

EPHESIANS #97 6:5-9 pt.2 5-3-15

MASTERS AND SLAVES pt.2

(Ephesians 6) As we read our text this morning you will find the bulk of it addressed to slaves. Understand that last week we looked at what Scripture says about slavery. And I now you may realize that the relationship discussed by Paul here is little different than that of an employee and employer. The principles covered here apply to such a common relationship. Maybe you will enjoy going into work tomorrow and calling your boss, “Master” just to see what kind of response you get. *Yes, Master.* If you do that, it may allow you to share what you learned in church with your boss. It is probably not advisable, however, to refer to your employees as “slaves.” Read again **5-9** *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.* Although the bulk of the passage addresses those in the subordinate position in the slave/master relationship we are going to cover the instructions to both groups together today examining them under four headings, the first of which is their duty. Point one is their duty according to God and here there is a difference in what the apostle tells employees and what He tells employers.

What is the duty of the workers according to our text? It says several things, but let’s sum it up with the words “diligent obedience.” ® **5a** *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh.* Colossians 3 says the same thing **22-23** *Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.* That is a great verse to commit to memory and a rule you would love to have everyone working for you follow isn’t it? God’s word tells us what it means to live Christianly in every sphere of life. It says, *this is what a Christian wife is like and this is what a Christian husband is like and a Christian child and a Christian parent and a Christian citizen and a Christian worker and a Christian boss.* If you thought being a Christian meant you did a few religious things at church and that was it, think again. The Bible gives us a distinctively

Christian way to see things, to think about things, and to behave. And the Christian life described in God's word is beautiful. It is beautiful, and wonderful and orderly, but it's not easy. It's not easy. The Christian life has never been tried and found wanting but it has often been found difficult and left untried. We all naturally resist obedience to another. We are rebels by nature, some more than others. But God calls us to obey, to see our bosses as those set over us by God. Therefore, we do what they tell us to do. We don't argue with them. We don't fight about our jobs. We do them and we do them well out of our devotion to--? To Christ. Certainly that means following orders, but it also means doing our best, working hard at the job.

Colossians speaks of the diligence called for in our service. Shouldn't it be the case, and wouldn't it be great if it were, that employers everywhere were thinking "Let's hire Christians, they are the best workers." We should have that reputation of honesty, pleasantness and diligence. We have at least two wonderful examples of this in the Scriptures in Joseph and Daniel. Both Joseph and Daniel were taken, as young men, to be slaves. Joseph worked for a palace officer named *Potiphar* in Egypt and it says Genesis 39:2a *The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. A successful man? He was a slave! Yeah, but his wisdom and hard work paid off. 3-4 Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and how the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.* Every leader, every employer is looking for trustworthy, intelligent, diligent guys like Joseph. And, in most cases, there will be advancement to higher positions. Of course, Joseph got a little too popular with the boss's wife and ended up in prison because of it. The good guys don't always win in the short run, but even in prison what happened? Joseph's character shown thru and he became the jailer's right hand man until such time that he became the pharaoh's right hand man and was second in the mighty kingdom of Egypt. Joseph was obviously a great employee. So was Daniel thirteen centuries later. You'll remember how Daniel was taken captive into Babylon. And rather than moan and groan about his rotten luck Daniel made the most of the situation, studied diligently, ate wisely, worked hard and became the chief advisor to the king. These guys are examples for us. We won't all have the ability to become what they became but we can all work with the kind of diligence and respect for authority we see in those two brothers.

Now, I should say here that there are limits to this principle of diligent obedience. Daniel's story demonstrates that doesn't it? When obedience to the boss means doing something God forbids, like worshipping idols or cheating on taxes, or deceiving a customer we have to nicely say "no" and bear the consequences. For many of you the tension may be over the hours your boss expects you to work. While at work Christians are to be the best, most focused, most diligent employees but there are times when you may have to let the boss know your priorities are inconsistent with a 70 hour work week. Most bosses will understand that and will do what they can to keep a good employee, but sometimes we have to let the job go and trust the Lord. We can't sell our souls to the company. I Corinthians 7:23 *You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.* And that includes your boss. Because you are a Christian you will serve him or her well, but because you have a higher authority there will be limits.

Secondly, and more briefly we look at the duty of masters. 9ab *masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening.* The negative there is to not always try to motivate through threatening and punishment. Maybe you have seen the t-shirt that says, "The beatings will continue until morale improves." For Christian masters there is a better way, there are more dignifying forms of motivation. The positive side of these instructions is stated this way: "do the same things to them." What would the "same things" be? I don't think it means that masters are to be obedient to their slaves, but the other part would apply. The masters are to serve those under them. I'll say that again. The masters are to serve those under them. This strikes the unbelieving world as quite strange. What do you mean that masters are to serve their slaves? I mean just that. Jesus Christ turned the concept of leadership on its head. He taught that the measure of a man is not how many he has serving him but how many he serves. He said this in Matthew 20:25-27 *Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.* Woah! This is radical! The Christian model of leadership is one of servant leadership. And in this role we follow Jesus who sets the example. The next verse in Matthew says 28 *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.* Remember when he demonstrated this so dramatically with the disciples in the upper room on the evening of the last supper? There in John 13 he took the place of the slave, picked up a washbasin and towel and began to wash the

feet of his disciples, his followers. And he didn't leave the interpretation up to his disciples. He said, John 13:**13-15** *You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.* Last week I mentioned Wayne Alderson's teaching on management and how he motivated men by treating them with dignity. Alderson took his management job in a Pennsylvania factory as a place of service. Leadership yes, authority yes, but in the kingdom of God service is to be joined with the roles of leadership.

