

Spirit-Filled Labor Relations

Ephesians 6:5-9

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Ephesians chapter 6 is our passage for this morning and we're looking at verses 5 to 9, and we're really going to cover what could be a long series just in a message. I was kind of ambivalent this morning in the early service as to how far to go and, you know, when you're taking off in an airplane, there's a point called the point of no return, and once you get there, you've got to go, no matter what happens. And I hit that point this morning, so I went, and that's why you stood outside for an extra few minutes. But we're trying to cover a lot of ground in a brief time on the subject of Spirit-filled labor relations.

Let's look at verse 5: "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with a ready mind, doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord whether he be bond or free, and ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him."

Now, here we have a word from the apostle Paul about how employer-employee relationships are to function. This is a needful subject today. I think it's obvious to everybody in our society that the struggle in the employment world has reached a monumental level. Strikes and walk-outs and threats and management fights and so forth literally fill the newspapers. The conflict rages on constantly, and all people who are in the employ or are the employment source are finding themselves fraught with multiple problems as we endeavor to unscramble all of the issues.

Basically, the problem in employment can always be reduced to one single sin and that is the sin of greed. Everybody wants more of everything for himself. The employee wants less work, fewer hours, more vacation, and higher pay, and the employer wants more labor from the employees, more freedom for himself, bigger chunk of profit, and on and on it goes, and at the bottom of the whole thing is greed, and that's the way it goes. The consumer is out there screaming for lower prices and screaming for less taxation and at the same time screaming for more money. Now, it is an impossibility to have lower prices, less taxation and higher wages. It defies the simplest principle of logic.

For example, a man, say, who works in the auto industry, he decides that he wants more money, so there's a strike. They strike for more money, the corporation is caught. The corporation has to renegotiate and pay them more money. Where is the corporation going to get that money? Two places. One, it immediately raises the prices of automobiles. Secondly, it makes a big loan from the government. Well, the government doesn't have any money, so the government just prints some, and when the government prints money without any source behind it, it inflates the money that

already exists so you have more money worth less.

So now, when the employee wants higher wages, what happens is the product becomes higher, and by the way, the auto industry is interrelated with almost every single product that's in existence because it's all carried by transportation, so that everything goes up in price. His wages go up but so does the government's inflationary spiral, and the end result is you wind up in the same situation. Except for one additional thing: in order for the government to pay back its debt, it raises taxes, so that all you have is a constantly ascending spiral based upon the fact that everybody wants more of everything. It can't happen. You cannot have everybody demanding more without having everybody losing out, and the greed goes on.

And that's what we're seeing in our country today, and by the way, I think the reason we see it so much more dramatically here is it is just a basic characteristic of human nature that the more possible materialism available, the greater the greed. In other words, in a society where life is very simple and there isn't that much, the greed will only reach that level. But where you proliferate the potential attractions to greed, you proliferate the greed itself. So we might say that the greediest people who've ever been around would be the 1979 edition of Americans and maybe a few other select places in the world.

What is the solution to this? How do you resolve this? Because what happens on the job is you've got the employee wanting more money, you've got the management wanting more money and bigger profits and so forth. You've got all this conflict going on. You've got the employee who feels he's being abused, he's not getting a fair wage or he's working too hard, you've got management feeling the employee's not doing what he ought to do, and the profits aren't good, and what do we do? How can we get an answer and a solution to this? A major problem in our world that continues to plague us.

Now, some people say absolute government control is the answer, and what we need to do is to just abolish the free enterprise system and have some form of socialism or communism or an elitist kind of group that run what amounts to a welfare state.

Well, increasing government control would be a solution, and it may be that that's where we're going toward. In fact, it seems to me that that might be the logical thing because that will build the potentiality for antichrist to just take over the whole world, and if I read my Bible right, in the 18th chapter of Revelation, one of the things that antichrist does is ride on top of a worldwide economic system. It may well be that what's happening in the world today is the development of such a system. With greater and greater potential greed, there must be greater and greater restrictions on that greed, government takes more and more power, beginning to set the stage for one who can come and sit on top of the whole pile and dictate policy for the world. It's fast coming.

But I'm really convinced that God didn't design our freedom to be that way. I don't think he designed man's freedom and man's autonomy to work against man, but He designed it in order for us to earn our money, to provide for our families, to gain those things which our potential allowed us to gain, and to cooperate with each other for the good of all mankind. Unfortunately, that just doesn't happen. Why? Because man is depraved and man is sinful and I suppose the single, most obvious manifestation of depravity is selfishness.

