

SERIES: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE
PART 15: I AM REWARDED

John Maxwell in his book, **The 360° Leader**, shares the story of General George Marshall, who played a major role in the Allied victory of World War II. Two of the most notable names historically that come to mind in any discussion of WWII is usually Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. But it was General Marshall working behind the scenes under Roosevelt's authority who orchestrated many of the victory strategies.

Maxell points out that Marshall was considered to have “a record of achievement rarely equaled by any others.” Marshall's achievements did not go unnoticed, and, as Driscoll states, “his appointment to the U.S. Army chief of staff under President Roosevelt made him responsible for leading the armed forces.” During his service, Marshall led the expansion of the military from 200,000 soldiers to more than 8,300,000 and was recognized with being “the organizer of victory,” by Winston Churchill. Driscoll, quoting Maxwell, writes, “President Roosevelt found his advice invaluable and said that he could not sleep at night unless he knew Marshall was in the country. And Roosevelt requested Marshall's presence at every major war conference, from Argentina to Newfoundland, in 1941, to Potsdam Germany in 1945.”

Marshall was known as a smart soldier and organizer, but Marshall also demonstrated that he was a consummate politician and strategic thinker seen in his ability to develop successful battle plans, including the battle of Normandy, and often he went head to head with other generals, most notably the more famous General MacArthur. Driscoll in his book, Who Do You think You Are?, shares a quote from Maxwell concerning the importance of Marshall. “At the end of the war, Churchill said of Marshall that he was ‘a statesman with a penetrating and commanding view of the whole scene,’ and General Dwight D. Eisenhower said, ‘In every problem and in every test I have faced during the war years, your example has been an inspiration and your support has been my greatest strength. My sense of obligation to you is equaled only by the depth of pride and satisfaction as I salute you as the greatest soldier of your time and a true leader of democracy.’” It was after the war, when Europe needed much rebuilding it was again the world turned to Marshall who stepped up formulating what is now known as the famous Marshall Plan. Driscoll mentions that it was originally named the Truman Plan, after President Harry Truman, but at Truman’s insistence, the name was changed to honor Marshall.

Most likely, most people won’t know who General George Marshall was or his significant accomplishments when he’s mentioned apart from the Marshal Plan. With what we’re witnessing in the political theater and debacle that is playing out in front of us every day as a nation, where we’re contemplating completely moving away from the foundation that our incredible nation was established on, for many,

Marshall's accomplishments mean nothing. They have the freedom they do to try to sabotage our freedom because of the humble service of men and woman like Marshall. The point is, he spent his life tirelessly working under authority, committed to his work of serving humanity rather than to gain fame for himself. As a member of the military, Marshall had a deep understanding of authority and submission to it. He was deeply aware that he was serving a greater cause than himself. His faithful service didn't go unnoticed by his superiors and the watching world. He was awarded with much praise and promotions. And, later in his life, he is the only professional soldier to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. He lived and worked within the context he found himself to.

In Ephesians chapter 6:1-9, the Apostle Paul promises us, based on the truth of Scripture, as we live and work within the context, we find ourselves. Follow along as I read our text for this morning (this afternoon). **“Children obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. ²‘Honor your father and mother.’ This is the first commandment with a promise: ³If you honor your father and mother, ‘things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth.’ ⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. ⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ⁶Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As**

slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ⁸Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. ⁹Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favorites.” Ephesians 6:1-9

I. How to live like Jesus in your given culture

A. Slavery in the Old Testament

During my study for this teaching, I have been amazed just how much slavery is in the Bible. The transatlantic slave trade is a terrible, sinful blot on American history and, also, the ways in which the Bible has been used at times to condone slavery. I highly recommend the book by Rebecca McLaughlin, **Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World's Largest Religion.**

