

**The “Simple” Gospel**  
**Part 3**  
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**Serve**

The second verb, "serve", does not occur in Greek elsewhere within the Thessalonian letters, but it appears widely throughout the letters of Paul and the New Testament (along with various related terms). "To serve" can be defined as "loving service," "to serve the demands of another," "to be under the control of some influence," "to serve the interests of another," and "to be a slave." Jesus declared that service to God means "enslavement," which implies absolute dependence, total commitment, and exclusivity.

Thus, we can summarize service resulting from repentance in three dimensions. On the personal or individual level service means being a disciple, follower or worshipper. In the Old Testament, for example, "to serve" meant to "walk after" or to "follow after" the figure of a god in a pagan religious procession, a slave walking after his master or a disciple walking after his teacher.

Within the corporate, social or ecclesiological dimension serving God means, simply, loving one another. In the words of Galatians 5:13 – "through love serve one another." Paul (Rom 12:7) and Peter taught that God's gives spiritual gifts to the church for service: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1Pet 4:10). Thus, Phoebe was called a "servant of the church" (Rom 16:1) and Epaphras was affirmed as "our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf" (Col 1:7). Likewise, Paul said that Timothy manifested his "proven worth" because he "served with me in the gospel" (Phil 2:22).

On the cosmic or eschatological level we serve the true and living God and Jesus Christ, as well as the gospel and God's mission in the world. Paul identified himself variously as a "servant of God" (Tit 1:1), "servant of Christ Jesus (Rom 1:1), "servant of this gospel" (Gal 3:7; Col 1:23), and a "servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God" (Col 1:25). The author of Hebrews declared simply that we "serve the living God" (9:14). Even the angels affirm their servitude before God as "fellow servants with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 19:10).