Now, this brings the Christian into the picture in a very strategic way. I believe that as the only hope in the world for marriage is going to be found in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and the only hope in the world for the family is going to be found in Christ and the Holy Spirit, I think the only hope for the labor situation is to be found in Christ and the Holy Spirit. I think that's what this is saying right here. That God has a divine design. You know, if you study the Bible, you can study all the way from Genesis to Revelation and you can study biblical economics. You can study the whole process of employment, of wages – it's all through the Scripture. But God, as He has done in other parts of the 5th and 6th chapter of Ephesians, has boiled it back to some very basic principles.

There are very basic things that are related to this issue, and they are built upon the same two pillars that all of God's systems for man are built on: authority and submission. You have it in government, somebody leads and somebody follows. In marriage, somebody leads and somebody follows. In the family, somebody leads and somebody follows, and in the business world or the economic world, somebody has to be in charge and somebody has to carry out the orders. This is the way it is, and the authority/submission principle as designed by God is evident in verses 4 – or rather verses 5 through 9. You have the masters in verse 9, the employers. You have the servants in verse 5 through 8, the employees, and this is God's design for how it is to work.

But, as we have said before, this is all a response to chapter 5 verse 21, which says “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God,” so that there is a mutual submission, just as in marriage and the family. Yes, there are employers and employees, but both learn to submit to each other. Both have a point at which they submit. Both must be conscious of the needs of the others so that none is given the right to oppress. None is given the right to lord it over in an abusive way. There is a beautiful, mutual submission within the leadership and the follower that brings about the good of both.

Now, just the text itself is dealing with a domestic situation. All of chapter 5:22 through 6:9 pictures a family where the parents are there, the children are there, the husband, the wife, and here - the servants in the employ of the family - and it is a domestic scene that is in view. In fact, in 1 Peter, in a parallel passage where there's a discussion of the same truths, Peter uses the word *oiketēs* for “servant,” which means a “household servant.” And that, I think, is the intention here, though a different word, *doulos*, is used; it is in view particularly in a home. But I believe we want to see the principle extend itself from a household servant to any person in an employment capacity. So what we have here, then, is God's divine standard for employer-employee relations.

Now, keep in mind that Paul is dealing with the practical effect of a Spirit-filled life. Apart from Christ, this can't happen. But with Christ, and as we are filled with the Spirit, we not only are to have model marriages and model families but model employment relationships. If you're an employee, there is a standard for your employment, just like your home and your marriage. If you're an employer, there is a standard for your employing practices, just like your family and your marriage. So this is God's divine standard.

Now, if you'll notice in verse 5, you notice the word “servants.” It could be translated “slaves” because it is the word *doulos*, and *doulos* is a word translated “slave,” “bond slave,” or “servant.” Now, we need to mention also the word “masters” in verse 9 is the word *kyrioi*. Now when you see the term lord and slave, or lord and servant, you immediately think of a slavery system, and people have asked the question, “Why would the apostle Paul regulate slavery? Why wouldn't he just abolish it?” Well, that's because we don't have a comprehension of the terms as they're used

biblically. They are simply a reference to the one who leads and the one who follows; the one who gives the orders, the one who obeys them.

And by the way, such concepts are very germane to the whole teaching of the Bible. If we didn't understand an employer and an employee concept, if we didn't understand a master and a slave, we would never understand our relationship to Jesus Christ. We would never understand His relationship to the Father in His incarnation, either, right? So there is validity in the divine concept of a master and a servant, of a leader and a follower. That's all right. God has ordained some to be leaders, some to be heads, and some to be those that respond and obey – that's part of God's design. We see it in marriage; we see it in the family; we see it in the employment world; so we shouldn't be concerned about it. We see it in government as well as the home.

The point is this: at that day and in that time, employees were servants and employers were masters. Most economic issues revolved around a home. Whether it was an agrarian, agricultural situation where a householder had servants and stewards who worked in his fields and took care of his crops and his animals, or whether it was a business of manufacturing or making something and the servants would work around the home in that capacity. The home was pretty much the center of the employment situation. There were those people who then had a shop in the marketplace, which would be operated by another employee, but the home was pretty much the center. And since most marketplaces were fluctuating, in other words, on market day, the market went to the market, and then it went back home. And still some places in the world, that's done. Rather than having permanent shopping centers as we do today, the home was the center. So he's regulating employment in line with what it was in that day.

The Bible does not defend an oppressive slavery system, but employing people is a normal procedure in human life, and so that is not spoken against. Now, slavery was widespread in biblical times, and in many cases it was bad. There's no question about that. Now, the Bible speaks against that. But where it was good, where a servant was serving a just and fair and equitable master and giving a fair service to that master for a fair wage and properly cared for, it was no different than employment. So that in some cases, slavery would be just like employment today.