1) The first slave story in the Old Testament

Genesis 16:1-5

When I first read this section of her book, I was amazed. The first story of a slave in the Bible is Hagar. She was Sarai's servant or slave. At first you might think that the Bible endorses slavery, even sex slavery. But, as with many O.T. narratives, you must read the whole story to understand its meaning. Human sinfulness is seen even in biblical heroes

who make terrible moral mistakes. Abram and Sarai had been promised by God a son of promise. Being infertile, they take things into their own hands by Abraham sleeping with Sarai's slave Hagar. In ancient Near Eastern culture, sleeping with a slave would not have raised as much as a moral eyebrow. In fact, Hagar being an additional wife of Abraham was considered a raise in her status. However, his decision to sleep with her reveals a lack of faith on his part in God's promises. Hagar is the 1st person in the Bible to name God. In Genesis 16:9-10 the Angel of the Lord comes to Hagar after she had run away from Sarai and tells her to, **“Return to your mistress and submit to her authority. ¹⁰Then He added, ‘I will give you more descendants than you can count.’”** The Angel tells her she is pregnant with her 1st son Ishmael, which means God hears. He describes Ishmael's character as untamed, and he will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. In verse 13 Hagar says, **“You are the God Who sees me.”** In Hebrew, that is the word El Roi. We don't know Hagar's full story. But we do know that Abraham's sleeping with her went against God's promise, and Hagar was seen and heard and validated by God Himself in an astonishing way. Mclaughlin writes, **“Hagar's story is the first in a line of slave narratives in the O.T. Notably, Abraham's great-grandson Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. But God redeemed this sinful act by leading Joseph to become a ruler in Egypt.”** This truth leads to pt. 2.

2) Three differences between ancient slavery and modern styles

a) Ancient slavery was not primarily racial

Hagar was an Egyptian slave to Hebrews and Joseph was a Hebrew slave to Egyptians.

b) Slavery was a form of employment

It was common for people to sell themselves into slavery. It was seen as a form of employment and was preferable to destitution.

c) Though it could be brutal, advancement was possible

Mclaughlin writes, “Many undoubtedly suffered the kind of brutality and exploitation experience of many enslaved Africans in America, advancement was also possible within the slave status and beyond—even to the point of becoming a senior civil servant such as Joseph.” Please understand that this has been true throughout our troubled human history. The Bible doesn’t condone this. The book of Exodus is all about the oppressive nature of enforced slavery and how God delivered Israel from it. But this is the background into which Jesus came.

3) God’s law taught Israel how to treat slaves, immigrants, widows and orphans

Exodus 21:16 states that anyone who kidnaps another person, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have

already sold them as slaves, must be put to death. In Exodus 20:9-10, God says on the Sabbath everyone in your household, whether they be your sons, daughters, slaves or foreigners, they all get a Sabbath day of rest. If a slave's master did them bodily harm, they had to be released (Exodus 21:26). Any Hebrew man or woman sold into slavery after six years had to be released and given gifts unless they chose to stay (Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:12-16). Israelites were also commanded to offer refuge to escaped slaves. Deuteronomy 23:15-16 says, **“If slaves should escape from their masters and take refuge with you, you must not hand them over to their masters. ¹⁶Let them live among you in any town they choose, and do not oppress them.”**

O.T. summary of slavery:

a) **Bans slave catching**

b) **Provides protections for slaves**

c) **Encourages us to see the world through a slave's perspective** from Hagar, to Joseph to the whole people of Israel at their exodus from Egypt

B. Slavery in the New Testament

In Paul's time:

1) **Primarily economical not racial**

Driscoll writes, “All races were slaves and all races had slaves, and rather than a lifelong social status as it was in early American history, it was economically motivated.”

2) An arrangement made to pay off a defaulted debt

Unlike today where many people file bankruptcy and default on their debts, in the ancient world people would work as a person’s slave until they repaid the debt.

3) Most slaves could be free by age 30

This could be done by buying their freedom or through governmental emancipation. Historians also inform us that many slaves were given education and specialized job training that would benefit them when emancipated. Often, freed slaves became Roman citizens and developed a client relationship with their former masters.

4) Enslaved through war

C. Paul’s view of slavery

1) Paul’s letter to Philemon

Paul writes a letter to return a runaway slave to his master. Some based on this letter argue that Paul endorses slavery, until you read the letter, especially with the background I have given you. In vs. 10 Paul says he is writing on behalf of Onesimus who has become his son. First point, slaves are not

