e-ISSN: 2656-7997
p-ISSN: 2775-3425

JOURNAL of ASIAN ORIENTATION in THEOLOGY
Vol. 02, No. 01, February 2020 : 105 - 121

The Imagery of Slavery in Romans 6:15-23

Antonius Galih Arga Wiwin Aryanto [a,1]

School of Theology, Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta [a]

galiharga@usd.ac.id [1]

Abstract

The slavery in the Greco-Roman provides resources to interpret Paul's idea of slavery as a metaphor for the power of sin that binds human souls in Rom 6.15–23. Paul uses the idea of obedience to explain that, when people believe in Christ, they die to their former life and are given a new life by the new master. Those baptized in Christ die to the old life and receive a new life as slaves of God. The new baptized gets their freedom and so they now surrender all parts of their body as slaves of righteousness

Keywords:

Greco-Roman slavery, sin, death, baptism

Introduction

The theme of slavery in the Pauline letters, especially Philemon and II Corinthians, has been studied for over thirty years.[1] Scholars

[1] Some scholars approach the slavery based on the analysis of Greek, Roman, and Jewish legal texts. S. Scott Bartchy, *First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21* (Missoula: SBL, 1973). Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984). Others

DOI: 10.24071/jaot.v2i1.6118
Web: http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/JAOT| E: jaot@usd.ac.id

have understood ancient slavery, and what they have found thus far have revealed a great complexity in the practice. In his letters, Paul not only discusses the problem of slavery in the community, but he also employs slavery as a metaphor for a believers' relationship to Christ. This paper will explore how we should understand the function of slavery as a metaphor in Rom 6.15–23. When Paul says that believers are slaves of Christ and not slaves of sin, his image of slavery has both positive and negative connotations. In order to account for this, the first section of the paper will explore the socio-historical aspect of slavery in Greco-Roman society. How were the slaves treated in the Roman society? The second section will use the historical framework in section one to discuss the function of slavery as metaphor in Rom 6.15–23. This paper will demonstrate that a slave of Christ is used as a religious term to explain the relationship between believers and Christ and that they live under the grace and the lordship of Christ, not under the power of sin.

In order to explore the meaning of language used by early Christians, we would imagine a way in which the language functions for a community in a particular cultural system. That is, we need to understand how the words were used in the Greco-Roman society, and what they signified in that specific context. The study of Greco-Roman slavery, then, will provide us with data to understand the language used by Paul for the Roman community. Paul, as a Jew, may have had this Jewish context of slavery in mind. If this is the case, then an understanding of slavery from both Greco-Roman and Jewish societies will provide a rich understanding of the language of slavery in Pauline letters.

Slavery in Greco-Roman Society

Slavery was a fundamental element of urban life in the Greco-Roman society from around 200 BCE to 200 CE. At that time, many slaves were forced to live in humiliation and serve their masters.

approach by giving sociological definition of slavery. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Some scholars focus on the metaphor of slavery in Paul's language. Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

Studies of slavery in ancient society indicate that between one and two-thirds of the population were either slaves or former slaves.[2] Many slaves were mistreated and oppressed though some slaves had better lives because of their good relationship with their masters. The main ways in which slaves were obtained were warfare, piracy, brigandage, the international slave trade, kidnapping, some breeding, and the punishment of criminals. In some cases, freeborn people sold themselves or their children for slavery. First Clement reports, "We know that many among ourselves have given themselves to bondage that they might ransom others. Many have delivered themselves to slavery, and provided food for others with the price they received for themselves" (1 Clem. 55.2). However, this self-sacrificing activity is not regular in Rome or anywhere else nearby. Self-sale never provided a major supply for slavery.

Warfare was the primary way to obtain slaves. Originally, they were captured in war and by land or sea brigandage. Between 58 to 51 BCE, Julius Caesar was reported to have shipped back to Italy nearly one million enslaved Gallic prisoners of war. In the case of the Jewish war (66-70 CE), Josephus reports that 2,310 women and children were sold into slavery after the capture of Japha, 30,400 prisoners were enslaved at Tiberias in Galilee, and 97,000 prisoners were taken during the siege of Jerusalem, 700 of which were sent as captives to Rome by Titus as a sign of his victory.[3] Penal slavery was another source for slavery. In the Roman criminal law, the "*servus poene*" describes a free person who became slave because he/she lost the political and social right to freedom. Such a criminal was sentenced to work in a public area.[4]

[2] Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 42.

