

The Conscientious Christian Employee, Part 1

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:1

Code: 54-43

Well, let's open our Bibles now to the study of God's Word, 1 Timothy chapter 6. We begin a look at 1 Timothy 6 verses 1 and 2. Paul in writing to Timothy and instructing him in matters related to the life of the church, particularly at the church at Ephesus where Timothy has been left to set things in order, spends two verses on the matter of employment...two verses on how Christian slaves are to behave in their responsibility to both their non-Christian and their Christian masters. And while the terminology here is slaves and masters, *doulos* and *despotes*, the idea here extends beyond that to include us today who are in an employer/employee relationship. We've entitled this portion, "The Conscientious Christian Employee."

Now it wouldn't seem difficult to get through two verses.

You would think we could do that rather readily since they're brief and very obvious in terms of interpretation. But as often as the case with me, I didn't even get to these two verses in the first service because there was so much preliminary material that was necessary for a proper understanding. So let's begin with a little bit of a general insight.

U.S. News and World Report says that 70 percent of the people employed in our country don't like their job. Now I'm assuming that you're as normal as the rest of the nation so maybe there are 7 out of 10 of you employed people who don't like your job either. Ninety percent of the seventy percent who don't like their jobs don't feel like getting up in the morning to go to their job at all. So what we have is a very large group of people who are very unhappy. And unhappy people tend to be rather unproductive and not the choice of employers, to be sure.

As a result of that, the average work in America, according to Time magazine, wastes many, many hours a week to the tune of \$100 billion of drain on the American economy to pay people for work every year which they don't do. It costs our economy \$100 million dollars for indolence, for people who because they are unhappy or because they are lazy don't do work but are eager to collect pay for what they didn't do. The American worker, frankly, is consumed with creature comfort. He is consumed with leisure. He is consumed with materialism. He is consumed with, as I said a few months ago, financing his indulgences. He has little love for quality. He has little love for performance. He has little concern for excellence in the product which he produces. He really continually demands more and more money for less and less work and wants only to finance his major goal in life which is pleasure, his own.

And often employers find it hard to locate committed trustworthy diligent durable accountable productive quality type workers. And really many Christians fall into these areas as well as non-Christians. Many of us need to be reminded of our responsibility as employees. And that's what the Apostle Paul is writing here to Timothy...encouraging those in the church at Ephesus and all others as well to take again a good look at the responsibility that we all have in the role of work. Now we are raising, I think, a generation of people who really don't understand work at all. In fact, somebody said that most of our teenagers think that manual labor is the president of Mexico. I don't know how true that is but it sounds just about reasonable.

We have indulged ourselves in our own pleasures to the point where we may find it difficult to be productive in the future.

Now I believe that as Christians we desperately need a work ethic. We need a biblical theology of work. And the Scripture does provide such a theology for us. And before we have finished with these two verses, we will expand our thinking to encompass Ephesians 6 and Colossians 3, both of which give us the most detailed theology or ethic of work in the New Testament.

But to look at our passage by way of at least a start this morning, I want you to listen to the two verses that begin this sixth chapter. Now remember, there is probably a corrective in this as there is in all the other instruction Paul gives to Timothy because in the church these areas are not being fulfilled as they ought to be and reminder is of great necessity. So Paul says to Timothy, in regard to the people in the church and their employment, "Let as many slaves...doulos, means slave...as many slaves as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed; and they that have believing masters, let them not undervalue them because they are brothers but rather do them service because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

Now the idea of teaching and exhorting indicates that Timothy has really got to make a major issue out of this because obviously it was of great need in the church. People were shirking their proper responsibility as slaves to the masters who were over them.