On the other hand, there are some cases of employment today that would be more like slavery then, where there is oppression, where there is inequity, where there is injustice, where there is an unfair treatment, where there are people who are literally intimidated to doing things they didn't want to do, where they are in hock to the corporation through blackmail or whatever else so that they could never get out of their job without being blackballed all over the place.

In other words, the very terms today, employee/employer, don't tell us anything about the relationship, and the terms master and slave or servant don't tell us anything about the relationship in the past, either. We've got to see the character of the individual relationship to know whether it was right or wrong. When we think of slavery in the sense of stealing people and shipping them across the ocean, in the case of the blacks, or as the case may be in our own country of little tiny white children being used as child labor forces - when we see that kind of slavery, we all are against that, and the Bible speaks against that.

In fact, the Bible says that if anybody ever stole a man or a woman to make them a slave, he would pay with his life. So, whatever was done in capturing slaves in Africa and other parts of the world, if you were living in the time of Israel in the Old Testament and had done that, you would have paid

with your life. And in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verses 9 and 10, it says that the ungodly of the world are characterized as kidnappers or man stealers, so that kind of slavery is spoken against in Old and New Testament texts. But just the terms themselves don't need to give us trouble because they can only be defined by the individual relationships themselves.

Now, among the Greeks, slavery was oppressive – no question about it. Among the Greeks, it was oppressive. That's why Paul regulates it here. In fact, we know on the island of Delos in one day as many as ten thousand human beings were sold into slavery, and this occurred several times. And among the Romans, it was even worse. In fact, almost the whole Roman Empire was functioning on the basis of slave power. There was a fatal flaw in Roman thinking and that was - that was beneath the dignity of a Roman citizen to work. So all the Roman citizens wanted to do was sit around in their orgies and watch their games, and they got slaves to do it, and there were literally millions of slaves in the Roman Empire. And they were thought of simply as instruments of work, like a hoe or a beast of burden, nothing different than that. They had no rights, no protection, were treated with no kindness and so forth, and there was an oppressive element to it.

Now, in the Old Testament, did you know that the Lord advocated a certain kind of slavery? Yes, He did. Because in and of itself, you see, the terms used don't really define the relationship. For example, in Exodus chapter 22, just to show you an illustration, people in that day would serve someone as their servant or their slave. The term didn't carry any connotation about whether it was good or bad kind of a situation. The term was just a definition of the fact that they served another person. They were an employee, that's all. And here we find that some of those things are even advocated. "If a man steals an ox or a sheep or kills it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief be found breaking in and be smitten that he die, there shall be no blood shed for him." In other words, if you're trying to steal something and you die in the act, there's no price to pay, you shouldn't have been doing it, you're guilty. Now, verse 3, "If the sun be risen on him there shall be blood shed for him for he should make full restitution. If he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft." Now, there's the point. If a thief steals something and he can't make restitution, then he has to work back that restitution.

In other words, he simply moves into the employ of the person he has taken from and he renders due service until such time his restitution is paid. So you can see under some terms the Bible even advocates a kind of slavery or service, but the term slavery doesn't mean that it's oppressive, evil, kind of brow-beating, chaining and whipping kind of relationship. No. It's simply servitude for a purpose - servitude in the employ of another person, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes to pay back restitution, or whatever.

In Leviticus chapter 25, we find several statements, but in Leviticus 25, verse 44: "Both thy male and female slaves whom thou shalt have shall be of the nations that are round about you." In other words, you have a right to hire people in the nations around you to work. You can buy male and female slaves from them, and the buying idea was the idea that you literally – somebody had some people in their employment - you literally wanted them, and so you purchased them. Or in the case that a person made himself available, you literally paid that person for his service. Sometimes – of course, in all cases you would pay the person - but sometimes you had to hire him away from someone else; there might be a price to pay.

It's exactly what we have in baseball, basketball, football, and whatever else today. If one team wants the services of another person, they will take the contract to pay the person they want, but

they'll also pay something to the team that gives him up. So it's not unlike that kind of a thing. If a person had a good servant and was willing to make that servant available to you, you might have to pay a little to get him.

It works in the business world today. You're working for a company for 25 thousand dollars as a junior executive, another company really wants you bad. In order to get you, they're going to have to pay you 30 thousand dollars and maybe just shove a little bit of money under the table to the people you used to work with to let them – to make them let go if they catch you in a – well, if they find that company in a needy problem or a needy situation, they may be able to buy away an executive. Those kinds of things happen.

They don't necessarily mean slavery as we think of buying someone, putting them in chains and whipping them all the time. And the slaves could be bought. It goes on to say they could even use their own people in Israel as employees, the end of verse 46, "But do not rule one over another with rigor." That's repeated twice in the Bible, at least that I know of. Don't rule over one another in some kind of wild or violent or oppressive or intense way. This is an employment situation; you have the right to ask them to do things, but not to be oppressive.