Another important principle for Christian bosses is simply the Golden Rule. ® You treat those under you like you would want to be treated. Colossians 4:**1** *Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.* Masters are reminded of that in Ephesians too. I think the point is that one ought to treat those under him as he wants to be treated by those above him. That means you don't use your position as a means of self-advancement, but you use your authority as a way to lift up and serve others. The Lord gives us a higher standard and a better way to hold our positions of leadership in the church, in the family and in the workplace.

On to major heading #2 which is the way of obedience. ® For servants and masters the way is the same, and it is the way of humility. The way of humility. The word *humility* isn't used in our text but I will show you where it's found. For slaves, it is found in the phrase *fear and trembling*. **5abc** *Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling.* I know that brings to our minds the image of one cowering in the corner but that is not what is meant at all. The phrase *fear and trembling* is found several times in the New Testament. It is a familiar Greek idiom that means *humility*. In I Corinthians 2:**3** *I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.* You know little about Paul if you think he was stymied by fear. This was just a statement about his self-effacing attitude. In II Corinthians 7 we read Paul's comments on the ministry of Titus. 7:**15** *His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.* Does that mean that Titus had them all shaking in their boots? Not at all. It means they regarded him with an attitude of humility issuing forth in submission and reverent obedience and that is exactly what it means in Ephesians 6. Slaves or workers are to lay aside

pride and that is absolutely essential if we are to respond to authority with honor, support and encouragement as the Lord would have us do.

But then I suggested the same rule holds for the bosses and it does. God calls the masters to humility when he reminds them in verse 9 that they too are under a Master and that there is no partiality with God. The Lord says, "Hey, don't you behave in a superior way. Before the Lord you are no better than those you lead and rule." There are all kinds of ways that we may communicate to subordinates that we are better than them. A star on the door, a special parking spot for ourselves, a grand title. Do those seem fitting for Christian bosses? It seems not to me which is why I tell those on our staff, "don't think of me as your boss, just think of me as a co-worker who is always right." Seriously, the principle of Christian headship does not suggest that we discount the authority that is ours; but it does mean that we emphasize our commonality, not superiority, to those subject to us at work. This week someone sent me a bulletin from a church they attended and I was astonished to read how the Sr. Pastor of this place was listed in the bulletin. At the top of the bulletin it had the man's name and underneath his name it had these titles for him, *A.B., M.Div. D.D. D.Sac.Lit, Ph.D, Litt.D, D.Sac.Theol, D.Humane.let.* All of that. What's the point if not to say, "Wow, aren't I something!" Titles descriptive of one's role I understand, but this is just show and I doubt that God is impressed. He is impressed, at least pleased, by fear and trembling, humility in servants and in masters.

Major heading #3 is the Big Boss. ® Our text reminds both the high and the low of who the Big Boss really is doesn't it? Slaves are admonished to concentrate on serving Christ in their positions. Masters are admonished to remember who their master is. The application is a bit different though. Slaves are told, "your Lord Jesus sees all and deserves all."® In verse 6 we are told to obey 6 *not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.* That word *eyeservice* is a literal translation of an unusual Greek term, and you all know what it means don't you? We have all been guilty of this, slacking off until the boss shows up or the teacher comes in or the coach starts watching. Oh, here is something just for fun – the three best things to say if you get caught sleeping at your desk. #3 "They told me at the Blood Bank this might happen." --#2 "This is just the 15 minute power nap they raved about in the time management course you sent me to." And the #1 best thing to say if you get caught sleeping at your desk...Raise your head slowly and say, "...in Jesus' name, Amen." Me personally, I am a big fan of the power nap, but not of slacking off until the boss

shows up when we pick up the pace and look very diligent for a few minutes. What is the goal of that type of worker? To impress the boss. That's it. ® Do Christians have a different goal? Not really, it's just that we have a different boss who is always looking, who is always there. In the third century, the early church father, Origen, argued in a letter to the governor that Christians make the very best citizens because we obey whether there is a danger of getting caught or not because we know God sees us. The same applies to our work. Whether we have a supervisor looking over our shoulder or not we know that we have a Super-supervisor who is not only always looking, but is deserving of our very best effort.

