

Slave Labor

September 5, 2010

Now that you've heard Paul's letter to Philemon, how would you answer the question, "What is the Bible's position on slavery?" Does God approve or disapprove? This short letter was at the center of biblical discussion in the mid-19th century. In fact 600,000 people died in a civil war over the answer. Paul says he could command, but he would rather persuade Philemon to treat Onesimus as a brother. Can slavery be ended through persuasion or must it be commanded? Does our understanding of humanity include the possibility of one person owning another? Why do you need a slave? To do work! Is work a blessing or a curse? If a blessing then you would want to do your own work. If it is a necessary evil then having someone else do your work is a blessing. Throughout history the wealthy are blessed with slaves to do their work. Today 10% of our citizens are out of work. Some suggest, the unemployed are lazy; they just don't want to work. Others testify to looking for work for years with no success. Yet others who have jobs feel enslaved. There is a close correlation between labor and slavery. The difference is our understanding of who we are. If we are brothers and sisters, children of God our Creator, then we would not be capable buying and owning another human being. But if the goal is the "good life" and the "good life" requires owning assets human among others so be it. God makes the difference. Without God the unthinkable is possible. Thanks be to God!!!