our world today? Give examples.
4. If slavery is still practiced, what can Christians currently do about it?
5. What led to about 25% of all single women in London being prostitutes? What leads to prostitution in our society? How can we end it?
6. More and Wilberforce supported companionate marriage. Why?
7. What theology in India led to burning the wives of dead men upon their funeral pyre?
8. How can politicians and citizens collaborate for Christian morality?
9. What about Robert E. Lee's belief that statues and commemorations of the Southern position in the Civil war would deepen the sores of civil disagreement? He swore allegiance to the Union after the war. What about Monument Avenue? What about the effect of the Civil War on Richmond today? What about black poverty much higher than white poverty as a percentage of the black and white populations?