Now I want to give you an insight into the terminology, to start with. The word "servant" in verse 1 should be translated "slave." It is the word *doulos* in the plural, *doulos* in the singular. And it designates a person who is in submission, subjugation, subjection to someone else. And, in fact, a *doulos* had a long term submission, a long term sort of responsibility for obedience to a master. There are many uses of this word. In fact, I think there are about 125 uses of the word *doulos* and about 25 uses of the verb form *douloō* in the New Testament. So there is 150 times the term is referred to. That means that it is a very, very common familiar and useful term. Slaves, *doulos*, *doulos*, were literally a part of

the fabric of New Testament culture. They were everywhere. In fact, the whole economic structure of the Middle East and the Roman world was based upon masters and slaves, or employers and employees. It's no different than today. There are those people who own companies and who own land and they are the ones who hire those who work for them. And that's the way it was then. The terminology today would be employee and employer, the terminology then was slave and master.

Now to understand best the definition of a slave, let me take you to two passages. We don't have time to cover anywhere near all the ones there are. But in Matthew we get a good insight in chapter 8 and verse 9. Jesus here comes into contact with a centurion...that's a Roman soldier who commands a hundred men. And He is concerned because his servant, his *doulos*, his slave is at home, sick of the palsy...verse 6 says...and tormented in a grievous way. Now this is, no doubt, a domesticated servant. This is a man who would be very much like a butler, an adjutant, a personal escort for this man who took care of his personal duties. And to get a little definition of the function of a *doulos*, we come down into verse 9 and the man describes this *doulos*. The centurion says, "I'm a man under authority," that is the authority of Caesar in Rome. "I have soldiers under me," a hundred of them to be exact, as centurion indicates that. "And I say to this man, Go, and he goes. And to another, Come, and he comes. And to my *doulos*, Do this, and he does it." Now there is the best definition of a *doulos* in all of Scripture. A *doulos* is a person to whom you say, "Do this," and he does it. That's his duty. He is a person in the role of a servant. He is a slave in the terminology of the Middle East and the terminology of Rome.

Now let me show you another passage that will help to enrich your understanding. Luke chapter 17...first thing we now is he's a man to whom you say "Do" and he does it. In Luke 17, we start by seeing verse 7. He says there, the Lord does, "If you have a *doulos*, a slave plowing or feeding cattle," he's out there plowing furrow to plant grain or he's out in your field feeding cattle, and now we are getting our picture of *doulos* stretched a little bit, primarily they were domestic servants in the household, like the man in Matthew 8. But also they would from time to time plow a field or work with the animals. So if you have a *doulos* doing that, when he comes in from the field, do you say to him, "Go and sit down to eat?" In other words, do you say..."Well, boy, it's been so wonderful that you worked all day, thank you very much, sit down and I'll get your dinner." No.

"Will you not rather say to him, Make ready that with which I may eat and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk and afterward you will eat and drink."

In other words, he is a servant. He is employed and paid to do a duty. You don't thank him and bend over backwards to serve him, you expect him to do his duty. And until his duty is done, he must continue to do it. So he comes in from working in the field. He prepares your dinner and when he has fully done his duty, then he can eat himself. Verse 9, "Does he thank that *doulos* because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not, Jesus says." You don't thank him, that was his duty.

When you've worked your eight hours, at the end of the day your boss doesn't come in and say, "Oh, thank you...thank you, I cannot express how deeply grateful I am. May I prepare your dinner?" Not on your life...not on your life. Why? Because you are being properly compensated for what you have done. It is your duty to do that. If you stay three or four hours late and you do what is beyond the call of duty, then you merit a thanksgiving. But you are properly compensated for the duty as defined.

"So you also when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you by God...implied...you should say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do." Now there's another definition of a doulos. He is one who does his duty. He functions within the framework of a prescribed duty assigned to him by someone else and he is to do his duty.

You say to him, "Go," and he goes. You say to him, "Come" and he comes. You say to him, "Do this," and he does it.

Now what we see also and we should note is that primarily the doulos was a household domestic employee. He functioned in the family in the house. Sometimes would work in the field.