Exodus 21, as I told you earlier, said "whoever steals a man and sells him or is found in possession of him shall be put to death." So yes, in the Old Testament there were servants and masters. Yes, but God – God didn't say it's wrong to do that; somebody's got to run things and somebody's got to work. He just regulated it, you see? So that it wouldn't be oppressive in any way, and the New Testament does the same thing. For example, if you ever hit your servant and hurt his eye, he was free. If you ever hit your servant and injured him in any way, he could go free. If you laid a hand of cruelty – Exodus 21:26 and 27 says if you laid a hand of cruelty on your servant and affected him in any way, he was free from you. That's right.

In Deuteronomy chapter 23, verse 15, just going a little bit further in our thinking, it says this: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant who has escaped from his master unto thee." In other words, if a master's been oppressive to a servant and he escapes, don't take him back to that master. God doesn't have some kind of a system where if a guy's beating you up you just stay there and take it. Let him go. "And if he comes to you and dwells with you and in that place chooses to be in your gates where it pleases him best, let him stay and don't you oppress him." In other words, God is regulating things.

In Leviticus 25, he talks about the fact that it's not to be oppressive service. In the seventh year, every seventh year in Israel, all the slaves were set free, and they could go anywhere they want, they could work with any – for anybody they want. And if they wanted to, they could stay with their original master. In fact, they might just say, "I don't want to go free, I want to stay," and very often they'd lean them up against a doorpost, take their ear lobe, stick it against the doorpost and punch a hole in it with an awl. And if a slave had a hole in his ear with – where – that an awl had made, he was saying, "I by my own choice, out of love, choose to serve my master for the rest of my life."

So in the Old Testament time and in the New Testament time, you have employment situations under the terms of masters and slaves or masters and servants. But that does not have anything to do with the fact that they were oppressive. God tries to regulate against that, constantly. In fact, any time you ever sent a servant away, according to Deuteronomy 15, he had to be fully supplied, and if he was done serving you, you had to give him, literally, severance pay to fill in the gap until he could

next be employed. They were to be that cared for. And so those kind of ideals are upheld in the New Testament. Luke 7, the centurion comes and he pleads with Jesus to heal the servant whom he loves. God has always wanted a right relationship in that area.

So I just want you to understand that because you see this term, “servant” and “master,” you don’t need to panic. God is not defending an evil slavery system. God does – God speaks against kidnapping, against stealing people to be sold into slavery. But God realizes there will be employers and employees, and those are just the terms that are used biblically. Whatever the terms are, the relationship is what God is after, and now as we look at the text, let’s see what God’s terms are for this relationship of employees and employers.

First, the submission of the servants in verses 5 to 8 – the submission of the servants in verses 5 to 8 – and here is the pattern for all employees, and we’re going to go through pretty quickly. This is for all – from Paul’s time until today; and some people have said, you know, “Well, why didn’t Paul wipe out the slavery system? Why didn’t Jesus come in and sweep away the slavery system in Rome?” You want to know the facts? Just between you and me? They did; they did. The Roman Empire came to a screeching halt, the slavery system came to an end, and I really believe it was directly through the influence of Christianity that that happened.

But the point is this, people: their focus, the focus of Jesus and the focus of Paul, was not on the system because the system is never the issue. You could have that system, and if the right attitude was there, coming out of the hearts of the right people, it would work well. Remove slavery as a system and have the same rotten, corrupt people, inventing another system, and all you’re going to have is a different kind of oppression, right? All you’re going to have is a different set of problems. And Jesus and Paul knew that if they focused politically and socially on those issues, that all they would do would be change the political-social situation, which doesn’t ultimately do anything for anybody because man’s problem is not political or social, it’s spiritual. Right?

But if you can change the heart of a man, then he’s going to change everything, and if a man is a slave or a servant to a master, but the master loves the Lord Jesus Christ with all his heart and walks in the Spirit, nothing will be as wonderful as working for that man. On the other hand, if you have a free enterprise system like we do, and we are working for an employer and have total autonomy but that is a Christless, godless, anti-biblical, perverse man, slavery to a Christian would be better, right? So it isn’t the system, it’s the individuals, and so our Lord came to change the hearts, and He knew that when men’s hearts were changed, the system would be changed, and Spirit-filled people make right relationships, it doesn’t matter what the system is. I’ve seen situations in the armed services of our own country where there couldn’t be any worse kind of slavery than there is right in there because the attitudes aren’t right.

And so they came to change the hearts of men. You know, you look at our own country, people say, “Oh, you know, what a great day it was when we had the abolition of the slaves.” You know the great contribution to the abolition of the slaves was not the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln, the greatest contribution to the abolition of slavery in America was the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitfield because that’s what changed men’s hearts. That’s the key. In Paul’s day, it was the hearts that he was after. Oh, the system was oppressive, there’s no doubt about that. It was a horrible system.

