

II. James in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel Life According to James*  
“James, the Prodigal”  
Book of James  
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September 15, 2013 – Morning Sermon

We are in the book of James but I will start off by reading from a passage in Luke 15. This is where the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus for spending a lot of time with sinners and Jesus said “I have news for you because not only do I eat with them but I came to seek them. I came to save them.” Then He tells them three parables – the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. We are going to look at the lost son. This is the parable of the prodigal.

Luke 15:11-32 says [11] *And he (Jesus) said, “There was a man who had two sons. [12] And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. [13] Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. [14] And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. [15] So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. [16] And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*

[17] *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! [18] I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. [19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ [20] And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. [21] And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ [22] But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. [23] And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. [24] For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.*

[25] *“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. [26] And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. [27] And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ [28] But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, [29] but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. [30] But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ [31] And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. [32] It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

Now let's look at James 1:1 which says [1] *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever, and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

This is our second study in James. When you get an email these days, I would have said letter but we get so few of them these days or when you decide to read a book, what is the first thing that you look at? When I started using email the tech people who set it up said "How do you want the email to appear?" I said "I'd like to see who sent it first." They said "Don't you want to see what it says?" I said "No, I want to see who sent it first." Why? I need to know who sent it first because one I may decide not to read it depending on who sent it and two I will know how to read it once I know who sent it. I will know something about the content if I know who the author is.

The same thing is true in God's Word. The Holy Spirit inspired every jot and tittle and has given it to us but He used forty plus human authors. When you read what they wrote you can see their humanity. He used their personality, their background and their education. When God's Word was written through human authors it says the Holy Spirit carried them along. They didn't become robots. The Bible didn't come by mechanically. It's not like James is sitting there and says "I need to write an epistle. Oh my goodness, look at the words coming out of my pen. This must be God's Word." No, this is James and he is writing it. If you want to understand what he is writing, part of understanding it is to understand who wrote it and the uniqueness of this James. Who is he?

That is the way it is with you, isn't it? When you get the email you look at who wrote it and say "Now I can understand what they are writing." Or do you want to read it? If you do want to read it, what are they saying and what would be their burden? When you read the Greek that Paul uses and the Greek that Peter uses you can tell one was educated as a lawyer and a Rabbi and the other was a fisherman. You can see the difference and God used both of those. So there is something about the author that is crucial. So I wanted to come back and dig down just a little bit for a couple of reasons into you and I understanding the author of the book of James.

In our last study, the first study of the book of James, we took an overview of the book of James and we learned that the book of James has a very specific theme. It is the Gospel life according to James. It is known as a wisdom book. It takes its place in the New Testament alongside the Old Testament books of Ecclesiastes, Job, Proverbs and some of the Psalms. Job is the book of the biography of suffering and how God uses that in your life and what He uses it for in your life. After you read Job, read James for here are all the basic principles that Job learned in life and James is giving you the outline of how we live in a sin-cursed world. We are in a sin-cursed world and except for the judgment of God against sin, everything that happens in a sin-cursed world to an unbeliever can happen to a believer, and will likely happen to a believer.

Now how do we live in a sin-cursed world? James says here is the wisdom. You need to know that those in a sin-cursed world who have a Gospel foundation and Gospel motivation have a Gospel life where two things are obvious. One is they persist and persevere in life and ministry and two in the midst of a sin-cursed world persevering in life and ministry, displaying the glory of God's grace, they are actually growing and maturing in God's grace. So the Gospel life of persistent ministry and joyful maturation

in a sin-cursed world can only be done by being informed by the God-sent wisdom so you see what is happening with “wisdom from above” and not with wisdom from below – earthly wisdom which is demonic and chaotic. You can see the tapestry of God’s providence at work so that you stand firm and count it all joy as you’re growing. The adversity isn’t the joy but it’s the joy of what God is doing and the opportunity that God is giving.