[3] Josephus, *Jewish War*: VI. 420; VII. 118. Josephus, *The Jewish War Book IV-VII* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 497, 541.

[4] The general rule of *Servi Poenae* is that a person convicted of crime and sentenced in a certain way suffered *capitis deminutio maxima*, and he or she became a slave. It occurred right away on the final condemnation when there had been no appeal. A death sentence also involved penal slavery for the interval between the passing of the sentence and the death. The Roman law has some forms of execution, for example: beheading, *ad gradium traditio*, crucifixtion, and burning. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 403-05. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity,* 32-41.

Classic definitions of slavery found in Aristotle and Roman Private Law declare slaves as property, no different from farm implements or domesticated animals.[5] They were treated like animals because they worked for their owners and were not paid for it. However, Orlando Patterson argues that the limited definition from the legal statutes may not reflect the full social practice, and so fails as an adequate definition. We should not rely on legal texts alone to define slavery because the results would be monolithic and not positive indicators of society. Slavery laws were established in response to situations which required some type of legal control. [6]

Patterson proposes that we approach slavery as a process of dishonor, alienation, and 'social death.' On this view, slavery does not mean simply to be owned as property, but it is the permanent and violent domination over persons alienated from birth who live in general state of dishonor.[7] Slavery is neither simply the loss of civil rights, nor the loss of freedom. The slaves have been physically, violently removed from their homeland, stripped of their dignity, forced to learn a foreign language and to obey different customs.

[5] Aristotle, on *Politics* I. 2. 5-6: "An article of property is a tool for the purpose of life, and property generally is a collection of tools, and a slave is a live article of property." Aristotle, *Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 17. The slave is a chattel, usually paid off with money as res (property). A slave is also treated constantly as the typical chattel. Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: The Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian*, 11.

[6] From 1973 to 1990, scholars approach slavery studies through the legal texts. Bartchy describes Greco-Roman slavery based on an analysis of Greek, Roman, and Jewish legal texts. He provides the first comprehensive examination of Greco-Roman slavery in relation to 1 Cor. 7.21. See Bartchy, *First Century Slavery and the Inter-pretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21*(Eugene: Wipt & Stock, 2002). Lyall takes a similar approach in his book "Slaves, Citizens, Sons" (1984), attempting to correlate various legal metaphors in the New Testament with Roman laws. Scholars criticize his approach as an uncritical way to understand the texts because he assumes that if an echo of Roman law can be found in a text, the text may be interpreted in light of the law. See John Byron, "Paul and The Background of Slavery: The *Status Quaestionis* in New Testament Scholarship", *CBR 3.1 (2004): 118-129.*

[7] Patterson says, "Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely to integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with the inherited meanings of their natural forbears, or to anchor their living present in any conscious community of memory." Patterson also argues that previous scholar relied on law exclusively to understand the ancient slavery. But this approach mistreated the ancient evidence. A better approach should define the phenomenon comparatively, on the level of personal relations, and without exclusive reference to property ownership. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, 5, 22-23.

As outsiders, the slaves lived in fear, and socially dead to the free population. The slaves were alienated and dishonored, subject to violent domination.[8]

Slaves in the Roman Empire were also vulnerable to physical control and abuse. The master possessed full sexual access to his slaves. A female slave's value was in her capacity for sexual pleasure and her reproduction of offspring. Female slaves would increase the household wealth by providing future generation of slaves. Women and their children were sold independently. A male slave had no legal connection to his own offspring because as a slave, he was excluded from the status of fatherhood.[9] The description of the slaves' life above shows that slavery was not a positive experience because it was a matter of the master's power over the slave and it was maintained by violence. In other words, they were estranged from their family and ethnic background to such a degree that they had practically undergone a death experience. In addition, all slaves were punishable by their bodies, often tortured, punished, and abused. Although there were some opportunities for high status and change of life for resourceful and fortunate slaves, most slaves lived and died under a brutal system.[10]

Possessing slaves was a matter of prestige in Roman society. A freeborn man who did not possess a slave would be looked down upon. In contrast, a freeborn man who had more slaves would have higher

[8] Slaves are person without honor who had been robbed of their former identity through a process "natal alienation": "Slaves differed from other human beings in that they were not allowed freely integrate the experience of their ancestors into their lives, to inform their understanding of social reality with inherited meanings of their natural forbears, or to anchor the living present in any conscious community of memory." Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study,* 5.