Varro divided what he called agricultural instruments into three classes. He said the mute

instruments are vehicles, the inarticulate instruments are cattle, and the articulate instruments are slaves. And Cato said, "Old slaves should be thrown on a dump, and when a slave is ill, don't feed him anything, it's not worth your money. Take six slaves and throw them away because they're nothing but inefficient tools." And so it went, and when a slave ran away, he got branded with an F on his forehead for fugitivus and he was cursed the rest of his life. Augustus had a slave who accidentally killed his pet quail, so he crucified him. Vedius Pollio found a slave that had dropped a crystal goblet and threw him in with some lamprey eels in a pond that he kept and he was killed. Juvenal tells about one master whose greatest delight was the "sweet song of flogging his slaves."

So it was oppressive, and I believe that's why Paul writes what he writes here, to the masters. He says, "You'd better do the same things unto them and you'd better not threaten them knowing that your Master is in heaven and He doesn't respect persons." And, of course, he's talking to Christian masters because those in the world wouldn't listen anyway, right? And they not only wouldn't listen but they wouldn't have the resources to obey the call of the Holy Spirit.

But to the servants, he has something to say first of all also. Let's see what it is. "Servants" – and here's the right behavior, that's where he starts, right behavior – "be obedient." "Be obedient to them that are your masters." Same word used to speak of children. We are to respond to their commands and their direction. A Spirit-filled Christian – chapter 5:18 – is where this all begins, be filled with the Spirit, and if you're Spirit-filled, you will respond, and it's a continuous present in the Greek, keep on obeying, be an obedient employee. When you go to work, do what they tell you to do. Really important.

You might say, "Aw, you don't know my employer. He's unjust and inequitable and all of this." Well, the Bible has something to say about that. You say we have every right to protest, we have every right to walk out, we have every right to strike and so forth and so on because our boss is so-and-so-and-so – well, First Peter says what you need to hear, 1 Peter 2:18. "Servants" – and here, he uses the word for a household servant – "be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the perverse." You mean I'm supposed to be submissive to some perverse boss? Yes, because this is worthy of thanks if a man for conscience toward God endure grief and suffer wrongfully.

In other words, God says, "Obey," so you say, "Even if he's perverse, I'll obey," and even though you suffer, your conscience toward God is right, and God will reward that – verse 20 – "For what glory is it if when you are buffeted for your faults you take it patiently but if when you do well you suffer for it and take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." When you're working as hard as you can and the guy's oppressing you and you're doing it unto God, blessed are you. The Bible says whether your employer is a perverse man or a godly man, you are to be obeying him.

Now, of course, that comes to the point where if he asks you to do something that is evil, immoral, against the Word of God, that's when you have to stop right there and say, "we ought to obey God rather than men" at this point, but anything short of a moral issue, you are to respond.

Now, imagine what this was like because in Paul's day and Peter's day, slaves became Christians, and all of a sudden slaves becoming Christians were raised to a nobler standing before God. They now knew the beginning and the end of the universe, they had divine truth, they were sons of the King, they had been lifted up and elevated and glorified, and their natural response would be to say, "Man, I'm not taking orders from that guy anymore. I'm a believer. I'm a child of the King. I'm a son of

God. I am going to reign with Him forever. I'm going to judge the earth. I'm not going to listen to this guy telling me this – this perverse master of mine.” And you know what would have happened? They would have absolutely destroyed Christian testimony.

And so the apostle Paul says no matter what your master's like – and Peter says it, too – no matter what your master's like, you constantly obey that master. This is vital. This is vital because we want the world to know that being a Christian doesn't make you disgruntled, being a Christian doesn't make you better than everybody else, being a Christian doesn't make you a lousy worker, being a Christian doesn't spin your head off into some never-never land where all you're doing is thinking spiritual thoughts all the time and you can't stay at the job. But being a Christian would give you a new imperative and a new inspiration and a new commitment to an honest and faithful day's work. Frankly, people, at the office or at the job, they're not going to listen to anything you say about Christ if they don't see in your life real commitment to work and to be a good employee.

You say, “But I've been unjustly punished. I don't get what I ought to get. They don't pay me enough” and so forth and so forth. Well, change jobs. That's one option. I saw that back in the Old Testament. If the slave wasn't happy where he was, go where he's happy. But if you're there and you've made the commitment, then you need to give all you can. All you can.