Sometimes work with the animals. But that was not the normal way that that kind of work was carried out. Field work and farm work was mostly carried out by hired day laborers, such as we see in the parable of Matthew 20 where a man goes into the marketplace, you remember, and wanting to harvest his vineyard, he begins the sequence of hiring day laborers to work so many hours in his field. Field work and animal work was carried on, for the most part, by day laborers because you could pay them less, you had less liability, you didn't have to house them, feed them, take care of their wives and all their kids. A domestic servant, you had to do all of that for. He lived in your family and so there were not as numerous domestic servants as there were hired day laborers.

So you have then this doulos who basically would be in the norm a domestic family member servant, living in the household doing exactly what he was told to do.

Now on the other hand, the other term to note is the term "masters" in verse 1 and 2. That is the word despotes, we get the word despot. We talk about a despotic ruler, and we mean someone who may be harsh and overbearing and cruel and abusive and so forth. But in the New Testament time, the word did not necessarily carry that connotation. A despotes referred to one who had unrestricted, unrestrained sovereign authority. It's a bit stronger even than the word kurios which is translated so often "lord," sometimes master. Kurios is a bit softer than despotes. Despotes emphasizes the unrestrained and unrestricted character, the unlimited and absolute domination of authority bound up in the master. And despotes went with doulos. In Greek terminology it was doulos-despotes. The strong word for slavery and the strong word for mastery went together. By the way, despotes is never used of a husband, though kurios is. It is a softer authority. Despotes is never used of a father,

though kurios is. Kurios is most commonly used of Christ because there was a graciousness in His rulership, however, there are at least three occasions in the New Testament where He is referred to as despotes, that is 2 Timothy 2:21, 2 Peter 2:1, and Jude verse 4 where He is called the only despotes.

So, the word emphasizes the absolute unrestricted, unlimited domination. Now what you have then an employment situation, is you have one who is a doulos who does his duty, you tell him what to do and he does it. And then you have the employer who is the despotes who has an unlimited control over those who are under him. That basically was the economic setup for the functioning of work in the economy of the Middle East and of the Roman Empire.

Now somebody's going to say, "Well, what in the world does this have to do with us? Here we are in twentieth century America, we liberated the slaves a long time ago, thanks to the work of God in the heart of people like Abraham Lincoln and so forth. We have freed the slaves. We're not into slavery. What relevance does this have to us?"

Well, I want to show you that. I want to show you that and I think you'll be fascinated by it. In fact, I got so wound up in this, I've been doing so much reading on it, that I never really got back to the text. But I think it's fascinating to understand. Now listen, if you go to the Bible and read the word "slave" and think of the word slave in an American culturized context, you're going to get confused. If you think of the word "master" in American cultural context, you're going to get confused. So we need to strip away our cultural understanding of slavery which is all bound up in the horrifying racial discrimination of the South, of the whites against the blacks, we need to set that kind of thing aside because that was not the characteristic of the slavery of the New Testament era.

Let me give you a little bit of background. Slavery by this time is woven into the fabric of the New Testament culture. It is woven into the soil, as it were, of Palestine and the Roman world. It is an accepted format for social life. It is an accepted economic system. In fact, it was even an honored system. Paul himself is proud to be identified as a doulos of Jesus Christ. Peter also says he is a doulos of Jesus Christ, as does James, as does Jude. Even Jesus was a doulos of God. So there was something inherent in being a doulos that was dignified, that was analogous to something very good and very right and very holy and very righteous. And so there was...there was a flavor to the slavery of the New Testament era that was good enough to make it analogous to spiritual bondage to the living God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And furthermore, at no time do any of the Apostles or the Lord Himself ever attack slavery as an existing social entity. They never do that because in and of itself it was a very workable economic system. There were abuses but there are abuses in any kind of social system and the abuses are the issue, not the definition of the system itself. And we need to understand that. And I trust to be able to help you to understand that.