[9] Glancy, Jennifer A, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9-12.

[10] Epictetus, a philosopher from the second CE, was a former slave of Epaphroditus, a freedman and an officeholder of Nero and Domitian. His master allowed him to attend lectures of the Stoic Musonius Rufus, and he liberated him finally. Epictetus describes the slave as a permanent symbol of subjection, ignorance, and cowardice, connoting sorrows, fears, and turmoil. Slave lives under violence – in some cases, the violence of being reduced from freedom to slavery as a woman or child while the husband and father is simultaneously murdered. Epictetus III. 24. 75; III. 22. 45; IV. 1. 7. Epictetus, *The Discourses and Manual* (Oxford: The Clarendon, 1916), 95, 113-17. On *Anger* 3.40.2, Seneca described how a master seized a slave by throwing him to huge lampreys because the slave had broken a crystal cup. Senaca, *Moray Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 349.

social status. The household of the king would have more slaves than other households; the poorest freeman might own few slaves only. To have slaves standing beside their master and serving food at banquets would indicate one's social status to one's clients and guests.[11]

Slaves could perform a variety of jobs that were also performed by free persons in Roman society. They were involved in book publishing, business, entertainment, medicine, teaching, and clerical occupations. In the Roman west, there was a specialization of slave jobs: barbers, mirror makers, cooks, and architects. Although the majority of slaves were lowly agricultural laborers and miners, many slaves also held bureaucratic, professional, and managerial jobs.[12] In aristocratic elite households, the slaves were assigned to precise duties: fuller, glazier, saddler, chamberlain, or furniture polisher. Some owners were aware of the needs for slaves to be motivated in order to increase their efficiency. The elites create a position rank in a servile hierarchy to give an individual slave motivation for working. Most slaves were supervised by elite slave managers called "*villici*."[13]

Even though slaves lived under exploitation and without power; the quality of their lives was diverse across the Roman Empire. Those who were enslaved in the urban city found a better quality of life than those who worked on the mines or rural areas. A slave's life depended on his/her function in relation to the master and the degree of the slave's responsibility.[14] Although most of slaves live under oppression, some have better relationship with their master. The

[11] Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 174-78.

[12] Aulus Gellius wrote on *Noctes Atticae* XII. 8: "This Phaedo, though a slave, was of noble person and intellect, and according to some writers, in his boyhood was driven to prostitution by his master…..There were not a few other slaves too who afterward become famous philosophers." Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 147-48. Fobes writes a list of slaves who got good education and training in business, medicine, and other skills. See Clarence A. Fobes, "The Education and Training of Slaves in Antiquity," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 86 (1955), 321-60.

[13] J. Albert Harrill, "Slavery", in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the BibleVolume 5 - NIDB*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville: Abingdon, 2009), 299-308.

[14] We may state that slaves experienced both positive and negative aspects of their lives and works. A slave was an economical investment and it was to the master's advantage to take care of slave. See John Byron, "Paul and the Background of Slavery: The *Status Quaestionis* in New Testament Scholarship", 33-4.

master depends on the loyalty of slaves, and the slaves depend on the master's maintenance. Some Greek writers urged the master to treat the slaves leniently. For example, Philo says, "If they are provided with clothes, food, care, and time for relaxation they will render their services much better than when overburdened and neglected."[15] Another writer, Seneca states, "Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable terms; let him talk with you, plan with you, live with you." (*Ep* 47.13).[16] Seneca also adds that it is praise-worthy to use authority over slaves with moderation. Mercy should be shown even to the purchased slaves.[17] Here, both philosophers advise a master to give more attention to his slaves, so that they can give more benefit to the master.