That’s why he says you have a Gospel foundation and how is that indicated? Twenty one times in the book of James he calls his audience “my beloved brothers” or “my brothers.” He is assuming you have made that profession of faith and you have a Gospel relationship by faith in Christ and if you have a saving relationship foundationally by faith in Christ then you have a Gospel motivation where the love of Christ compels you. Now you are in a sin-cursed world and you want to live a Gospel life of persistence, perseverance and growth in this sin-cursed world then you have to have wisdom. You have to have a Gospel life view and Gospel wisdom to be able to do that. So James unfolds Gospel wisdom from James 1:2 all the way to James 5:20.

Now here’s the question. Who is writing this? How do you identify yourself? When someone comes up to you and says “Hi, my name is Joe Smith” and I say “Hi, my name is Harry Reeder.” Who is Harry Reeder? I would assess who I was talking to and then I would say “I’m the son of Harry Reeder, Jr. who is the son of Harry Reeder, Sr.” Perhaps that doesn’t get me anywhere so I may say “I’m the son of Evelyn Sheehan Reeder” or “I’m the brother of Dickie, Amy and Beth.” I may identify myself with by my familial relationships. I may say “I’m the pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church” or “I’m a citizen of the United States of America.” So there are all kinds of ways I might identify myself. You know someone by how they identify themselves.

How does the writer of this epistle identify himself? He doesn’t give us a lot of information. He gives us no familial contacts. It just says James, a slave of God and a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Greetings, and then he addresses the Jewish Christians and through them all the Christians who become the children of Abraham throughout all the world. I believe that even though the information is not a lot I think it is extremely helpful and so much so that I’m willing to take one whole study to take a look at it with you.

There are four key words as James introduces himself in James 1:1. The first key word is James. That narrows it down to four possibilities in the New Testament. There is James the son of Alphaeus which was one of the Apostles. The only thing we know about him is that he is James the son of Alphaeus. From speculation, it looks like he is the brother of Matthew the tax collector.

Then there is the possibility of James the father of Judas, not Iscariot. There were two Judas’ who were Apostles. There was Judas son of Iscariot and Judas son of James. All we know about him is that he is the father of Judas. So we have James the less, son of Alphaeus that we know nothing about. We have James the father of Judas that we know nothing about.

Then there is James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee and Salome, who seems to be the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. So this James is a cousin of Jesus. Is it that James? It would be hard to be that James because he is dead. He was killed in Acts 12.

Whoever this James is only has to say one thing and that's "James." He doesn't have to give familial contacts. In other words, he is one of these one name people. For example he is known like "Tiger," "The Babe," and in my era "The Mick." The Mick was Mickey Mantle in my era. There was "Ted" who was Ted Williams who was the greatest baseball player that ever lived and don't argue with me. Around here if I used the name "Frank" many people would know who I was talking about – Frank Barker, the founding pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church. When I wanted to make a point with someone I liked to use the phrase "Can I be frank with you?" but since 1999 when I came to Briarwood I have had to give that up totally because of Frank Barker. I had to get rid of using that one when I came here.

Whoever is writing the book of James gives us one name and that gives us humility but it also gives us a reality. He is somebody that everybody would know. Who would that be? That is James the brother of Jesus and also the brother of Jude who wrote the book of Jude. The reason he is a one name man is a senior pastor of a multi-thousand member church in Jerusalem. He was the moderator of the first assembly. He is called in the Bible one of the four pillars of the church – James, the Apostle John, Peter, and Paul. He is a one name guy. That is the James that is writing this. He is the brother of Jesus.

What is the next thing we know about this James? The next key word is "Doulos." In James 1:1 it says "I am James the doulos" or "James the servant." That's who this James is. Here is a James who in his humility doesn't mention any of his functions in the church. In humility he only gives his one name but in reality everyone would know exactly who he is based on his one name. James says "If you want to know about me, I'm a slave. I'm a slave of God and I am a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ." Doulos is the Greek word for slave. Now let's back up.