We have to strip ourselves of the wrong notions. For example, the utterly unacceptable slavery of American history based upon a terrible racial discrimination, abusive in many, many cases, creating artificial social strata that still generates conflict in our nation, that kind of thing we need to set aside. That kind of terrible national blight was not the kind of situation in slavery in the Middle East in Palestine or in the Roman world at this time.

Now I know a little bit about the American past from my experiences of ministry over about a six-year period in the South where I was preaching and teaching among the black folks right at the time of all the civil rights action and the hey-day of Martin Luther King and even the birth of the black power movement under Stokely Carmichael, Rap Browne and others, and we were very involved there in the South...in high schools, in colleges doing assemblies, teaching the Word of God and having a tremendous ministry among these people. I learned a lot. I sat down for one whole evening, the night that Martin Luther King was assassinated and spent that entire evening with Charles Evers who was the first black mayor in Fayetteville, Mississippi, a very insightful conversation, one I will never forget.

But in all of that I learned some very interesting things.

I learned that when the blacks were brought to America...and by the way, if you want some interesting reading on this, get the book *Slavery, Segregation and the Scripture* by Oliver Buswell III who was an outstanding evangelical anthropologist. But I learned that when blacks were brought into America as slaves, initially they began to teach them to read and when they learned to read, the first thing they read was the Bible and when they read the Bible they got saved, and when they got saved they wanted to come to the church. And wanting them to come to the church...not wanting them to come to the church posed a great conflict. Now they had black Christian brothers and sisters that they didn't want in their church and they had a tremendous conflict with the Word of God which says in Christ there's neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, or bond or free, so in order to deal with that they stopped teaching them how to read. If they couldn't read, they couldn't read the Bible. If they couldn't read the Bible, they couldn't read the gospel. If they couldn't read the gospel, they couldn't be saved and that would keep them out of the church.

The net effect of that in many areas was that they had a smattering of biblical Christianity tied in with a whole lot of culture and so what generated was the black church movement which is sort of a highbred syncretism of their culture under slavery and a little bit of Christianity mixed in. And that highbred is a living testimony to the withdrawing of the revelation of God from the black people. And many of them, of course, by God's wonderful grace have come out of the caricature into the reality of Jesus Christ, for which we praise God.

I remember hearing when I was there with my own ears a white preacher saying that black people had a smaller brain than white people. I remember hearing with my own ears that they were cursed with a curse of Ham and needed to be kept in a cursed situation. I was dragged into a...into a jail in a

city down there and my life was threatened. They threatened to strip my clothes off and beat me with a whip if I continued to go around preaching the Word of God and meeting with black people. My..I had no social agenda, I was just giving them the gospel.

That kind of thing, that kind of abusive attitude which was a sort of a hold over from the slavery days is a frightening thing. I remember a pastor in one town that I knew personally, pastored the First Baptist Church who decided to start a Bible study with black people in his city. And the result of it was he couldn't buy gas, he couldn't buy groceries. They canceled his insurance policy. Had a nervous breakdown, they took him into the hospital in Jackson, Mississippi and about the third day he was he dove out of the sixth story and killed himself. The tremendous pressure of that whole situation was the residue of the kind of slavery that we knew in early America.

But somehow in understanding the biblical teaching about slavery and masters, we need to divorce ourselves from that kind of thing which is racially discriminatory and which is, for the most part, abusive and structures itself into social stratas that are wrong and not pleasing to God at all. And we need to get a whole new understanding of the social structure of servants and masters that we find in the New Testament. So that's what I want you to do, put that other stuff aside and try to understand it in its proper biblical frame of reference. All right?

Now slavery in the biblical sense has its roots deep in the Old Testament, deep in the Middle East. And I want to just talk about that for a moment. Slaves were primarily domestic employees of a family. And they worked sometimes, as I said, out in the field but for the most part they belonged to the household. They were, for example, cooks and household managers.

You would have a doulos who managed your household. He was your bookkeeper. He was your inventory controller. He was the one who decided how to use your resources. And he would be one who contracted to come into your service and in exchange for his long- term submission to you, you gave him his housing, his clothing, his food and the proper amount of money for living expenses and personal things.

