

PRAISE SERVICE SECRETS OF A GREAT TEAM

Back last November the phone on the wall of a pastor's home in San Antonio, Texas rang. As visitors for a weekend Bible Conference, it was surprising to get the message to speak Feb. 12, 1989 on Endurance.

* Mt. 20:26-28 Christ said our motivation must become His. What was His? What drove Him on? Servanthood.

My mind went to the New Testament world to a lone figure, frail and human, scarred, stained with many accusations, tired from ceaseless church involvements, often weak, abandoned at times, other times the center of the focus of tens of thousands. Who?

The Apostle Paul

Turn to I Cor. 4:1

When Paul wanted to convey how he kept going in life and how he wanted folks to assess his motivation, he drew from the Roman world of his day and called himself a slave!

Not just a slave, there are 7 other New Testament words:

diakonos	ministering
diketes	household
therapon	confidently
leitourgos	public
latored	temple
dikononos	responsible

boulos bond

The one he chose is graphic, #8, huperetes meaning literally "under rowers".

Life at the Bottom of the Ship
Mirrors True Biblical Servanthood

The huperetes' life at the bottom of the ship was tough and always busy -- and it was permanent. Most died in service, the chains about their ankles grim reminders of their bondage. And there were five aspects of their work that Paul and his companions could identify with in calling themselves "servants" of Christ.

First, the galley slave had to row to the captain's beat. To keep as many as 150 oars together, the captain beat a rhythmic tempo on a drum. Each slave had to row with the beat.

Second, the slaves had to row together. Often their thirty-foot-long oars were moved by two or three rowers. They quickly learned that one could not lean on the oar, another push, and another pull! They had to work as a team.

Third, they had to trust the captain. In the gloomy depths of the boat a slave had no idea where he was, where he was going, or when he would arrive. His was a labor of total faith and obedience. As the captain's beat grew more and more rapid it could signal an enemy attack or a storm to be avoided or a hurried schedule -- but the slave could not question which. He could only obey.

If there are any troubles in the church, it is in one of these areas!

Fourth, the galley slave was committed for life. His was always a one-way trip. The damp, hard benches were no relief to his weary bones after a day's labor. The lack of sunshine and fresh air, combined with the leg chains, meant repeated illness during service, binding every slave to the ship with deadly certainty. And if the ship went down in a storm or in conflict, the slaves had no way of escape.

Finally the slave received no honor. Only the captain was visible to the outer world. Although there were dozens of men who gave their lives and very breath to keep the ship going, they were never seen. They rowed on and on, day in and day out, invisible to and unrewarded by the world. If an under rower were seen, it was because he was not doing his job.

Galley Slaves for Christ are Those
with Five Key Servant Leader Qualities

With a few strokes of a pen on parchment Paul painted a portrait that was horribly vivid for his first readers. And he said it was a portrait of himself and his companions in ministry.

Paul wanted to be known for five things: that he rowed to the Captain's beat and so was submissive; that he worked in harmony with those about him and so was sensitive; that he didn't care where he labored for the Captain, and so was trusting; that he would die at this post, and so was dedicated; and that he wanted none of the glory to go to himself, but all to the Captain, and so was humble.

Our motivation for serving Christ differs, of course, even if our situation is similar. Like galley slaves, we need to obey our Master, cooperate with our fellow servants, trust the Lord to take us where we need to go, remain in service for a lifetime, and give Christ all the glory. But while galley slaves did these things out of fear, we can do

them in confident trust in a loving Captain whose plans for us are good.

Are you truly submissive, rowing to the beat of your Captain? Are you pulling together with your fellow servants in Christ? Are you willing to go wherever He leads? Are you committed to Him for life? And do you make sure to take none of the glory but to pass it all on to Him.

“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declare the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jer. 29:11).

Like galley slaves, we belong to someone else. “You are not your own,” wrote Paul; “you were bought at a price” (I Cor. 6:19c, 20a). But while they were held by iron chains, we are held in Christ's service by a different kind of chain: “For Christ's love compels us...” (II Cor. 5:14).