

# The Slavery of the Saints

## By Dr. James Earls

Dr. Smith mentioned that several years ago we met down in Chattanooga in conjunction with the Sword Conference. It was a burden to my heart to start a fellowship among black fundamental preachers.

By the way, it's not just for the black fundamental preachers. You see it advertised in the SWORD. You call and ask, "Brother, can I come?" Why not? We're going to Heaven too. Are you going to be there?

I was a black militant just like Louis Farrakhan. In 1961 God saved me, opened my eyes and let me know the problem is not skin, but sin; it's not race, but grace. The solution is not in the genes, but in the blood of Christ.

I thank the Lord for what I went through in my own personal experience. Back in those days I could not go to Bible college because of the racial situation. I'm down South, from Virginia.

By the way, they took away our state song. It was written by a black man, James O. Bland, who was a slave. They said the reason they took the song away was because it says, "That's where this old darky's heart am long to go," and "Massa." They called that racism.

Black people were called "darkies" in those days. (You ought to hear what we called each other!) Well, Bland was a slave. He wrote the song, and the state legislature picked it up and made it the state song. I still sing it. It doesn't bother me at all.

Ladies and gentlemen, you can't change history to save your life! A lot of people go around with a chip on their shoulder. But I learned from my daddy years ago that if you carry a chip on your shoulder, it's because there's a block of wood higher up!

I love coming to North Carolina because my dad and mom were from the Rocky Mount area, a little place called Margarettsville, North Carolina. Dad had only a fourth-grade education, but he had a lot of horse sense, or "stable thinking" as they called it.

Today I'm going to preach about slavery. I want you to know that I'm not an African American. If you want to make me mad, call me that. I'm an American who happens to be black. These people who are coming here from foreign countries and trying to change us, why don't they just go back from whence they came? This is America! If they don't like it, then I suggest they leave! And I'll help them leave.

They talk culture, culture, culture. The Word of God changes culture because it changes people. There are things that I used to do that are culturally acceptable. But I'm saved now!

"Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.

"If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.

"If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him.

"If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

"And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:  
"Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." - Exod. 21:1-6.

Probably because of debt, a man has sold himself into slavery. He has to stay there for six years. In the seventh year - the year of jubilee - he will be set free. But he says, "I will not go out free."

What made this man say that?

For one thing, he loves his master because his master loves him. His master provides for him. His master meets every one of his needs. This is voluntary servitude, if you please.

Our nation has a history of people being in slavery. I know there are a bunch of black people to-day, especially young fellows, who have an attitude. God help you! Do you know that God is sovereign and that anything that comes your way, He either allows or directs just to show you what you're like?

I used to have a bad attitude. Then I got saved. Grandma said, "Boy, if you get a big head on God, He will poke you through the small end of a funnel. You can get through the big end, all right, but you're going to have trouble getting through the small end."

Ladies and gentlemen, I've been through the small end a few times, and I don't like it. It really hurts. God uses these adversities that we don't like, even with people we don't get along with, to show us ourselves.

Everybody lay your hand on top of your head and say along with me: "All my troubles, all my problems and my worst enemy are underneath my hand."

Who makes you do what you do? If you are not living for God, whose fault is that? Not God's.

This man willingly volunteered: "My master provides for me. He cares for me. He meets my need. I will not go out free."

The servant is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His pure devotedness to the Father. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it willingly.

"And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

"And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

"Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

"And thou shalt remember..." - Deut. 15:12-15.

You can never give the Gospel to the wrong person. "Brother Earls, what's it like when you go soul winning in the black community?" Just like it is anyplace else.

"How do you do it?" With fear and trembling, just as you do. I know of good, fundamental churches that are in the inner cities. Thank God for this one. But others have moved out into suburbia and let the inner cities go to Hell. They have left and just neglected the blacks and Hispanics.

We say we love Jesus. We fly a missionary to JFK in New York on his way to Africa and leave more black people sitting in New York City than he will ever meet in Africa in a lifetime.

I've been living where I live now for forty-four years. It's a pretty nice subdivision. There are fundamental, independent Baptist churches all around my area. But not once has a fundamental,

independent Baptist church member out soul winning knocked on my door.

You may sit back and chafe at the bit and fuss, but what are you doing about it?

You and I are going to meet God. I'm not responsible for what happened two hundred years ago. I thank God I'm here in America.

Let's look at history for a minute. Sure, my forefathers came from Africa; but if God had not allowed that to happen and brought them over here, down to the Caribbean and up to the United States, I could still be in the jungle, running around looking for something to eat, while something was looking for me to eat. God caused the wrath of man to praise Him!