In summary, slaves lived in various conditions in the Greco-Roman society. They were in a combination of protection, abuse and exploitation. The quality life of a slave depended on their function and the degree of responsibility of the slave in a household. However, the most slaves experienced a process of social death. Powerlessness and alienation led slaves to be dishonored persons. Slaves suffered the indignity of having to work for a wealthy owner and being bought and sold like a commodity. They were punished indiscriminately, they were compelled to labor at their masters' orders, and they were not allowed a legal existence. Although some slaves had a good quality of life, the majority lived in abuse and exploitation. Moreover, the exploitable condition of slaves led to humiliation. Their bodies were vulnerable and became objects of sexual abuse by the owners.

The Metaphor of Slavery

Rom 16.15–23 are part of the second *probation* (Rom 5.1–8.39) of the thesis of the Romans letter that the Gospel is the powerful

[15] *De Specialibus Legibus* II. 83. See Philon d'Alexandrie, *De Specialibus Legibus I &II* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975), 285-86.

[16] *Epistulae Morales* 47.13. See Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), 308-09.

[17] On *Mercy* 1. 17.18. See Senaca, *Moray Essays,* 407.

embodiment of the Righteousness of God.[18] Paul stresses the life in Christ as a new system of honor that replaces the search for status through fulfillment of the Law. This section shows the relation between what Christ has done and how those who believe in him must live. Believers are free from the Law because they live under the grace and the lordship of Christ. The periscope (vv. 15–23) is divided in three units of discussion. First, it is about a principle of slavery: one becomes a slave to the lord one obeys (vv. 15–19a). Paul identifies two lords: sin and obedience. The second is on the theological rationale for exchange of lordship from sin to righteousness. (vv. 19b–20). The third is on the result of the two realms of sin and Christ (vv. 21–23). The fruit of slavery to sin is death, and the goal of slavery to God is eternal life.

Paul opens the discussion with a principle of slavery in v.16 that all slavery implies obedience: "Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey?" His rhetorical question, "Do you not know that," implies a well-known fact about slavery in the community. Paul continues describing a series of repeated contrasts between the past life under the power of sin and the present life under righteousness. The table below shows the contrast between slaves under sin and under righteous, and Paul plays the words paradoxically:

Verse 16–23: "slave of the one whom you obey"	
slave of sin ⟶ leads to death	slave of righteousness ⟶ leads to life
formerly bondage	now freedom
formerly slaves of sin	now slaves of God
formerly vice and impurity	now holiness
formerly death	now life
the wages of sin is death	free gift of God is eternal life

In two verses (vv. 16–17), the words slave and obedience dominate the sentences. The word "slave" occurs three times, and obedience

[18] Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), VI-VII.

four times.[19] In the Roman society, slave and obedience are twin ideas because for slaves, obedience is the only option.[20] In other words, the principle of slavery involves obedience to the master - no matter who the master is, the slave must render obedience. Slavery demands total obedience because a slave belongs to his master and is required to do the master's will. The master has the power of life and death over his slaves. He can punish and discipline them or execute them according to his will. However, some slaves surrender their freedom and obey the master because they receive also social and economic benefits from the master.

Rom 6.16a says "οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ᾧ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν" The phrase οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι is interpreted as Paul's rhetorical question and he presumes that his audience understands the familiar fact which he is discussing. Some scholars relate this verse to the practice of voluntary selling of one self as a slave for social and economic benefit.[21] But there is a difficulty with the self-sale interpretation, since the person who sold himself or herself did so from a position of freedom. The practice of self-sale does not explain Paul's idea of transferring from one master to another.[22] A slave does not have a right to sell him or herself to another master, but rather the master may sell his servant to another owner.

Paul proceeds from the image of slavery to the condition of the believers: one is either under the power of slavery, or in the service of the righteousness. There is no other option. Although persons may delude themselves into thinking that they are free people, those who do not obey righteousness are slaves of sin. Here Paul argues that if believers show by their conduct that they are obeying the mandates of a certain power, and then they belong to that power. They are in the

[19] There are forty-eight occurrences of slavery word in Pauline texts. Twenty of them are in Romans. Chap-ter 6 has 9 words of slavery; chapter 7 and 8 has six occurrences. Therefore, Romans 6–8 are the most saturated with slavery terminology. John Byron, *Slavery Metaphor in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 2006-07.

[20] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 342-43.

[21] James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 341. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 20-23. Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, 205. Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, Sons* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), 34-36.