This is what Paul is reminding us here. He says in verse 5 that we work in the sincerity of heart as to Christ. Verse 6-7 *not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men.* As to the lord and not to men. It doesn't matter if your boss doesn't deserve your best, does Jesus? ® I remember years ago when our church had a new wing under construction and I got to talking to one of the young men working on our building and he told me he was going to work extra hard on our church because he knew he was doing this job for the Lord. I was glad to hear him say it, but that should be our attitude all the time shouldn't it? Colossians 3:23 *Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.* And rather than being a burden I have found that this concept makes every task a challenge, and delivers us from drudgery when we see that we can glorify Christ in everything we do. Christ Jesus is the Big Boss, the ultimate Master and the Christian worker knows he sees all and He deserves all.

For the Christian master, the believing boss, the perspective as given in our text has a different twist. The master is reminded that the Big Boss sees all and judges all. 9 *Masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.* That last phrase puts us in the context of judgement day. The implication is that you will answer to the Lord for how you treated those under your charge. I heard the story of a county agricultural agent who went to a small farm and knocked on the door. The old farmer came to the door, and said, "What do ya want?" The agent said, "I'm from the government and I came here to talk to you about your..." As soon as he heard the man was from the government he said, "I'm not interested, now go away" and shut the door. Just before it was all the way shut the government man stuck his foot in the way, pulled out his card and said, "I'm an officer of this state and I have a right to be on this

property, I have a right to inspect your farm.” The old farmer said, “Then do whatever you have a right to do and then get off my property.” The county agent proceeded to walk out into the field to inspect what was going on there when the old bull kept in that pasture started after him. That bull chased the agent up into a tree where the government man commenced to yelling for help. He was screaming, “you there, up at the house, come get this bull.” After a while the farmer strolled out onto the porch, listened to him yell for a while and then yelled back, “Show him your card.” The point is that some folks, like some animals, just aren’t impressed by high position and God, the judge of all the earth, is one of those folks. He sees all, He judges all, and without partiality to the rich or the poor. Leviticus 19:15 warned against that mistake among human judges. **15** *You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly.* No bias in favor of any class. And so the Lord will judge. He is unimpressed by your high social standing. Therefore, you in authority, be careful how you exercise that authority, as one accountable to God.

Finally now we come to major heading #4 which is the reward. ® There is a reward promised to faithful slaves and faithful masters. **8** *whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.* There is the promise of good for those who do well. And this promise is there for our motivation. We are to seek after this reward, this which is conditional grace. Now strangely I find many in the evangelical church who think it wrong to pursue reward, who don’t see how rewards for good deeds are consistent with a theology of grace. I agree with John Piper who said, *some popular notions of grace are so skewed and so pervasive that certain biblical teachings are almost impossible to communicate. For example, the biblical concept of unmerited, conditional grace (which is what is offered in Ephesians 6:8) is nearly unintelligible to many contemporary Christians who assume that unconditionality is the essence of all grace. To be sure, there is unconditional grace. And it is the glorious foundation of all else in the Christian life. But there is also conditional grace.* God says he gives grace to the humble. There is a condition. He says that if you love your enemies you will have reward in heaven. There is a condition. The Bible is full of those kind of promises. Here it says there are rewards for masters and slaves who do good. Doing well is the condition. Obeying your boss and working with diligence or serving your servants. The fact that it is conditional does not nullify grace. You can’t merit grace. But you can fulfill a condition for its promise. Remember my story of my two friends who made money by their football success in

high-school? The money their father gave them for their tackles and touchdowns was not earned, it was graciously provided by dad, but there was a condition they had to meet. So it is for believers in Christ. You read the parables of Jesus and you encounter servants who were more or less faithful and who received rewards according to their service. Those are stories of judgment and reward. In I Corinthians 3 we read of the foundation for every spiritual house, which must be Jesus, but then we read of how the day of judgment will test the quality of what each man built on that foundation. I Corinthians 3:14 *If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.* II Corinthians 5:10 *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* And from Old Testament to New Testament, from the teaching of Moses, to Jesus, to Paul we find our Lord holding out rewards for obedience. In the case of good slaves or employees, that reward may come in the form of advancement and riches in this life. Or it may not, but it will come. God has promised it. And it is His reward we seek, not the boss's. One wife told her husband, "Honey, you go to your boss and demand a raise, God knows you deserve it." The husband said, "if God knows I deserve a raise, that is enough for me." He saw where the reward comes from. He was confident he wouldn't miss out. The Big Boss gives the best prizes anyway. It can happen in this life, or it can wait till the life beyond. I love this quote from Jonathan Edwards. He said in his diary as a young man, "*Resolved: to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor and vehemence I am capable of.*" I love that! How little we think like that and how much blessing we forfeit in this life alone because we don't. In our text the Lord invites us, slave or free, boss or servant to take full advantage of his conditional grace, loading ourselves heavy with all the great things offered to those who will trust, and obey and do well in the positions God has placed us.

To review: Servants are to humbly obey with diligent labor, looking to the Big Boss Jesus who sees all and deserves our all to the end that you will know great reward for your service. Masters are to humbly and gently serve those under them, looking to the Big Boss who sees all and judges all to the end that you will know great reward for your servant leadership.

Let's pray. Sing In My Life, In my work.