

Pierced Ears

Scripture Reading — Exodus 21:1-6

“Pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.” — Exodus 21:6

Ear piercing is a widespread phenomenon. In some ancient tribal traditions, people pierced their ears in the hope of protecting themselves from evil spirits. For virtually everyone today, though, piercing is mainly a fashion statement.

The Bible describes a tradition of piercing ears, but that was not done for protection or fashion reasons. In Exodus 21, we find a rule requiring that after seven years, a Hebrew servant was to be set free. Often a person would become a servant of someone else to pay off a debt. But they were not required to be servants for life; instead, they had the hope of freedom.

In some situations, though, not all servants *wanted* to be free after seven years; some preferred to stay with their master. Maybe they were treated very well and—with the rest of their family—wanted to stay with the master. Perhaps they couldn’t imagine themselves living anywhere else.

In cases like that, the master and servant would go before a judge to ensure that the servant was willing to stay. The master would then take the servant to a doorpost and “pierce his ear with an awl. Then he [would] be his servant for life.”

These practices have parallels to our new life in Christ. By his sacrifice, Christ has set us free. The Holy Spirit moves in us so that we desire to be faithful servants of the Lord. We recognize how good God is to us, and there’s no other place we’d rather be than serving him.

Prayer

Lord, “I am not my own, but belong—body and soul”—to you. Make me “wholeheartedly willing and ready” to live for you. Amen.

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Printed on October 13, 2019