Do you know that this is in the Bible: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15)? Do you know what a creature is? Look around you. That's what we are-a bunch of creatures. We neglect folks because of what? Social pressure, peer pressure?

I tell Dr. George Riddell, "You and I have to stay together. All minorities have to stick together." He didn't know he was a minority. Dr. Shelton Smith doesn't know it either. As far as this world is concerned, you fundamental, independent Baptists are a minority whether you realize it or not. The world hates you. They will be standing on the corner high when they bring your body by. They will be glad when you're dead, you rascal you! They will be glad to get rid of you, if you live for God.

We have all our needs provided for us in Jesus Christ.

Here we have a servant!

They did call us Black America. I remember when I was "colored." I was a colored boy. Then I got to be an American Negro. Then I graduated and got to be black; colored, African American-all the same guy.

Somebody asked, "Brother Earls, what should I call you?"

I replied, "Brother Earls would be all right." Now it's African American. You can't say "black" anymore. African American-the top of the road. My shoes are African American. It's dumb!

Jesus, the Exemplary Servant

Look at John 13, at the One who set the example:

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

"He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself."-John 13:1-4.

Here is the Lord of Glory taking the position of a slave, a servant. He laid aside His garment. He laid aside His glory and became a man. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He bought me out of the slave market. I was a slave to the Devil, and so were you.

Some of you are still slaves-slaves to your own prejudices, ideas and thoughts.

I used to watch fights. I don't watch them anymore. This black boy and white boy were fighting. You

know which one I was rooting for. That white boy was beating that black boy. He hit him everywhere but under the bottom of his feet. I got caught up emotionally. I said, "Get up! Don't let him beat you like that, boy! Get up!" I think he heard me, because he got up and knocked out the white guy. Then it dawned on me: I'm in the room by myself.

Wait a minute! I am through with fights; I don't care who's fighting. I get caught up in that stuff. Don't tell me you're not like that. I don't care what color a guy he is; if he's in the Olympics and wins the gold and waves Old Glory, I like it-especially if he's an American and won the gold! Hallelujah! Glory to God! I like that flag. I like that song, "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."-John 13:5.

This is the Lord of Glory stooping to that level. You can't wash a fellow's feet standing over him; you have to get down below him.

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?"

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

"Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

"Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

"Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

"For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?"

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."-John 13:6-15.

Notice that "as"-not "what."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." - Vss. 16,17.

We are told in the Word of God, "By love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). Some of you young preacher boys think you're so important. You reek with it. I'll tell you how important you are. Go home and get a five-gallon bucket, fill it with water, stick your hand in the middle of that water and snatch it out quickly. The hole that's left will tell you how important you are. A servant is all you are or ever will be.

Some of you have your résumé ready, waiting for a vacancy in the Trinity. I have news for you: It's not going to happen in this world nor in the next. Just roll up your sleeves, go back home, be a servant and do what God has called you to do.

We have here in the Bible the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."-Phil. 2:5-7.

That's what I'm talking about.

"...and was made in the likeness of men:

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."-Vss. 7,8.

Several years ago I was so humble that I thought about writing a book: The Ten Most Humble People I Know and How I Taught the Other Nine. Then I changed my mind. My wife let me know how humble I was: "Get in the kitchen and wash the dishes!"

"Are you talking to me?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm talking to you."

"I don't have to do that."

"If you don't want to eat, it's all right with me."

So I washed the dishes.

What's our problem about being a servant?

I've been places, had people introduce me, and my wife has said, "Who are they talking about?"

"About me."

"They don't know you like I know you."

Compliments are like perfume-nice to smell, but don't swallow it.

It makes no difference whether I impress you or not; the important thing is to serve my Lord and Master.

When you stand before Him, do you want to hear Him say to you, "Well done, chief executive officer"? No, not that, but, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

This is a James Earls interpretation: Anything you want well done, stick in the fire. Has anyone here been in the fire? You say, "I smell something burning. Oh, that's me!" That's right. When you stand before Him, He's going to say, "Well done," because you've been in the fire-the fiery trial.

Peter speaks about that: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice..." (I Pet. 4:12,13).

You say, "What? Rejoice? Be exceeding glad? Be happy? Peter, you must have fallen out of a tree and broken your neck raking leaves. You don't know what I'm going through."

Take a look at the Scriptures and see what Jesus went through and see how it stacks up. I think about what He did for me. I wasn't seeking Him; He was seeking me, and He found me.

Go back home and do what God would have you do and forget all this racial stuff.

I saw in the news that Jesse Jackson, with an entourage of liberal preachers, is going to Afghanistan. Drop the bomb! That would solve one of our problems there.