[22] John Byron, *Slavery Metaphor's in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity,* 209-10.

reality of slavery. The idea of "obedience under slavery" continues with a more specific nuance of what happens when a slave has a new master. Paul employs the idea of obedience to explain that followers of Christ have to die to their former life and are given a new life by a new master. Believers baptized in Christ die to the old life and receive a new life as slaves of God. Here Paul stresses the change in the believer's life from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness.

In verse 17, Paul says that Christ-followers have been given obedience "from the heart" to the "pattern of teaching" to which they "were handed over".[23] The phrase "obedience from the heart" expresses the contradiction to the simple obedience of the slave. Slaves are forced to render obedience by external power. In contrast, the obedience of believers comes from the free choice of faith because Christ has paid for our freedom through his death: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5.8).[24] At this point, Paul addresses his teaching to slaves themselves, that their obedience to Christ comes from their freedom. They are not forced by their master.

Paul exhorts his readers with formula "Just as ....so.." to describe how believers should conduct themselves: "just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification." Paul uses the example of their former slavery to emphasize how they should conduct themselves as slaves of righteousness. As they formerly surrendered their bodies as willing slaves of impurity and lawlessness, so they now surrender all parts of their body as slaves of righteousness.

[23] There is a problem in the sentence: "εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς."To whom or what the obedience of believers should be directed? Jewett argues that Paul did not originally write v.17b, "You obeyed from the heart the imprint stamped by teaching, to which you were handed over." It was an additional sentence written later by other authors of the interpolation in Rom 16.17–20. The vocabularies in v. 17b are parallel to the sentence in Rom 16.17, "Teaching that you learned." The teaching refers to a definite tradition of Christian faith. In the context of Paul's audience, the purpose of the additional sentence in v. 17b is to warn believers not to return to the former state of slavery. Living under the lordship of Christ demands Christians to obey a specific teaching and doctrinal instruction. See Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 418-419. James Dunn argues that τύπον διδαχῆς (v.17b) refer to Christ as a pattern of behavior to whom Christians give their obedience. Obedience to Christ is in contrast to obedience to sin (v. 17a). See James Dunn, *Romans*, 343-44.

[24] Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2007), 200-207.

The transferring of ownership from sin to Christ results in eternal life and freedom. But how does a slave gain freedom? A slave is set free through manumission. In the ceremony of manumission, the master would give freedom to the slaves. They may become freedmen and obtain citizenship. However, it does not happen always because it depends on the status of their former owner. After the manumission, the relationship changes from master-slave to patron-client. [25] As a client, the former slaves have legal obligation to perform morning salutation: in the morning they line up outside the patron's house to greet the former master who has given their freedom. The idea of manumission is echoed in the Paul's idea that once Christ sets Christians free, the believers share a special relationship with Christ as the new master. Believers are also obligated to offer faithful and obedient service to Christ, who has given them freedom from sin.

In verse 23, Paul sums up the result of slavery: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In the end, Paul returns to the theme of the death and life antithesis. Paul describes death as the wages (Rom 6.23) earned by sin, but he does not say that the wages of righteousness is eternal life. [26] Rather, the gracious gift of God for the believers will be eternal life in Christ Jesus. The words Paul uses here show that one can earn death by living under sin and lawlessness, but eternal life is a gift which cannot be earned.[27] Eternal life is the antithesis of

[25] Francis Lyall, Slaves, Citizens, Sons; Legal Metaphor in the Epistles (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 38-9. In the Greco-Roman society, the manumission is understood in the ideology of patronage that the master can bestow upon a slave. J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, 162-65. In the formal manumission, the slaves are set free and simultaneously given Roman citizenship. It is a radical transformation of status because the former slaves will be admitted at the Roman civic society. However, in the informal manumission, a slave enjoys only a de facto freedom and does not have citizenship rights. See Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 155-57.

[26] The word "wages" also occurs in LXX (1 Edrs 4.56; 1 Macc 3.28; 14.32) and in the New Testament (Luke 3.14; 1 Cor 9.7).

