

James 1:1

¹ “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.”

James A Servant **James 1:1**

INTRO:

If someone asked you, “Who are you?” How would you answer? We usually begin with our names. Then we talk about our vocations or our family or our friends. We have to identify.

This morning, I want to jump back to the first verse of **James 1**. This is the first Sunday of the New Year. Last week we talked about what is probably ahead. Today, I want us to commit ourselves to being the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ in the year ahead. To do this we will explore the first verse of James letter.

I. Why A Slave?

II. Are We Slaves?

III. How Can We Be Good Slaves?

I. Why A Slave?

James 1:1 *“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.”*

A. This little book of **James**, like all the other books of the NT, was originally penned on a scroll. Because these scrolls were rolled up, it was common practice to begin with a greeting which included three elements: the author's name and some phrase to identify the author to those who were receiving this epistle, a designation of the recipients of the letter, and a word of greeting.

B. Notice how James, the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, began his epistle. I am going to translate this verse literally for you. *“James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, a slave.”* The order of the words are important here. James is emphasizing the identity of his divine Master. For James there could be no greater privilege than to be the slave of this wonderful master. The order described his submission, but it also implied his love and relationship to the Lord.

C. When we look at this as a whole, it is a rather startling thing to find James identifying himself this way. After all, James was the leading elder/pastor of the

mother church of all Christianity. More than this, James himself, had a biological connection to the Lord of the church. He shared the same mother with Jesus. He could have rightfully written: ***“James, the Lord’s brother.”*** Paul described him in this way in **Galatians 1:19**.

D. Instead of being identified in either of these ways, James instead wanted to be thought of as a slave, specifically as the Lord’s slave. Why would James want this? What did it mean to be a slave?

1. The Greek word, ***“doulos,”*** translated slave, speaks of a relationship many people in the first century church understood well. 50-60% of the Roman Empire was made up of slaves.

2. The term *doulos* described someone in a unique position. First, a slave was absolutely dependent upon the master. The master owned the slave. The master provided his food and lodging, defined his day to day existence, and was the focus of all of the slave’s labors. Second, a slave was also absolutely committed to the will of the master. There was no place for one’s own will or ambition. The will of the Master was supreme. Third, the slave was unconditionally responsible to his master. The Master was the only judge of the fitness and merit of the slave. No one else could judge whether he was a good slave or not.

Romans 14:4 ***“Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”***

3. James wanted those who read his epistle to understand how he viewed himself in relationship to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I, James, am absolutely dependent upon the Lord. I belong to Him. He gives me all I need. He is the purpose for my very existence. I, James, am absolutely committed to His will. I have no will except His will. I have no purpose but to please Him. I, James, am unconditionally accountable to my Lord. He is the ultimate judge of my life.

II. Are We Slaves?

A. Somebody might say we are not slaves but sons. While because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we have become sons of God, the responsibility of being a servant has not been taken away from us.

1. Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** ***“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”***

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The imagery here is the market place where the slaves were bought and sold. We were slaves to sin and now are we slaves of righteousness.

2. The fact is that all of us are slaves. Before we are saved we are slaves to sin. Then Jesus came into our lives and delivered us from our slavery to sin and made us servants of righteousness.

B. Several places in the New Testament the Bible uses the terms and concepts of slavery to describe believers. The slave/ Master relationship is fairly prominent. One example among many is in **John 15:20** Jesus said,

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

I picked these verses because they appear on the heels of the Lord calling us His friends in **verses 14-15**. This is one example of many I could give you. Yes we are slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ, too.

III. How Can We Be Good Slaves?

A. If we are all slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should want to be the very best slave we can be. How can we be the best possible servant of the Lord? The first step in this process is to reaffirm this relationship. We need to reaffirm we are totally dependent upon the Lord for all that we are and have. We also need to recognize that we are totally committed to His will. We have no other purpose than to do His will.

B. The second step is ask the question that Paul asked when he was saved on the road to Damascus. ***“Lord, what would you have me do?” (Acts 9:6)*** The answer to this question is found in the scriptures. We must study the Bible and seek to obey the Lord's directions and commands we find there first. Second, we need to recognize that the realm of this service is to others.

2 Corinthians 4:5 ***“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.”***

Hymn #210 Jesus Paid It All