In your Bible God authorizes three kinds of slavery in the Old Testament – judgment slavery, mercy slavery and love slavery. Those are my categories. Where judgment slavery is concerned there were times when God through His theocratic relationship – Israel was a theocracy – God would use His people as instruments of judgment against other nations when their iniquity had come to fullness, such as the six nations that occupied the Promised Land. Then God brought them to bring judgment and judgment would be seen by the sword, death to the nation or by slavery to nation. So there would be an authorized judgment slavery that God would use His theocratic nation to accomplish from time to time. Now there is no theocracy and now it's the church from all the nations.

The second kind of slavery that God authorized was mercy slavery. Why do I call it mercy slavery? I call it this because there were times that you could get into debt and you couldn't pay your debts so one of the ways you could pay your debt was God allowed three mechanisms to take care of indebtedness. One of them was a mechanism of slavery and in our culture it later became known as indentured servitude. In other words, you put yourself into slavery to the one whom you owed the money and you would pay them back with the sweat of your brow as a servant or slave to them. That kind of slavery could only last for seven years. That means people didn't make big loans because the slavery couldn't go longer than seven years and then you had to forgive it and set them free. So it was a mechanism of God's mercy so that one could live with integrity and pay off your debts and secondly, not pass your debts onto your children which by the way we're doing in this narcissistic culture.

The third kind was a doulos slave. This is translated four ways in your Bible. Sometimes the word doulos is translated as servant. Sometimes it is translated bond servant. Sometimes it is translated slave. Sometimes it is translated bond slave. I think the best way to translate it is bond slave. Why is there such a differentiation? It is because it is a very unique slavery. It is a slavery where someone was a slave but someone out of love emancipated them by paying the price to ransom them. So someone out of love and at a cost to themselves paid the price to emancipate them from their slavery and a doulos is someone who had been emancipated by someone else's payment out of love for them but then out of love to the emancipator they wrote their own contract and became a "bond" slave to them out of love to them because of what they did to set them free from the slavery that they were in. They now having been set free, freely established themselves as a slave. That is the word that is used here in James – bond slave. James is a bond slave of God and of Jesus Christ.

This is a parenthesis. I couldn't help but think of this in the last couple of weeks knowing that this was the Sunday that we remembered the evil of the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church here in Birmingham, Alabama. What does slavery have to do with that bombing? It has everything to do with it. I want to try and connect a couple of dots here. In this country, in our culture, we enshrined and embedded chattel slavery where a whole race of people are put into slavery for the benefit of others. Two things happened then. One, is obvious and it's the Christian church where instead of bringing the truth of God's Word that confronts man's dignity for the Bible does not allow that kind of slavery for it absolutely forbids it, to bear upon the sinfulness and evil of this man stealing, they took the Biblical forms of slavery and tried to shroud it underneath that. So instead of those great preachers, whom I admired in many ways, confronting that with a prophetic ministry they succumbed to it as they got overly contextualized in a culture. They didn't confront it as they should have.

Here is something else that happens. You can't oppress people and put them into slavery without denigrating and demeaning them to something less than being made in the image of God. So a whole culture of demeaning a whole group of people was enshrined into our culture because that's the only way you can treat someone as a piece of property, when in fact you begin to look at them that way instead of being made in the image of God. Then we fight a war and the war got rid of an institution of slavery. It didn't get rid of the heart view of the people enslaved so when the institution of slavery was gone the heart that would denigrate, control, intimidate and oppress people, was still there and it came out not in the institution of slavery but in the passing of what became the Jim Crow laws. They were still designed to do the same thing which was to take a whole group of people and demean, denigrate and set them aside as something less than people.

If you have never gone through the Civil Rights Museum here in Birmingham, Alabama you need to go. It is very well done historically and tastefully on a very untasteful subject. You will see a whole group of people in our community who had to fight one battle after another. There is a battle where we can be entertained. There is a battle that we can eat where other people eat. We can vote like other people vote. We can be educated like other people can be educated. They fought it step by step by step and as they were winning because one God was blessing it and two it was done with a non-violent approach and three the constitution was ultimately behind it. As it was being

blessed the only way to try and do it was through the eruption of evil and violence such as a bomb and other things. So there is much to repent of but I want to stop here and thank the Lord.

