

Why Did God Allow Slavery?

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • October 8, In the year of our Lord, 2014

Prelude:

I. Atheists and other skeptics

A. use the existence of slavery in the Bible

B. to speak against Christianity.

1. Consider a billboard in Pennsylvania in 2012

2. that showed a black man in some kind of contraption,

a) with a quote from Colossians 3.22,

b) although I could not find out what version they used, but

(1) the quote goes like this,

(2) "Slaves, obey your masters."

(a) What message does that give about the Bible?

(b) What do you think of the message?

i) How do you refute it?

ii) Notice that they did not quote the Old Testament, but the New Testament.

(1) Is the Bible talking about the same thing

(2) that existed in American slavery?

(a) You know how to do this with the word, "church."

(b) Do it with slavery also.

II. Have you wondered about slavery in the Bible?

III. Have you questioned how America could have allowed or even endorsed slavery at one time?

A. Again, haters of Christianity use this as an example on why Christianity is bad, because

B. we say the Founders were Christians or at least Bible-believers, and

1. so the haters counter
2. with the charge that the Bible smiles upon slavery.

Persuasion:

I. Do Bible-believers always understand and apply the Bible the way they should?

- A. No, and that has been a problem from the days of Adam and Eve.
- B. We know that hypocrites hurt the church's image almost beyond repair.
 1. Romans 2 shows the damage done by hypocrites,

23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written (Rom 2.23–24).

2. We must teach and live the truth to counter the damage.

II. How atheists and others argue.

- A. They argue that the Bible regulated rather than disbanded slavery.
- B. They argue that Paul did not speak against slavery in his letter to Philemon.
 1. In fact, Paul encouraged Philemon to take back his runaway slave.
 2. However, was Philemon to treat Onesimus as a slave?
 - a) No, he was to treat him as a brother.
 - b) In this way, Christianity has dismantled slavery,
 - (1) something that atheists and skeptics have failed to note.
- C. Then they argue that Jesus never condemned slavery, that He remained silent.
 1. Yet, those same people will argue that His silence on homosexuality
 2. means that He condoned it.
 - a) They like Him because He supposedly condoned homosexuality, but
 - b) they do not like Him because He supposedly did not condemn slavery.

III. How is that some believers use the Bible to support slavery and others use it to condemn slavery?

- A. Does this happen with other biblical issues?
- B. Name me an issue where this does not happen!

IV. How could the same Jesus who taught these passages condone slavery?

39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. (Matt 5:39–42).

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matt 7:12).

V. The following is condensed from J. Warner Wallace.

- A. Why did American slavery exist?
 - 1. It was for the benefit of the slave owner.
 - 2. Was this the purpose of slavery in the Bible?
- B. How did Americans get slaves?
 - 1. Africans kidnapped their fellow Africans and sold them to Americans.
 - a) It was against their will.
 - b) It was purely selfish and wealth driven.
 - 2. However, notice how it was in the Bible.
 - a) Some people needed the assistance.
 - (1) Exodus 21.2
 - (2) Deuteronomy 15.12–15 shows kind treatment of bondservants.
 - b) Some became permanent servants voluntarily.
 - (1) Exodus 21.5–6
 - (2) Deuteronomy 15.16–17
 - c) Israelites could not treat Israelites shamefully.
 - (1) Deuteronomy 24.7

- d) What if ancient criminals could not pay restitution?
 - (1) Exodus 22.1–3
 - e) Some became servants as the result of military conquests.
 - (1) Leviticus 25.44–46
- C. Notice the regulations for slaves and servants.
1. They were not to be treated treacherously.
 - a) Leviticus 25.43, 46, 53
 - b) Deuteronomy 15.18
 2. Slaves made the decision whether to stay with their masters or not.
 - a) Exodus 21.5
 - b) Deuteronomy 15.16
 3. When a slave was released, he was not to go empty-handed.
 - a) Deuteronomy 15.12–15
 4. Slaves and servants had to rest on the Sabbath just like all Israelites.
 - a) Exodus 20.9–10
 - b) Exodus 23.12
 - c) Deuteronomy 5.13–14
 5. Slaves and servants partook in religious activities.
 - a) Deuteronomy 12.12
 - b) Deuteronomy 12.18
 6. The Lord holds masters accountable for the way they treat servants.
 - a) Exodus 21.20, 26–27
 - b) Ephesians 6.5–9
 - c) Atheists like to quote Colossians 3.22, but they should continue reading through 4.1.

VI. Do you see the differences between American slavery and that of the Bible?

A. Why do you think Paul encouraged Onesimus to go back and for Philemon to receive him?

1. See Philemon 16

B. Why do you think Paul told servants to obey their masters?

C. What do you think motivated Paul's words in First Corinthians 7.20–21?