You say, “Well, what about if I work for a Christian?” You know, this is another kind of a problem because some people work for a Christian, they think they can do less. They say, “Well, he's already a Christian, it doesn't matter what my testimony is,” right? See? Or, “Well, he's a Christian and so we're just – we're just brothers in the Lord and we discuss things together.” No, no, even though you're a Christian and he's a Christian and you're brothers in the Lord and you go to the same church, he's still the leader and you're still the follower and you do what he says.

You know, I have kind of that relationship here at Grace Church, in a sense, because I'm an employee of the church, and the elders of the church set policy for what I do, and they set my salary, and they establish what my work should be and when I should be here and what I should accomplish and the parameters of my ministry and tell me whether I ought to go over here and do this or not do this and whatever, and I'm an employee, and I will accept that because that's the way it ought to be. And all of the pastors on the staff of the church here are really employees of the church. But what's so wonderful about it is the fact that while we are responding as employees, when we come together in the assembly of Christ here, all of a sudden all those distinctions are lost, and all those people who are making the policy for my employment, I'm teaching the Word of God to.

And that's what happened in the early church. You had a master and a slave, and the master ran the employment situation, and then he went to the Christian assembly and the master sat in the pew while the slave was the elder. That's a great thing.

So whether you have a good master, an evil master, a Christian master, a non-Christian master, the principle is the same. You are to obey and to give a full day's work for a full day's wage with the right attitude.

Titus 2:9, “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things” – I like this – “not answering back.” Don't mouth off to your boss, just obey. “Not pilfering” – stay out of the petty cash – “but show all good trustworthiness” – Why? – “that they may adorn the

doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”

You know what the issue is, people? How you work will affect what people think about God. That’s right. How you work will determine what people think about God, and even a Christian employee. You say, “Well, I have a Christian employer, I’m not concerned, he already thinks right about God.” But in 1 Timothy 6:1, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed.” The same thought as in Titus. You’d better work hard for your master so that God’s name isn’t blasphemed. “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather do them service because they’re faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.”

In other words, if you would serve with all your heart for someone who’s not your brother, for God’s sake, you certainly would serve someone who is your brother, right? So whether you’ve got a Christian or a non-Christian, whether you’ve got a good guy or a bad guy or whatever, it’s all the same. “Servants, obey your masters”; that’s the right behavior, the right perspective. Look at verse 5 again: “according to the flesh,” “according to the flesh.” In other words, the perspective is this is a human, temporal relationship and that is all. The employer has authority only in that area, not the spiritual. And I think Paul is regulating here what could have been an abuse in the early church, where the employer would run the employee and the servants and the slaves, and then when they got to the church, you see, he’d be doing it again, and that’s where Paul says, “Cool it.”

Galatians 3:28: “And Christ was neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond nor free.” We are all one. And so when we get into the assembly of believers, we don’t do that anymore. That is only according to the flesh. That is only a temporal thing. So the right behavior is obedience, the right perspective is that it is only a temporal issue.

That leads to the right attitude. He says the right attitude is “with fear and trembling.” Now, some of you say, “Boy, that’s the way I work, I’m afraid of that guy, I’m afraid,” but it isn’t that kind of thing. It’s the fear and trembling that should be translated “reverence and respect,” “reverence and respect.” Why? Because God has ordained the authority-submission principle. If you can’t reverence and respect the individual for who he is, then – or she is - then respect them for the place they have in the design of God. Because God has designed some in authority, some in submission, and so it is a matter of honor, respect, and reverence. We just read you 1 Timothy 6 where it says honor your master. This is your attitude. You are to realize that God has established authority and submission. God has allowed him to be there and you to be where you are. It isn’t the fear and trembling of shaking in your boots every time he comes around, but it’s the respect and the honor because God has ordained this. God has assigned you that task.

Do you know something? Where you work is a mission field that God has placed you on, and you have a responsibility there, and so your service to your employer is an act of service to God, and so that is the perspective that is necessary. You must realize that you are only doing this temporally, but the attitude is that you are reverent toward it because it is a divine principle. It is a divine principle that you’re responding to.

Now, fourthly, he talks about the right commitment. If you have the right behavior, moving along in the right perspective with the right attitude, you’re going to have the right commitment, and this is really great. Verse 5 says “in singleness of your heart,” “in singleness of your heart.” What does “singleness of your heart” mean? It means undivided, honest, upright, loyal commitment. In other

words, you have one thing in your mind. Single-heartedly, you do your job. Loyalty, commitment to do your very best all the time. People, this is so practical, it's just amazing.

First Thessalonians 4:10: "And indeed you do it toward all the brethren who are in Macedonia, we beseech you, brethren, increase more and more" – Listen – "study to be quiet, to do your own business, work with your own hands as we commanded you, that you may walk honestly toward them that are outside and may lack nothing." In other words, do your job, keep your mouth shut, work with your hands, and you'll be an honor to God. Do your job. Singleness of heart. Sixty minutes of work for sixty minutes of pay. Give it all you've got. It's really important.

