

Exodus 21:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

Analysis

And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:

Love can voluntarily extend servitude—'I love' (אָהַבְתִּי, ahavti) my master, wife, children. The servant may prefer security with a good master over freedom with poverty. This provision protects servants' choice—freedom isn't forced. The ear-piercing ritual (v. 6) marks permanent voluntary service. The New Testament applies this to Christ-service: we're bought, freed, then voluntarily bond ourselves to Christ as love-slaves (Romans 1:1, doulos). We serve not from compulsion but love. Christ is the good Master; we willingly say 'I love my Master and will serve Him forever.'

Historical Context

Voluntary permanent servitude (recorded by piercing the ear at the doorpost) was rare but provided. It protected servants who thrived under good masters. The doorpost ritual symbolized belonging to the household permanently.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does voluntary servitude based on love teach about Christian service to Christ?
2. How does the servant's choice ('I love my master') illustrate true freedom versus mere autonomy?

Interlinear Text

וְאָם H518	יֹאמַר say H559	יֹאמַר say H559	וְעַד And if the servant H5650	אֶה בְּתִי I love H157	אֶת H853	אֲדֹנִי my master H113	אֶת H853
אִשְׁתִּי my wife H802	וְאֶת H853	בָּנָי and my children H1121	לִי H3808	אֵצֶל I will not go out H3318	חֲפָשִׁי: free H2670		

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