



The Duty of Subordinates
27th in the “Ephesians” Series
Ephesians 6:5-8
September 6, 2026
Pastor Mickey Klink

Introduction

In this passage, we learn about the duty of subordinates to earthly leaders and supervisors.

1) This text raises the post-abolitionist problem of slavery that we must address for Christians today.

a) The doctrine of God (what is true about God) helps us frame Paul’s instructions to slaves.

b) The apostle Paul is thinking about ancient slavery, not modern slavery.

c) The Bible condemns slavery directly and indirectly.

1 Timothy 1:8-10; Exodus 21:16, 22:21, James 3:9; Matthew 7:12; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 3:26-28; 1 Corinthians 7:21-22; Colossians 4:1; Philemon 15-16.

d) Paul is speaking about slavery from the inside, since his outside perspective would be condemnation.

2) Christians, serve your earthly leaders and supervisors with respect, sincerity, and an eye to the Lord.

a) God expects us to acknowledge the leaders placed over every area in our lives (v. 5a).

b) God commands us to honor our leaders with respect and fear as to the Lord (v. 5b).

c) A Christian should “wholeheartedly” serve under the leadership placed over them (vv. 6-7).

d) When we honor our leaders, God rewards us (v. 8).

Response

Serve your leaders and supervisors wholeheartedly, Christians, just as you would serve and obey Christ.

Sunday Text Questions

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Read the text aloud and discuss any significant observations or issues that need clarification together.

- 1) What is slavery, what makes it so evil and unbiblical, and how should Americans think about their nation's involvement in this evil institution?
- 2) Since the Bible principles of justice, life, and equal dignity condemn slavery, why does the apostle Paul not speak forthrightly against slavery in this text? Is that a problem that Christians need to resolve?
- 3) Even if we do not have slave-master relations in our personal lives today, how should the principles of this text direct how we think about and act toward our earthly leaders, employers, and supervisors?
- 4) What does it mean to serve our leaders "with fear and respect, and with sincerity of heart" (v. 5)?
- 5) How can a Christian obey their leaders, "just as you would obey Christ ... serving the Lord, not people" (v. 5, 7)? What does this look like in practice?
- 6) Why is it tempting to work differently when we are not being watched? How has this text convicted or convinced you to work more faithfully from the heart?
- 7) Action Step: Spend time praying for the leaders God has placed over your lives, and that God would help you to work under your leaders, even the difficult ones, with respect, fear, and an eye to the Lord.

Further study this week: Passages related to the message of this week's text: 1 Timothy 1:8-10 (Mon); Exodus 21:16 (Tues); Matthew 7:12 (Wed); Romans 13:9-10 (Thurs); 1 Corinthians 7:21-22 (Fri).