I know the founding pastor of this church, Frank Barker, would say not enough was done and the elders would say it was imperfectly done, but I want to thank the Lord that in the midst of those days there was an effort in the leadership of this church to do what would honor the Lord, even at the cost of the ridicule and mocking of others that we are now able to build upon. In fact, we are ministering in the Fairfield area of Alabama due to the leadership decisions that were made in the 1960s. So now we're able to plant a church and develop relationships. Not only can we repent of sin but more importantly we unite in the work of the Gospel to move it forward for the sake of the Kingdom of God so that we are one in Christ.

So as I work through these issues of slavery in the Bible and know what that did not only in the failure of preachers and dealing with it but a culture that would demean and denigrate a people so it would feel okay to do it and then to see how it could come out a century later that begin to overwhelm me. Then it began to overwhelm me that God allowed this church to take some good solid steps that we can keep building on as we move forward. I look forward to the future of dealing with it with Gospel restoration, reconciliation and transformation, just to keep taking it forward. Thanks for allowing me to do that little ellipses. Let me get back to *doulos* for this is what James said, "I was a slave to sin, Satan, the world and men. There was a cost that was paid and the One that paid the cost out of love to me, and as a redeemed, set free sinner I am now a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ."

The third key word is Lord. It is the word *Kurios*. The word Lord (*Kurios*) is used to translate two words in the Old Testament – Adoni and Yahweh. In other words, when the Hebrew was translated to the Greek in the Old Testament it is called the Septuagint. When they got to the word Yahweh meaning deity, God, I am that I am, they put the word *Kurios*. When they got to the word Adoni meaning sovereign King they put the word *Kurios*. So when you see in Psalm 8 "O Lord (Yahweh) our Lord (Adoni)" you're saying two things. You are saying He is God and He is King. So when James says in James 1:1 "I am a slave to the Lord (*Kurios*)" he is saying that Jesus is Yahweh and Jesus is Adoni.

This word Lord was so important that those living under the Roman rule were expected to say "Caesar et *kurios*" which meant "Caesar is lord" and the Christians wouldn't do it. They developed the first confession of faith recorded in your Bible – Jesus is Lord. Jesus is God and Adoni and for that many of them died. That is a glorious word. So James the brother of Jesus says about Jesus "I am His *doulos* and He is Adoni and Yahweh. He is deity and sovereign."

The fourth key word is "Christos," Christ. He is the Anointed One. The anointed offices of Prophet, Priest and King have now found their fulfillment in Him. In other words, James is saying that his older Brother is the final Prophet. He is the Priest who brings the sacrifice to save and the King to whom I bow as my Lord. Those four key words tell us a lot.

I want to leave you with two takeaways and one is a word to parents. Have you ever wondered how long it would be before your children would stop walking away from the Lord when you brought them to church, brought them to youth groups, had family

devotions in your and taught them God's Word? I want to give you a little word of encouragement here. We don't have a lot about James but I would like to look at John 7. Here Jesus' brothers come up to Him.

John 7:3-5 says [3] *So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."* [5] **For not even his brothers believed in him.** In other words, His brothers were unbelievers in Jesus. Mark 3:13 indicates they went beyond not believing. They would mock and be arrogant against Him. They would interrupt Him and there were a number of things they would do. Now this is the one that is writing this book of James.

Let's look at Acts 1 where Jesus has sent them back to the Upper Room. They go back to the Upper Room to pray. Acts 1:12-14 says [12] *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. [13] And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. [14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.* Somebody got saved for now His brothers are believers. Now they are Christ followers. Their Brother is now their Lord and Savior and their Christ. How did that happen? What turned them into believers? It was the cross and the resurrection. It was particularly meaningful to James.