You say, "Talking about such stuff can get you killed." Don't threaten me with Heaven! I'm going to see my Lord and my Master, and I want to have something to lay at His feet when I stand before Him. I will not let the problems and the social structure of this world influence me. I'm on my way out of here!

Paul says:

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are [there is that word again] to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

"But God be thanked, that ye were [past tense] the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."-Rom. 6:14-18.

I was a bondsman to the world, the flesh and the Devil; then God saved me. I have a new Master now. Abe Lincoln and Martin Luther King didn't set me free. The Supreme Court of the United States government did not set me free. The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, set me free. I belong to Him. I'm a servant to Him. I'm a child of the King, King Jesus.

You may not like me, but that makes no difference. God made me. He stuck me behind my face. I don't have to look at it. If you don't like it, look someplace else. It's a two-way street we are on. I don't have to like you. You're not all that good-looking either!

A man by the name of Philemon was a Christian, and he owned a slave by the name of Onesimus. Onesimus had stolen from him and had run away. He ran into a buzz saw, the Apostle Paul. He got saved. What's he going to do now that he's saved? Start a civil rights movement called NAACP?

By the way, you didn't know this, but you will now. I'm going to confess it publicly. I have a lifetime membership in the NAACP-the National Association for the Advancement of Christian People. Amen!

In a lot of this stuff we call civil rights, the rights are not even civil. We have a bunch of guys who are sitting back manipulating and using that for their own selfish gain. I'm smart enough to know that the U.S. Supreme Court is not the most Supreme Court. My Supreme Court is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. When They meet, They are going to set things right!

The "Commission" Is a

Command!

God has given us a command. We call it the Great Commission. I think the reason a lot of us are not doing anything with it is that we call it a "commission."

I was in the military three years, ten months, twenty-eight days and five hours. How do I remember it so well? They tried to kill me! You don't forget that. There were guys who received battlefield commissions. You see one who is a sergeant today; thirty or ninety days later, he is a lieutenant, having received a battlefield commission.

But there were others to whom it was offered who refused to take it. No law can be passed to make one accept a battlefield commission.

I brought that over to my Christian life. The reason a lot of us are dragging our feet is that we call it a "commission." You could accept it or reject it. But when God commands us to do something, we have no option but to obey. So we're sitting back relaxed, saying, "It's the Great Commission." No, it's the "Great Command." Did Jesus say, "Whatsoever I commission you, do"? No. He said, "Do whatsoever I command you."

I don't know Greek and Hebrew, and I have a problem with English. I'm prejudiced to the old Authorized 1611 King James. These men come up with these new translations. A Bible out called the "Rapper's Bible" is for black people only. I'm serious. I don't need HIV-positive-I mean, the NIV. There's no cure for either one! Give me another King James when I've gone through this one and this

one has gone through me. Then I'll need another one. But don't rewrite it!

These guys say, "How did God preserve His Word?" I have no problem with that. They have a thing coming out now called the "openness of God." They say, "God doesn't know everything." They say, "He has to wait for something to happen so He can determine what to do about it."

That must be Allah; it surely isn't the God of my Bible. The God of my Bible knows the end from the beginning. He inhabits eternity. Nothing catches God by surprise.

Paul, writing to Philemon, says, "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ." This ought to strike a note with Philemon because he had a slave. But Paul does not appeal to his friend Philemon out of his apostleship. He didn't command a thing. This is a love letter.

"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer,

"And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in thy house:

"Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers,

"Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;

"That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.

"For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.

"Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient,

"Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

"I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds."-Philem. 1-10.

Paul affectionately calls him "my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." Paul is writing this epistle to his friend Philemon on behalf of a runaway slave, Onesimus.

"Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me."-Vs. 11.

Glory! Hallelujah! I look back over my past life. I wasn't profitable to anybody. I'm the oldest of seven children-five boys and two girls. I'm the one who is literally the black sheep in the family. I was the one most likely not to do anything. I was lost.

Because of my wife, I got saved. She got saved listening to Oliver B. Greene on the radio. Then I got saved watching my wife's life. She didn't worry me to death; she just prayed for me. I couldn't figure out that woman. When I looked in her eyes, I could see the lights on, but there wasn't anybody home in there. Oh, the way she loved me!

When I was getting ready to go out, she would lay out my clothes like a valet, kiss me at the door and say, "Have a good time. I'm praying for you." That girl was playing the game, but she didn't have any marbles! Do you know what that was? Love!

I was in the Presbyterian church, singing in the choir, studying to become a Roman Catholic and a black militant. Was I messed up! I always go first-class! Don't fool around. If you're going, go all the way.