You might be interested to know that in the ancient times in the Middle East, artisans were...were doulos, were slaves or servants. Teachers were slaves. When you wanted someone to come and teach your children and raise them in the things of wisdom and knowledge, you would bring in a servant to do that. Not unlike early America, you remember in the colonization of America the term "indentured servant." People in Europe were literally contracting to sell their services to a family over here in the New World for say seven, ten, fifteen years, they would come over based upon the fact that they were guaranteed employment, they would be cared for by the family. And when those years ran out, they would be free to then pursue their own career and their own objectives in the New World.

Now slaves in those ancient times were acquired in many different ways. One was they were the captives from conquest.

In fact, the people of Israel knew what it was to be servants to conquering nations. They were servants to the Phoenicians, the Philistines, the Syrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans. And there were other nations who in being conquered by Israel were servants to them as well. In fact, in ancient times, it was thought to be a very humanitarian option to conquer a people and then make them servants. In effect, that's what the Babylonians did with Daniel and his friends, right? And Daniel in the role of being a servant rose to become the prime minister of the whole Babylonian Empire and even the Medo-Persian Empire that succeeded it.

So rather than killing the enemy you conquered, you would keep them and put them in the role of serving you. That solved a lot of problems. One, it provided for you servants. Two, it provided for them their needs. Three, it brought them into your culture. And four, if it was Jewish, it brought them into the knowledge of your God and your religion and the truth of revelation. So you find an illustration of this, for example, Numbers chapter 31, Deuteronomy chapter 20 and 2 Chronicles chapter 28. All three of those show how a conquered people are brought in to serve the conqueror with a view to teaching them, to providing for them, to showing humanitarianism to them and to, in the case of Israel, exposing them to the truth of their God.

So, the first way that people became servants was through being captive in war. Secondly, people were brought into this role of *doulos* through purchase. You could be a foreigner, for example, and you could be purchased. For example, let's say a guy from another country comes into Israel and he's looking for employment, a land owner can buy his services. And he can take him in. He then sells himself to that individual. By the way, there was a death penalty, according to Exodus 21:16 and Deuteronomy 24:7, for kidnapping and selling a free man. But a man who was already a *doulos* or a slave or who sought to be, could be bought and sold, according to Leviticus 25:44 to 46.

Furthermore, a father might sell his daughter. In Exodus 21:7 and Nehemiah 5, a father can sell his daughter to work in a home. It wasn't a bad thing or an evil thing to do, you literally contracted with someone to employ your daughter over a period of time. And your daughter went to work for that family.

Not uncommonly, when she reached marriage age, she would marry the master of the house or one of the sons of the master of the house. So in that sense it was a very good thing for both families.

A widow, according to 2 Kings 4:1, might sell her children into the employment of someone in order to pay off her husband's debts which he being dead could no longer pay. And in Leviticus 25:39 and following and Deuteronomy 15:12 to 17, people sold themselves into employment. Literally went and

contracted for their services with someone and became slaves in that sense.

Children were also sold under conditional contracts, according to Exodus 21. A very interesting case in Nehemiah 5, the first part of the chapter, apparently a father had used his children as collateral for a loan. And when he defaulted on the loan, he had to put his children into service in order to pay back what he had borrowed.

So self-sale was not uncommon. And people could employ people who were willing to be bought and there were people whom one owner would sell to another owner, there were people who desired to serve life-long with a master and there were people who desired to serve short time. And there was within the slavery system the ability to contract and negotiate whatever it was that you both agreed on.

According to Leviticus 25, interestingly enough, the Old Testament said fifty years is maximum for any service...50 years.