The Bible indicates that there are approximately fifteen appearances of Jesus after the resurrection. All of them but three are to groups of people. The three exceptions are Mary, Peter and... now let's look at I Corinthians 15. I Corinthians 15:3-8 says [3] *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. [6] Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. [7] Then he appeared to James (His brother), then to all the apostles. [8] Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

No wonder James is a believer. The resurrected Christ met him personally and you can meet the resurrected Christ by faith in Jesus Christ as His Word is being preached to you today to invite you to Him. You can be transformed just like this man who was an unbeliever, a skeptic, mocker, arrogant and is now converted and becomes a Christ follower. In 62 AD James will be thrown off of the pinnacle of the temple as he confesses Jesus Christ. When he hits the pavement, not dying from the fall and he will roll over on his knees and he'll start praying for those who were killing him, even as they beat him to death. That's the James who is converted by the resurrected Christ.

What is the encouragement for parents? Here is a man who is against the Lord. He gets converted and then next thing you know he is the pastor of a multi-thousand member church. He is the moderator of the general assembly. He is one of the four pillars of the church. He writes an epistle that has an unbelievable number of illusions and quotes from the Proverbs. Where did he learn that? He quotes Jesus' sermons 29 times and 21 of those quotes are from the Sermon on the Mount. He refers to what it

means to live by faith in Jesus Christ 14 times. He affirms Christ as Lord and Savior 15 times in this book. Where does all that come from?

All that stuff you are pouring into your child is taking in their life whether you see it or not. When they get converted all that stuff just starts coming right out and that is what has happened to James. There are 13 parables in the book of James and I wonder where he learned to teach with parables? All of that stuff that James was exposed to not only came to fruition when he was converted with the resurrected Christ but it then became useful in his ministry. So keep putting it into your children. You don't know when the Lord is going to bring it out but He will bring it out gloriously.

I want to give you another little back story on this. Who is calling Jesus 'King,' 'God,' 'Deity' and 'I surrender to Him as a slave'? It is His younger brother and those are the people who usually write books exposing the older brothers. He came from the same womb as Jesus. He used the same bathroom as Jesus. He played with Him. He saw all of this and when he writes his name he doesn't even explain his brotherhood he just says "Lord. Jesus is Lord. He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings." Now those were just some back stories.

Here is what I really want you to know. Here is the takeaway. The functional identity of an authentic Christian is shaped by their confessional identity which is embraced because of your salvation identity. Let me explain this. What would we expect James to do when he introduces himself? We would have expected him to say "James, the brother of Jesus..." or "James, the rock star pastor of the mega church..." or "James, the first moderator of the general assembly..." or "James, one of the four pillars of the church..." or "James, the just..." He doesn't do any of that. He doesn't take his functional identities in life but he takes his confessional identity of life to introduce himself – I am a slave to Jesus Christ. That shapes all of his functional identities in Christ.

Why is James able to call himself a slave to Christ and why does he want to call himself a slave? It is because the Christ who is his Lord, whom he serves as a *doulos*, is the Christ who paid the cost to set him free. As he has been set free from sin, self, Satan and the world he was enslaved to sin, self, men, Satan and the world and He set him free. Now that He has set him free at that wonderful, glorious cost that he didn't merit or didn't want for he was mocking Him and arrogant against Him but He appeared to James and saved him. I am yours for you have been bought with a price and that is my salvation identity for I have been made a son of the living God. Now I want to be a slave for Him. James' sonship moved him to slaveship for the glory of the Father which would be seen in every part of his life.

