

New Testament References to Slaves and Slavery

Literal References to Slavery

- On two occasions, Jesus heals a slave (Matt. 8:5–13; Luke 22:50–51).
- Paul casts a demon out of a slave (Acts 16:16–17).
- Slaves have equal status before God (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Rev. 6:15; 13:16; 19:18).
- Instructions are given regarding how slaves should behave and how their masters should treat them (Eph. 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1–2; Titus 2:9–10; 1 Pet. 2:18–21).
- Advice is given concerning whether slaves should seek their freedom (1 Cor. 7:20–24).
- There is condemnation of slave traders (1 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 18:13).
- Paul writes a letter in regard to his return of a runaway slave to the owner (Philemon).

Metaphorical References to Slavery

- Jesus tells parables in which slaves are characters (Matt. 13:24–30; 18:23–35; 22:1–13; 24:45–51; 25:14–30; Mark 12:1–9; 13:34–36; Luke 12:37–48).

- Jesus uses slavery as a metaphor for discipleship (Matt. 6:24; 10:24–25; Mark 10:42–44; Luke 17:7–10; cf. John 8:31–36).
- Paul uses slavery as a metaphor for devotion to others (1 Cor. 9:19; 2 Cor. 4:5; Gal. 5:13; Phil. 2:7).
- Slavery can be a metaphor for the controlling influences over one's life (Rom. 6:16–20; 7:6, 14, 25; 8:15; 2 Cor. 11:20; Titus 2:3; 3:3; 2 Pet. 2:19; cf. Matt. 6:24).
- Slavery can be a more general symbol for a negative spiritual condition, to be contrasted with freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:1–7; 4:22–5:1; Heb. 2:15).