Boy, how practical this is. If we want to turn things around and see a difference, and if we're really filled with the Spirit of God, it'll be visible on the job because we'll have the right behavior, with the right perspective, with the right attitude and the right level of commitment and the right motive. Look at the end of verse 5: "as unto Christ," "as unto Christ." "You mean my boss is representative of Christ?" You are to do your job as if Christ were there. Why? Because He is, and He is the ultimate paymaster, believe me. He is the ultimate paymaster. We'll see that in a moment.

The words show, and I want you to get this, that there is no difference – now get this - there is no difference between your Christian life and your job. There's no secular. There's no secular thing. Your job is service rendered as unto Christ. Whatever you do, "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the" - What? – "glory of God." First Corinthians 10:31. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." In other words, your very living is a sacrifice to God. Your very working is an offering given to Him. Your job is service to Christ. That's a critical thing, and people talk all the time about full-time service. Every Christian is in full-time service, every single one. I don't know any part-time Christian living, do you? "Today I'm a Christian, tomorrow I don't know. Tuesday through Saturday, I don't know, but Sunday and Monday, I'm a real Christian." No, it's a full-time thing. Full-time service. Everything you do is service to Christ.

People say, "Oh, you know, I just wish I could quit my lousy job, you know." And they're a poor worker or they're lazy or they don't have any diligence and they want to get out of it. They say, "I want to go into the ministry." You know, the ministry does not need deadbeats. We really – we've got a lot of them anyway, we don't need them. There's a lot of them around. But you know, people say, "Oh, I want to get into" – listen, there are two reasons why you may not be in the ministry. Number one, it just isn't God's will and that's okay, too, because what I do is significant for me and what you do is significant for you, and there's no sense in switching the two. There's nothing better than something else. We just want to be in God's will, right?

So number one, you may not be in the ministry because that isn't where God wants you. But number two, you may not be in the ministry because you haven't been faithful over little and God isn't dumb enough to put you lord over much, and if you can't do your service to Christ in your job, then who is to say you're ever going to do it in the church? Start where you are. Faithful over little, lord over much.

In verse 6, he says the same thing, essentially, but he adds not only to the right act or the right behavior, the right perspective, the right attitude, the right commitment, the right motive, and now the right diligence. "Not with eye service as men pleasers." Now, what is he saying here? What is our right diligence? We are to be diligent all the time, "not with eye service." That means not just working when the boss is looking. "Eye service" – you know what eye service is? When you're just going like

this all the time. See? You're rolling your head around to see who's checking on you. "I've got to go into the office today because the boss is coming today. I've got to put my hours in. I've got to clock in, then I'll do" – you know - eye service, eye service. Salary evaluation time; you really start cranking it out. When you know they're talking about salary, boy, you – you're just frothing at the mouth and spinning wheels. Smoke coming out behind you, see. This is eye service.

But we are to have a steady pace of loyal commitment that shows diligence all the time, not with eye service as men pleasers. We don't do what we do to please men. We don't do what we do to get the approval of men. We don't do what we do to please the boss. We don't do what we do to get the big money, to get the raise. That's not the idea. What we do, the right diligence, is this: as servants of Christ, we do the will of God from the inside, you see? And what is the will of God? That you work the way God wants you to, and you do it not because the boss is watching but because the Lord is watching. Right?

The Lord is the ultimate paymaster. The Lord is the one checking. The Lord is the one evaluating. And right diligence involves that kind of commitment. We serve Christ, verse 6 says, "doing the will of God from the heart." Verse 7 repeats the same thing, "with a ready mind, doing service as to the Lord and not to men." It's the same thing. The end of verse 5, "as unto Christ." Verse 6, "as servants of Christ." Verse 7, "doing service to the Lord." It's all three verses are saying the same thing. We are not serving men; you are not serving your boss. You are not serving your company, your corporation, your foreman. What you're doing is serving God, and every day's work and every task in that day should be an offering given to God to prove your devotion to Him, to prove the reality of a Spirit-filled life.

Why? That His nature may be adorned, His testimony may be enhanced, the credibility of His person may be uplifted. And so when you get up in the morning it's "I'm going to serve the Lord today." Get out there and pump that gas and make those hamburgers and do it to the glory of Christ.

But that isn't the way it usually – "Oh, I got to go to work, down to that crummy deal and" – and you don't even have the right perspective. It's an offering to God, and if you're faithful over that, who knows what the Lord might do for you? Who knows? Paul was a tentmaker but God had better things, greater things, and who knows? If you're faithful. But even if you stay being a tentmaker, that's okay if that's His will because that's the best thing for you.