[27] ovyw,nia often refers to the wages paid to a soldier. Robert Jewett, *Romans*, 425. Although under Roman law slaves could own nothing, some cases show that slaves are able to control and to possess money and property independently. The legal device that allows slaves to possess is the convention of the *peculium*. The head of the household owns all the family's property. But, out of his property, the master set apart a portion called a *peculium*. The slave may use the *peculium* and enjoy economic and social independence. Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 7-14. Frank J. Matera, *Romans,* 157-8. James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8,* 333-57.

death. Here, Paul means death either as the end of existence or as a state of death which is a state characterized by a lack of response to the power of God, who gives and sustains life beyond death. In contrast, the result of obedience to God is righteousness which is a relationship with God, who gives grace and makes for individual well-being and wholeness.

Rom 6.15–23 portrays slavery in a negative sense, referring to the people's subjection to super power, sin, and death. The Christian community in Rome is familiar with these topics because as slaves or former slaves, they have participated in the "culture of death" of the arenas and amphitheater of Rome. All honor and superiority should be paid by death and violence, but, Christ has set them free. In contrast to the death culture, from their works they do not earn status and honor, but they receive fruits of righteousness and eternal life.

In summary, Rom 6.15–23 uses the imagery of slavery to illustrate the new life occurs after baptism, which transfers believers from the power of sin to the new relationship with God. Believers live in Christ as a new system of honor that replaces the search status of honor by fulfilling the laws. The new existence of believers also demands obedience, just like slaves obey their masters. The obedience will bring the believers to righteousness, and righteousness gives eternal life.

Metaphor of Slavery and Soteriology

The idea of being a slave of God or Christ does not occur exclusively in Romans 6. Paul calls himself a slave of Christ in Rom1.1, Phil 1.1, and Gal 1.10.[28] Other texts also call all believers to be slaves of God or

[28] The title "the servant of Christ" can be understood in two meaning. (1). Paul employs the traditional Old Testament motif of chosen servant of God. The Jewish believer may call him/her self as a God's slave (Neh 1:6; Ps 19.11; 27.9, 31.16). Israel is the slave of God (Deut 32.36; Ezek 28.25). By using the title as slave of Christ, Paul wants to indicate his belonging and dependence on Christ. See James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 6–8. (2). Paul claims the status of high-ranking slaves sharing in the authority of the master. In the Roman household, slaves occupy various social levels and they share in the status of master. Calling himself as a "slave of Christ," Paul shows that he has the role of the manager of slaves who share the status of his master. In using the title as a slave of Christ, Paul may offense to the upper class Christians. To those in the upper class, a slave is the lowest level of society. But, in Paul's eyes, his role as a

Christ, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat 6.24, Luke 12.41–46, Rev 1.1; 7.3; 19.5). The sentence calls them to be obedient to God alone, just as a slave is obedient to the master.

But the imagery of slavery in Rom 6.15–23 does not function only for moral-ethical exhortation. It portrays the obedience of believers, and it highlights the salvation which will be received in Christ. The last sentence in Rom 6.23 states that the freedom from sin gives salvation and eternal life. Salvation is received by changing the relationship from the old master to the new one, and the believers enter into new relationship with God.[29]

The same idea is portrayed in 1 Thess 1.9, where Paul describes the conversion of the believer as turning from idol worship to be a slave of the true God, "For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God." The idea is that the Thessalonians changed their master - from Idols to God. Conversion is described as entering a new relationship such as a slave having a good master who takes care of his slaves.

The early Christian believers may have understood the meaning of Paul's metaphor because they would recognize the relative benefit of a slave having a good master. As discussed above, some slaves of high status masters enjoyed their lives. For example, slaves may receive a letter from their masters that grant them generous gift during their lifetime or establish them as heirs after the master death. For example, one text by Gaius says, "We can institute as heirs slaves no less than free men, provided of course they are the slave of person whom we could institute heirs, since the relationship of testamentary capacity with the slaves was introduced from the

slave of Christ describes that he holds great authority in his relation with Christ. The title also intends to appeal to the lower class in the Christian community. See Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 76. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academics, 1998), 77-82.

[29] D. Francois Tolmie, "Salvation as Redemption: The use of "Redemption" Metaphors in Pauline Literature", in *Salvation in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Boston: Brill, 2005), 264-6.

person of the master."[30]

The exodus story also relates to the theme of soteriology. The exodus presents the story of freedom from slavery and also transferring between two masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. God is the only master, "For they are my servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves" (Lev 25.42). The liberation from Egypt motivates Israel to serve God faithfully.[31] In the same line, Paul develops his idea in Rom 6.1–23 through Christ's death and resurrection. Believers are freed from the bondage of a cruel master and they find their salvation through the new relationship with good master.

