



Work As Unto God

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Ephesians 6:5-9

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⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

(Pastor prays)

The honest temptation is to look away from this passage, to just skip over it and the words it uses. The truth is, the idea of slavery is morally repugnant to the American conscience because of its temporal proximity to our own present day. A day where in some places, racial wounds are not fully healed. But for all people everywhere that love the gospel, we cling to the gospel truth that announces the very principles that destroyed slavery from William Wilberforce in England to the Beecher family that led the gospel-driven call for equality in the U.S. You see, the gospel gives a man liberty that slavery can't shackle. The gospel of Christ is subversive transformation. It soaks like bleach on a new pair of jeans. Wherever it touches, purity shows up. An evil institution like slavery can't stand when the gospel, like termites, consumes the foundation.

Paul's gospel was that kind of complete spiritual equality, and there is so much we can gain by getting at what he instructed the Christians caught in slavery to do. Our first thought is, why doesn't Paul or Peter or Luke or somebody deal with the topic of slavery instead of just speaking to the Christians in bondage? And the truth is that the New Testament doesn't focus on reforming structures or human systems. The issue is always the heart of man, and when the human heart is changed, the human system is changed. It's what the gospel does.

So, what do we do with this? How do we apply it? Well, the Christ-centeredness of these instructions is remarkable. And in the world we live and work in, we need this. We need the clear-sightedness to see Christ and to set him before us. We are to cook every meal as if Jesus were going to eat it. We are to clean as if Jesus were going to visit. For teachers, doctors, plumbers, and airplane pilots, for secretaries, and for every person here that does tedious work or work you don't think matters and are in jobs you can't stand, this is for you, that you might have singleness of heart and honesty of purpose and give a wholehearted effort in the name of Jesus Christ. The truth is...

Our Life at Work Reflects Our Life in Christ

At work...

A Christian has gospel behavior

In verse 5, Paul addresses the Christian slave and says, ⁵Slaves, *obey your earthly masters*. The first obligation of every Christian is to please the Lord, and one of the ways we do that is by following through with what we are asked to do regardless of the character of the one in authority. A Christian employee does what she is told to do in everything at all times. The only exception would be if you are asked to do something that goes against conscience or God's word.

This is not about the boss, the work environment, or even the fairness. This is about the Christian worker, whether the boss is kind or cruel. Peter speaks to this in 1 Peter 2:18-21. Listen to what he says. ¹⁸ *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.* ¹⁹ *For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.* ²⁰ *For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.* ²¹ *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* At work, a Christian has gospel behavior because he knows there is more at stake. Whether a boss is kind or cruel is not the point. Being a Christian should make a person a better, more productive, agreeable worker because tedious work in those miserable conditions is gospel work. Your work is your mission field. Your behavior is your platform and credibility, and your mission is Christ to the people you work with. Our life at work reflects our life in Christ. At work, a Christian has gospel behavior.

A Christian has a gospel perspective

Notice what Paul says to the servants in verse 5. ⁵ *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters.* That is as if to say, this person over you is not the end all and be all. This will not last forever, and if you believe in a God who is sovereign over things, he's also in control of work, and this situation is not going to last forever. Remember that the gospel gives a person liberty that a job can't shackle. And when you are in a less than ideal work environment, we take on the perspective of Paul, the apostle in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 where he says, ¹⁶ *So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.* ¹⁷ *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.* God has me here by his grace, and I will keep the right perspective. A gospel perspective needs a companion, so this is my third point about work.

A Christian has a gospel attitude

⁵ *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling.* Fear and trembling, that seems odd. This is not the attitude of a lacky that is afraid to lose his job, so he doesn't have the backbone and compromises integrity. That would not be gospel living. Fear and trembling are an attitude of someone that takes the responsibilities of assigned work seriously, to leave no duty undone or showing no slackness in labor. I think it applies to the students in school. Right now, your occupation is being a student. Your teacher is the boss, and assignments are how you work. Slackness is a gospel issue about a bad witness. Don't talk about your love for Jesus if you don't turn in your homework. Instead, we cultivate a gospel attitude, an attitude of honor and respect. And if you can't honor and respect the person in authority over you, do it for the Lord's sake. When you work with the right attitude, when you work diligently and joyfully, you do three things, and they are all important and all gospel driven.

You give encouragement to other believers.

When your love for Christ is evident in your work, other believers who may be struggling will see your example and be prompted to honor Christ with their work.

You give a testimony to unbelievers.

Your joyful labor in adverse circumstances gives weight to your claim to follow Christ. It shows that being a follower of Christ makes you different. It gives strength to your words when you start to give a verbal witness.

You honor the name of Jesus.

You are sharing that you live your life for an audience of one. That your every move is done for the one who loved you and ransomed you. You see the man or woman that has a firm grasp on who you were before Christ and what Christ has done for you. You crucify the bad attitude and develop a gospel

attitude at work. So that's gospel behavior, gospel purpose and gospel attitude.

A Christian has a gospel commitment

Let's finish out verse 5. Paul writes, ⁵ *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ.*

The idea here is that you do your work without complaining, criticizing, gossiping, or tearing down. You're not disruptive. You are living and working as if your work is for Christ. Listen, being a Christian, filled with the Spirit, brings practical results. You are a reliable, productive, and co-operative worker. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, ³¹ *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* If you take verse 5 as a whole, you hear Paul calling us to clear sightedness in our daily lives as we set Christ before us and do all for his name and his rule and his kingdom. There is plenty more to say, but let me give you just one more thought to support the theme. Our life at work reflects our life in Christ.

A Christian has gospel diligence

Let me show you where I get that. Let's read verses 6-8. ⁶ *not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,* ⁷ *rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,* ⁸ *knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.* Verse 6 tells us we don't just do the minimum requirements. In Christ, if someone wants my tunic, I give him my cloak as well. If someone forces us to go one mile, we go two miles. Christianity doesn't need to constantly be checked up on. He always does his work to the best of his ability, not to people please but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Verse 7 says, ⁷ *rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man.* Paul says it like this in Colossians 3:23. ²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* There is no longer a life between

what is sacred and secure. What is Christian life, and what is work life? When God calls by the gospel and convicts by the Spirit, he redeems at the cross. At the cross, Jesus saves the whole person so that you follow Christ with your whole life. Our life at work reflects our life in Christ. Does your life reflect Christ at home, at work, and with friends? Work as unto God.

(Pastor prays)