

DOULOS
(Bond-Servant)

7-18-98

Rom. 1:1

"Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus..."

Wm. Barclay says, "He was writing to a church which was situated in the greatest city in the greatest empire in the world. Because of that he chose his words & thoughts with the greatest care. He begins by giving his own credentials."

1) He calls himself the slave (doulos) of Jesus Christ. In this word 'slave' there are two backgrounds of thought:

a) Paul's favorite title of for Jesus is LORD (Kurios). In Hk. the word Kurios describes someone who has undisputed possession of a person or a thing. It means master or owner in the most absolute sense. The opposite of Lord is slave (doulos). Paul thought of himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, his Master & Lord. Jesus had loved him & given himself for him, & therefore Paul was sure that he no longer belonged to himself, but entirely to Jesus. On the one side slave describes the utter obligation of love.

b) But slave (doulos) has another side to it. In the O.T. it is the regular word to describe great men of God. (Josh. 1:2; 24:29; Amos 3:7; Jer. 7:25). When Paul calls himself the slave of Jesus Christ he is setting himself in the succession of the prophets. Their greatness & their glory lay in the fact that they were slaves of God, & so did his.

Ralph Earle: Doulos comes from deo, "bird" & so is literally "bond servant". Two-fold meaning — "that

relation of subservience + subjection of will which befits all who confess God + Christ, + are devoted to Him."

Secondly, it indicates "a peculiar relation of devotedness in which a man is at God's disposal + is employed by Him."

There is a paradox in this word: the bel. becomes a slave of Christ by free choice, + yet he is owned by Christ b/c he was purchased by Christ's own blood. Rengstorff notes that the word indicates "unconditional commitment" to God.

Christ became a slave for our sakes. He took upon him the form of a servant (doulos - Phil 2:7). This was necessary for our salvation. And only as we become His slaves can we hope to be used in saving others.

The phrase "slave of the emperor" was a frequent occurrence all over the Roman Empire. How happy Paul was to write to Rome, "I am a slave of Jesus Christ, the King of kings + Lord of lords!" Thank God for the privilege of being freed from slavery to sin + Satan, that we might be Christ's slaves, + His alone. For His slavery spells true freedom.

NEW INT'L DICTIONARY OF N.T. THEOLOGY (Thoughts summarized)

Doulos - the abrogation of one's own autonomy + the subordination of one's will to that of another. To the Gks. this was degrading + contemptible.

In the O.T. this thought lost its meaning of baseness as it related to God. "As a result of God's special

election, doulos became a title of honor (Ps. 89:3). The concept... in turn affected one's relation to one's fellow-countrymen. He who honored Yahweh, the God who had chosen a people for Himself, knew at the same time that he had been joined to his community to serve them."

N.T. Out of the 124 instances of doulos, 30 are in Paul, 30 in Matt., + 26 in Lk. Out of the 25 instances of douleuo, 17 are in Paul.

... The distinctive thing about the concept of the doulos is the subordinate, obligatory + responsible nature of his service in his exclusive relation to his Lord. At the same time, all who are called to freedom are set to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13). Paul made himself a slave of all (I C. 9:19); in the service of the gospel (Phil. 2:22) he is the servant of the community for Christ's sake (2 C. 4:5). He who would be first in Christ's community must be its slave (Mt. 20:27).

"Master + servant are told to subject themselves to this Lord, because it is in their mutual treatment of each other that they join themselves to that community whose rule is love. However, it is not left to the choice of individual members of the community to decide whether or not thus to subject themselves + join this community. It is precisely the concept of douleuo, in contrast to that of diakoneo (to serve), that emphasizes the obligatory character of the service for God and to one's neighbor that is the duty of the community of those

who have been set free by Jesus Christ."

Verses:

Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1; Jms 1:1; Rev. 1:1
Compare I C. 7:22; Gal. 4:7; Eph. 6:6; Philem. 16

THEOLOGICAL LEXICON OF THE N.T. (Summary)

Doulos is not to be translated as "servant." In the 1st century it was an adjective meaning "unfree" Christians are bought + paid for by the Lord which transposes the notion of servitude into the supernatural order, "accentuating above all the nuance of the Lord's radical seizure of the believer; the latter, being in submission to the discretionary will of his Master, becomes essentially a dependent individual."

A slave was defined in terms of the job he did for his master. He used the genitive of his owner's name. The Lord, our Master, owns all rights to Christians. We are to be defined by our Master's ownership of us: our existence, mission, all our activities. We are to carry out that which we are commanded to do. The slave is a "worker", a "~~human~~ ^{living} fool"

THE EXEGETICAL DICTIONARY OF THE N.T.

In the figurative senses doulos designates the individual in his or her relationship of dependence + service toward God, the absolute Lord, whose possession he or she is:
Lk 2:29; ~~Acts 2:8~~; 4:29; 16:17; Tit. 1:1; I P. 2:16; Jms 1:1;
Rev. ~~3~~; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2,5; 22:3,6; in

relationship to Jesus Christ: Rom 1:1; I C. 7:22b; Gal. 1:10; Eph. 6:6; Phil 1:1; Col. 4:12; 2 T. 2:24; Jas. 1:1; 2 P. 1:1; Judel; Rev. 1:1; 2:20 (the relationship to Christ is described as friendship in Jn. 15:15a + as sonship in Gal. 4:7 - rather than servitude.) Doulos can be used to designate the person who is under the ruling power of sin (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:16f, 20). It can also designate one who is under the sovereign power of righteousness in Rom. 6:17-18.

A derivative of the word can be used to designate coworkers or fellow Christians in consideration of the common relationship to Christ in service + fidelity: Col. 1:7; 4:7; Rev. 6:11

Doulos expresses the serving which people exercise toward the following ruling powers: to God as the absolute Lord: Mt. 6:24; I Th. 1:9; Jesus Christ as Lord: Acts 20:19; Rom 12:11; 14:18; 16:18; Eph 6:7; Col. 3:24; to the law of God: Rom 7:25; to the gospel: Phil. 2:22; to the idols: Gal. 4:8f; to sin: Rom 6:6; 7:25; to the desires: Tit. 3:3; service to ea. other in love: Gal. 5:13

RYRIE STUDY BIBLE

The note for Rom. 1:1, under bond-servant says:

"Bond-~~slave~~ servant, Lit., slave, from a word that means 'to bind'. The believer who voluntarily takes the position of slave to Christ has no rights or will of his own. He does always + only the will of his Master. For his part, the Lord binds Himself to care for His servant (cf. Deut. 15:12-18).