Conclusion

Rom 6.15–23 asks, "To whom are you enslaved?" On the one hand, there is sin that leads to death, and on the other, there is God, who gives eternal life. Prior to Christ, all were enslaved to sin: "Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom 5.12). But Paul claims that the death and resurrection of Christ releases believers from the bondage of sin and causes them to become righteous in God. By baptism and identification with Christ, they become slaves of God and live to God under the grace and the lordship of Christ. They do not need to obey the Law anymore, but in Christ Christians finds their salvation.

What can we gain from these historical reflections? It seems that Paul has both the Greco-Roman and the Jewish context in his discussion of slavery in Rom 6.15–23. The Greco-Roman imagery provides a vivid description of the slavery for the audience. Paul borrows the imagery of slavery to illustrate his theological issue because the idea of obedience as the principle of slavery in Rom 6.16, "Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient

[30] *Digest* 28.5.31 pr., Gaius, book 17 on the Provincial Edict. Scott, *ed.*, *Corpus Juris Civilis Vol. 5&6: The Twelve Tables, The Institutes of Gaius, The Rules of Ulpian, The Opinions of Paulus, The Enactments of Justinian, and The Constitutions of Leo* (New York: AMS, 1932), 219.

[31] Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity, 363-5.*

slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey," echoes the principle of slavery in Greco-Roman society. This appears to be his primary apology in Rom 6.19 for his use of slavery, which may have offended some of the members of the Christian community who were slaves of freedmen. The image teaches the Roman audience to understand the meaning of being follower of Christ, that believers have special relationship with Christ as their new master. However, the imagery of slavery is not only a matter of being the slave of different masters. It also brings the idea of salvation and eternal life.

Bibliography

Aristotle. *Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959.

Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954.

Bartchy, S. Scott. *First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21*. Missoula, MT: SBL, 1973.

_____. *Slavery and Society at Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Bradley, Keith. *"Slave and Master in the Roman Empire: A study in Social Control.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

_____. *Slavery and Society at Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Brown, Michael Joseph. "Paul's Use of dou/loj Cristou/ VIhsou/ in Romans 1:1," *JBL* 120 (2001): 723-37.

Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery: the Condition of the Slave in Private Law from Augustus to Justinian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Byrne, Brendan. *Romans*. Collegeville, MI: Liturgical, 2007.

Byron, John. "Paul and The Background of Slavery: The *Status Quaestionis* in New Testament Scholarship*", CBR 3.1 (2004): 118-29.*

_____. *Slavery Metaphor in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity.*

Tubingen: Siebeck, 2003.

Combes, I.A. H. *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998.

Dunn, James D. G. *Romans 1–8.* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988.

Davis, David Brion. *Slavery and Human Progress*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Fobes, Clarence A. "The Education and Training of Slaves in Antiquity," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 86 (1955), 321-60.

Harrill, J. Albert. *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity.* Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.

Hezser, Catherine. *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Glancy, Jennifer A. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Jewett, Robert. *Romans.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

Josephus. *The Jewish War Book IV-VII.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Lyall, Francis. *Slaves, Citizens, Sons*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1984

Martin, Dale B. *Slavery as Salvation*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1990.

Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians*. New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2003.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Philon d'Alexandrie. *De Specialibus Legibus I & II.* Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975.

Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob, *ed*. *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Volume 5*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2009

Seneca. *Epistulae Morales I.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.

_____. *Moray Essays.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958.

Scott, *ed*. *Corpus Juris Civilis Vol. 5&6: The Twelve Tables, The Institutes of*

Gaius, The Rules of Ulpian, The Opinions of Paulus, The Enactments of Justinian, and The Constitutions of Leo. New York: AMS Press, 1932.

Waters, Larry J. "Paradoxes in the Pauline Epistles", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (210): 423-41.

Watt, Jan G. van der, e*d*. *Salvation in the New Testament*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

Williams, David J. *Paul's Metaphors*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999.