

WHAT IS POSSIBLY THE GREATEST BLESSING OF THE FAITHFUL SLAVE OF JESUS OUR LORD?

The surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord and growing in his grace.

How do we receive this greatest blessing?

Live as his slave. Live in his grace.

LIVE LIKE A SLAVE OF JESUS OUR LORD.

- (Galatians 6:17 ESV) From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.

1. Slaves know their place—they know they are the slaves and the master is the master.

The Apostle Paul knew his place as the slave of Jesus and counted it an honor.

This was not some intellectual tug-of-war or some Sunday School discussion or “who’s the smartest kid in the room” contest for the Apostle Paul. This was his life; his calling.

2. Slaves are marked—they bear the brand marks of their master.

Timothy George ... Why did Paul mention the brand marks here at the very end of his letter, as a kind of climactic conclusion to all that he had written? He did so for two reasons at least. First, Paul’s readers immediately would have identified the branding of the flesh with slavery, for slaves in the ancient world frequently were marked with the insignia of their master as a badge of identification. In addition, certain devotees of the mystery religions also tattooed themselves as a way of showing their devotion

and loyalty to a particular cult or deity. So, in effect, Paul would have been saying: Look, I too have been branded! I am a slave of my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. If you care to look for yourselves, here is his insignia imprinted in my very flesh. I am no fair-weather Christian but one who has come to know his Lord in the fellowship of his sufferings as well as the power of his resurrection. [George, T. (1994). *Galatians* (Vol. 30, p. 442). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.]

Richard Longenecker ... So he warns that he should not be troubled further since he is Christ’s “marked man,” with those markings suggesting, positively, that he is under Christ’s ownership and protection, as well as, negatively, that those who try to harass him will come under Christ’s judgment and retribution. [Longenecker, R. N. (1998). *Galatians* (Vol. 41, pp. 299–300). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.]

3. Slaves are faithful—they obey their master.

Slaves receive directives from their master. A directive is an official or authoritative instruction; an order or an official instruction.

4. Slaves are loyal—they don't deviate from the course their master sets them on.

“Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right” (C.H. Spurgeon).

So what is the blessing of the slave whose life is

THE SURPASSING VALUE OF KNOWING & GROWING ...

- (2 Peter 3:18 ESV) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

marked by his or her faithful, loyal service to Jesus Christ? What is the reward? There must be some kind of reward? Not just heaven by-and-by, but now.

So what is that reward?

The surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord and the power of his resurrection through the fellowship of his sufferings ...

- (Philippians 3:7–10 NASB95) But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.
- (Philippians 3:10 SBLGNT) τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ κοινωνίαν παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ.
- (Romans 8:16–18 ESV) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- (2 Corinthians 1:5–7 ESV) For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.
- (2 Corinthians 4:7–12 ESV) But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. 8 We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 11 For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death is at work in us, but life in you.

LIVE IN THE GRACE OF JESUS OUR LORD.

- (Galatians 6:18 ESV) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Live the life of a faithful slave, trusting our Lord for everything, trusting ourselves and our works for nothing, finding our only hope and merit in the cross of Jesus Christ.