She said one thing: "It's so easy to be saved." That bothered me. I didn't know what she meant, but I

found out. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). I called upon the name of the Lord. I was sitting in my living room. She was asleep. God lets some people go to sleep so that He can get His work done. She fell asleep sitting beside me. I heard John 3:16. That was it.

I got saved before I knew what the Romans Road was or where it was. I didn't know anything about theology, eschatology, soteriology.

I got saved, then God called me to preach. I didn't know anything about preaching. But I learned. Sitting by the radio, I listened to Oliver Greene, G. Christian Weiss, Ord Morrow, Theodore Epp, Donald Grey Barnhouse, Charles Fuller, M. R. DeHaan-the old greats. I worked for the federal government and got paid for listening to sound preaching on the radio eight hours a day!

Then we had meetings in the area. When a fellow came to the area, I wouldn't just charge in. I would call and say, "Hey, I'm colored. Can I come to the meeting? If I can't, I'll pray for it." "Come on, brother, and say 'Amen.'"

I went. I looked like a fly in a bowl of milk in that crowd. Those preachers were waxing eloquent. I loved it! I thought, Where did all these guys come from?

When I got to the meeting, I looked around. I was so lonesome. I found myself a lot of times the only black man in those areas.

What was God doing? Shaping and molding my life and working in my heart. But I didn't have smarts enough to know it. Then I found it out. Do you know how? He poked me through the small end of a funnel. Even when I started a church with black people, my own people, I had to fight them to teach them. They said, "This isn't a black church. This isn't black folks' music. This is white folks' music."

I said, "Hey, what color is music? Everybody get a hymnbook. Open it. I don't care which one you turn to. Look at the black notes on top of the white page. We're singing in the black. That's the way it's going to be in here. We're not going to have the jive in here. The rhythms of swinging monkeys, apes and gorillas aren't going to be in here."

The sad part is-and it breaks my heart-that now that kind of rubbish is coming into good, fundamental, independent Baptist churches. I call it "spear-chunking" music. When I hear that junk, I want to take off my clothes, put on a loincloth, paint my face and chunk spears at white folks. It doesn't glorify God in any kind of way.

God help us! This business about "Give God a hand." For what? The only hands He wants are yours. You don't infiltrate and cooperate. You isolate yourself from that stuff because God insulates you.

They won't invite me to their ministers' association. They had me preach at our mayor's prayer breakfast-one time. You see, our mayor is black, and somehow they got my name. "We want you to come preach for the mayor's prayer breakfast. Give the invocation and benediction."

I went and I preached! I said, "Before I give the invocation, let me say something." I had them sit down, and I preached the hide off that crowd. I gave the Gospel and the invitation to accept Christ as personal Saviour. You could hear a pin fall on a bail of cotton in that meeting. They never had me back. I wonder why!

Paul, writing this letter, sent Onesimus right back where he came from. They were both saved-his master, the slave owner, and the slave. They were brethren. God tells us in His Word how to treat each other. Ephesians 6 tells us how the servant ought to submit himself to the master, or the supervisor, or whatever you call him, as serving the Lord.

While in one meeting, I asked, "How many of you regularly go to work late?" Several hands went up. I

said, "If I knew where you worked, I'd call and tell your boss to give you your last check. You're not worth the salt in your bread."

What God did for us, He did in time and on time.

In my area, something is always going on. There might be a breakdown in a tunnel or a bridge torn up or a train going by. I used to sit in my car and fuss as I counted cars: "98, 99, 100, 101." Do you know what I decided to do? Put my car in park, turn it off, put the key in my pocket, open the door and go to others waiting and pass out gospel tracts. They are not going anywhere but are waiting for three hundred cars coming right out of the mountains of West Virginia with all that coal.

Some of them are nervous; some are cussing; some radios are playing loud jungle music. As I pass out gospel tracts, I say, "Hey, turn that thing down!" or, "Read this while you wait."

Some know me. "Hey, Brother Earls, how are you? You're out here passing out tracts?"

"Yeah, what are you doing besides fuming?"

As a servant, I can do what I please, and all I want to do is to please my Lord and Master. If I can do that, how about you?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our example. If we want to mimic somebody, it should be the Saviour! You and I can't help but learn from each other, but don't try to be like me. I'm not going to try to be like you. Let God use you right where you are. Be a good servant, a bondsman. It's hard. God knows that already, but tell Him about it. He never said it would be easy, but He did say, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

Bring your prejudices to Him. I had to tell Him about mine. It was hard, but I said, "Lord, I still have some of that stuff in me from the old civil rights days and demonstrations. God, that's not right." Every now and then it pops up. That's why I don't watch fights. I've been in them too many times. Just bow before God and tell Him you want to be a good servant.

What time I have left, I want it to count for the Lord. I trust you do too.