

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' (אֶחָזָה, 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

וְאֵם	וַיֹּאמֶר	וְאִם	בַּעַד	בַּעַד	בַּתִּי	אֶת	אֶת	אֶת	אֶת	אֶת	אֶת
H518	say	H559	say	H5650	And if the servant	I love	H853	my master	H853		
						H157	H113				

אֲשֶׁת	וְאֶת	אֲשֶׁת	בָּנִים	לֹא	אֵצֶל	אֵצֶל	חַפְשִׁי
my wife	H853	and my children	H1121	H3808	I will not go out	H3318	free
H802							H2670

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