sons. His status changes to Philemon once he becomes a Christian. Second, in vs. 12 Paul says, “I am sending him back to you with my heart.” McLaughlin writes, **“Paul’s words of affection for Onesimus surpass any other expression of love for an individual Christian in his writings.”** In vs. 16 Paul says, “He is no longer your slave but your brother.” In vs. 17 Paul writes, “If you consider me your partner in the Gospel, welcome him as you would me. He is as important to you as I am now.” In vs. 19 Paul says, “If he has wronged anyone in any way or owes you anything, charge it to me.” Does this sound like Paul endorses slavery? No. But this is the society he lived in. But the Gospel changed everything for Paul and for those who call themselves Christ’s followers. McLaughlin mentions that according to Roman law, Philemon could have branded Onesimus, deliberately broken his joints, or administered some other form of brutal punishment. Paul writes and says, “Please welcome him back as your brother, or you are going against your most respected mentor.” Notice in vs 2 Paul addresses this letter to “Philemon his co-worker, to our sister Apphia, and to our fellow soldier Archippus.” Philemon could not harm Onesimus without incurring public shame.

2) The N.T. (Paul) insists on the equality of slave and free within the church

In Colossians 3:11, Paul states, **“In this new life, it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and He lives in all of us.”** Galatians

3:26-28, “For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ like putting on new clothes. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

3) Paul denounces the slavery as was practiced in America as evil

1 Timothy 1:8-11, “We know that the law is good when used correctly. ⁹For the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious, who are ungodly and sinful, who consider nothing sacred and defile what is holy, who kill their father or mother or commit other murders. ¹⁰The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders, liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching ¹¹that comes from the glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.”

II. Discover why God rewards you both now and in eternity

A. To encourage you to grow in holiness and faithfulness

The Bible is bullish that God rewards His sons and daughters for loving and serving Him and others faithfully. To obey Jesus and the life He has called each one of us to live, it takes a humble and contrite heart. It takes a willingness to repent of

our bad attitudes, thoughts and actions on a daily basis. Holiness has to do with moving towards loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. This has to do with moving towards wholeness—where we turn from our sinful thoughts and attitudes and submit ourselves to His values, His virtues, purposes and plans. We are to live in awareness that He sees us and is always watching us. Paul writes in Romans 2:6-8, **“He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers. ⁸But He will pour out His anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness.”** (See Matthew 6:19-21, Colossians 3:18-25)

B. God rewards you when you’re under authority and you respond appropriately

In our passage where Paul talks about who and how God rewards us, he speaks to those under authority, children and slaves. Children are commanded to obey and honor their parents—this is the commandment with a promise. If you will obey your parents, things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth. Like any proverb, this is to be understood as a general pattern, but God does reward those of us who will listen to our parents and honor and respect them and learn from them the lessons God wants us to know. I am deeply grateful for my father and my mother. The older I live, the greater the positive impact they have had on our lives. I also believe that Kathe and I are living in the blessing that

things are going well for us and our family and that we will live a long, healthy, vibrant lives until we go home to be with Jesus. To slaves, Paul instructs them to respect their masters and to serve them sincerely as you would serve Jesus and to please them not only when they're watching. I have discussed with you the culture of the Bible. Some slaves had more rights and a better life than others. If God would command those under authority without any or little legal right to conduct themselves in a God honoring way, how much more should we with legal protections and rights pursue the same kind of good works? This doesn't mean what we shouldn't advocate for justice and right laws, but it does mean that, just as Jesus was mistreated and didn't sin, we can and must glorify God from refraining from sin when we are mistreated, to both honor Him and be honored by Him. So how about you? Who is an authority in your life, and how are you responding? Do you experience any kind of conviction of sin in light of what we have already looked at?

C. God rewards you when you use your influence in a godly way

Paul addresses fathers and tells us we're not to provoke them to anger by the way we treat them, and, in Colossians 3:21, he tells us why we're not to do that. It will cause our children to get discouraged. Downhearted. Depressed. As dads who God has given father power, we have the ability to encourage, empower, affirm, and guide our children into God's purposes and plans for their lives through life-giving discipline and instruction. The Bible is replete with the blessings of joy,

happiness and fulfillment that come when our children live their lives to glorify God and make their God-given impact on the world. Dads, you will hear a, “Well done good and faithful servant,” as your children bless the world with the gifts, talents and servant’s heart you have helped them develop.

Communion

Mark 14:22-25, “As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then He broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, ‘Take it, for this is My body.’²³ And He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.²⁴ And He said to them, ‘This is My blood, which confirms the covenant between God and His people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.²⁵ I tell you the truth, I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.’”