And so as you approach each day, "Today is a day of service to the Lord, and today I'm going to vow that whatever my hand finds to do will be done to the glory of God, that His truth may be adorned in my life and that people seeing me may glorify Him." If you seek to please men, you corrupt your motive. If you seek to do what only the boss watches you do, you mess up your mind. You're serving Christ, and in case you don't think so, look at verse 8, "knowing that whatever good thing any man does."

Listen, whatever good work you do. You say, "But the boss never knows it, he doesn't see it, everybody else gets the credit, they keep pushing people past me, they don't know that I'm really the one doing it." But listen, "whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he's a bond slave or a free man." God doesn't miss one thing that you deserve, and you know what? One of these days it's all going to come cashing in on your account. The question is: Are you going to scratch and claw for it now or are you going to be diligent and faithful and let God give it to you in the kingdom?

Perhaps you heard the story of the old missionary returning home after many years of sacrificial service in Africa. He was on a ship and on the same ship was President Theodore Roosevelt, and he had been big-game hunting in Africa. The ship docked at New York, and there were tremendous crowds to greet the president, and the press was there to cover the story, and the old missionary and his wife walked off the ship and nobody noticed. Somebody pushed them out of the way, and they took a taxicab to a cheap hotel to spend the night before traveling west.

“Just doesn’t seem right,” the missionary said to his wife in a rather bitter tone. “We give our life to Jesus Christ to win souls in Africa, we arrive home, and nobody is there to meet us, and no reward, and the president goes and shoots some animals and he gets a royal welcome.” And as they were praying before retiring, it seemed that the Lord spoke to them and said, “Do you know why you haven’t received your reward yet, my children? It’s because you’re not home yet.” And I think that’s right. I don’t think it’s all going to come together until we get home, and that’s why we’d better be working with a view to that world, not this world, and so God lays down the standard of how we are to work.

Let’s turn the tables in closing. It’s only one verse because we’ve already given all the principles. They’re just applied here to the other side. The submission of the master, in verse 9. What is the employer’s task? I love this. “Ye masters, do the same things to them.” What can be said besides that? What are “the same things”? What do you mean “the same things”?

First of all, the right goal, and what does “the same things” refer to? I believe the antecedent to that is at the end of verse 6: “doing the will of God from the heart.” You do the same thing, you be Spirit-controlled and do God’s will, and what is God’s will? God’s will is that you are reverent, that you are single-minded, that you be an employer who realizes that you are serving Jesus Christ. That’s it. You serve an employer’s role like you expect them to serve you - same standards, the same fairness, the same equity, the same diligence, the same hard work, the same godliness, the same Christlikeness, the same adorning of the doctrine of God.

Listen, as an employer, you be sure that Christ is manifest in your life. You be sure that God is manifest in your decisions. You be sure that what you do is a single-minded commitment to the needs of those employees, to put out the very best product in the very best way without compromise, to not cheat or do what is wrong, but to do the will of God from deep in your heart. And realize as an employer that you’re answerable to Christ, not a board, and not the employees, but Jesus Christ Himself. Do the same thing with the right spirit secondly. Verse 9 says, “forbearing threatening.” Hold back from threats. Don’t intimidate your employees by yelling at them. Don’t use verbal abuse. That was a temptation and still is.

The Spirit-controlled employer is gentle; he’s never divisive or derisive. He’s never abusive; he’s never threatening; and he says you ought to have the right goal, doing the same things, with the right attitude, not being abusive, based on the right standard. I love this: “knowing that your Master also is in heaven.”

Who is the standard for masters? Who is the greatest master of all? The Lord Jesus Christ. You treat your employees like Christ treats you. See? That’s the way. And finally, the right equity. “Play no favorites, neither is there respect of persons with Him.” You be fair, you be equitable, you do not be

abusive or threatening, and you realize that you are called to do the will of God to meet their needs with singleness of heart, to fulfill all God's will.

Listen, you get Spirit-filled employees and Spirit-filled employers working like this, and we can see something different than the confusion and chaos we see in our world today, because we'll have people being unselfish doing the will of God. Let's pray.

Father, we've touched on such a practical area and we ask that You'd give us grace to fulfill what we know to be true. Help us to be diligent, hardworking, faithful, loyal, loving, unselfish, sacrificial, Spirit-filled people whether we are employees or employers or both. God, help us to live to adorn the doctrine of God, to lift up Your holy name so that the world around us will see in our diligence, in our commitment, in our service to Jesus Christ, such distinction, such beauty, such wonder, such grace of life, that they'll be drawn to Jesus Christ. O God, may we know that what we say may not even be important at all, but what we live and what we do as we work may set the stage to make the gospel believable. God, make us the kind of Spirit-filled people You want us to be in our marriages, in our families, at our jobs, for Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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