As a pastor do I need to die? That's okay I'm a slave. I have been bought with a price and I am surrendered to Him. James doesn't introduce himself as his functional identity but says "I am a slave of the living Christ. My sonship has allowed me to embrace slaveship and my slaveship is what reveals the truth of my sonship. I am a slave of the living Christ." What happened? The Son of God laid aside the privileges of His glory and became a *doulos*, a servant. He humbled Himself as a servant. The Son became a Servant to go to the cross to emancipate us who were slaves to sin and makes us sons of God (Philippians 2). Now we follow our Savior and make ourselves slaves in love to the One who paid the price to emancipate us. The Son became a slave to emancipate us. We who were slaves to sins become sons for that is our salvation identity



in Christ, therefore we confess that we are slaves to Christ and that is what shapes every function in our life – spouses, parenting, pastoring, citizenship – everything. I am a slave to Christ to live it out in the functional identities of my life. That is what James has revealed to us.

Perhaps one is thinking ‘Why did he read from Luke 15?’ Has there ever been an appropriate parable for someone that this? James was Jesus’ younger brother. This was popularized by Tim Keller’s book The Prodigal God. We have all been to the far country, prostituted ourselves, did all of that and then came back and came to Christ and we were brought into the Family. Has there ever been a younger brother more like James who went to the far country of arrogance and unbelief? Then he came home but he didn’t find an elder brother who arrogantly dismissed him. He came home because his elder Brother went to the pig trough and died for him.

In the parable the younger brother comes home and he had already been given his stuff that he squandered. The older brother thinks where did that robe come from, where did that ring come from, that calf and all? The father says “I gave them to him.” The older brother says “Those are mine. He already got his. For you to take him back you have to give him what belongs to me. How dare you do that father!” We don’t have that elder brother. We have another elder Brother who lays aside the privileges of His glory to wrap us with the robe of His righteousness, who kills not a fatted calf but gives Himself at a cross, who gives us not just shoes but the Gospel of peace that shod us, who gives us not simply the joy of returning home but the joy of salvation.

Don’t miss this! When the younger brother came home he knew he was a son but he said to his father, “I want to be your hired servant. I want to be your doulos. That’s all I want to be. I am not worthy. I know what you’ve done to make me but I just want to serve you now.” It’s all because our elder Brother went to the cross to save us from our sins, to wrap us with the robe of righteousness, to give us the ring of salvation and to bring us to glory.

You might be thinking that this is a lot about James. Go read Jude 1. What does Jude call himself? He calls himself a doulos. The Apostle Paul calls himself a doulos. Peter, Timothy and Epaphras all call themselves a doulos. This is running as a theme throughout for these great men of God could have identified themselves in multiple ways but when they write their letters they say “I’m a doulos, I’m a slave, I’m a servant” and that’s how they see themselves.

We who have been set free, our salvation identity is because a Son has set us free to bring many sons to God and we have been given that place in the Family but we don’t occupy that place with arrogance and pride. On the contrary we bow. Father, we are Your servants. Don’t think that when you finish reading this that “I don’t want God as my Father and I’m not going to be a slave.” Oh yes you will. We are all sons and we’re all slaves. There is no question about that. The question is who is your father – Satan and you do his deeds to death being a slave to this world and men to be manipulated by them or a slave to the grace of the Lord Jesus, a servant for Him, God being your Father. You will leave here with a father and you’ll leave here as a son. Who is your father? You will leave here as a slave and to whom are you a slave? I invite you to Christ who sets you free that you might know Him, love Him and serve Him. I have been bought with a price. I want to glorify Him. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. For those of us who are believers, would You help us like James, Paul, Timothy and Peter, all of these great men of God through whom You give us the Bible and established the church in the first century, and give us the ability to know our salvation identity in Christ, to confess our identity as doulos, bond slaves of Christ and let that shape every functional identity in our life – husbands, fathers, wives, mothers, members of the body of Christ, ambassadors for Christ, citizens in this country. May it shape every single one of us. Father, if there is anyone reading this that doesn't know You, open their eyes and their hearts so they will not leave here serving Satan and the siren of manipulative calls of a narcissistic world enslaved in sin, the world and men's manipulations, but may they come to Christ who will set them free. May they know the liberty from sin, its penalty and its power and the joy of serving Christ with their life for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.