That's for any non-Jew, any of the Gentile people that came into service, 50 year limit. For a Jew, get this, 6 years. And the reason, I think, is very obvious. When a Gentile come into the service of a Jew, he was exposed to all the truth of God and so God wanted them to remain there as long as possible and so made the 50 year limit. It could be negotiated shorter than that, but that would be the limit. For a Jew, it was only six years. And that way the Jew had less time forced upon him, perhaps, in any individual or given contract situation. By the way, you can find that in Exodus 21:2 to 4 and Deuteronomy 15:12, the limit of six years was set upon a Jew.

Now another way that people went into slavery was through debt. If you incurred a debt you couldn't pay back, you might have to go to work for someone to work off the debt. And you became the slave until the debt was eliminated. A thief, for example, a thief who could not pay what he had taken was placed into slavery to the one he had robbed, or the court would put him in slavery with someone else and he would work off all that he needed to work off or he would earn enough in his work to give back to someone that he had stolen from.

Some slaves were received as gifts. In Genesis chapter 29, Leah received her slave, Zilpah, as a gift. Her personal attendant, this other young lady, was given her as a gift.

And then non-Hebrew slaves were passed on from generation to generation within a family so that you could actually inherit a slave or a servant, according to Leviticus 25:46. There was the more prolonged contract for those who were the original inhabitants of Canaan rather than the short six years for the Jews. And then you could be born into that situation if your parents were under contract as slaves to someone.

So, you get a little picture. There were a lot of people who were moving in and out of this kind of relationship in the society of the Middle East. Now listen, there is never in the Old Testament any statement "abolish slavery." There is never a statement in the Old Testament telling masters to let their slaves go and there is never a statement telling slaves to seek their freedom. The system was fine. It worked fine. The only abuses were abuses in attitude. The system worked fine. In fact, I thought to myself it's very little different than people today who sign long-term contracts with any employer. I think about that every time I see one of these high-priced athletes sign a five-year contract. What he's basically doing is becoming an indentured servant. What he's doing is becoming a slave under contract in bondage to the one with whom he covenanted that contract.

Now there was no abuse in the system itself. The abuse came in the evil of the hearts of the people in the system. And I hasten to add that you have evil hearted people abusing any and every system of employment. And so you can't escape it by changing the form of the system. In fact, they were so concerned about the legal rights of those who were the working force that the Old Testament is loaded with the rights and privileges of those who were slaves. Exodus 21, Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 15 are good starting points to understand this. But let me just give you a brief review.

First of all, they could not as Jews be more than six years in bondage to any one master. They could renew their contract as long as they wanted, or they could say I want to serve him for life and they would lean him against a door post and punch a hole in their ear and hang an earring or something in there so they would be for life identified as a willing servant of the one whom they had taken for their master. So if they were under contract to a master, that master had to take care of their housing, had to take care of their food, had to take care of their clothing, had to pay them on top of that, had to support their wife and all their children. That was necessary.

Now if the man came to the end of his six years and wanted to leave, he could take his wife and all of his kids. The guy would lose a lot of workers. Unless he had come into his service single and married someone who was already in service to that family, he couldn't just marry the person and then at the end of his time take them all out. Obviously if that was permitted, people who wanted out of their contracts would find somebody to marry them, break the contract and that wouldn't work at all. So you couldn't take one with you unless you brought her in or unless her time was up also. She was to remain and you had to leave alone if her time was not up.

Furthermore, they had tremendous religious rights within the covenant of Israel, even Gentiles once they identified as servants of a Jewish household had to go under certain vows and they were allowed to enjoy the sabbath rest just like the rest of the people and to enjoy the Passover as well. They had civil rights. If they were injured, they were immediately to be freed.

If you poked their eye out or if you broke a tooth or any kind of bodily harm to a slave, they were free...any cruelty, any premeditated injury. If you premeditated the murder of a slave, you were sentenced to the death penalty. So they had rights and they had privileges. They had social rights, they could marry.

They could have as many children as they could have and they could have a lot. And when they left they could all go free.

And while they stayed the house owner had to support them all.

They had economic rights. They could acquire property and slaves could also have slaves. So you had an enterprising slave who subcontracted to his own slaves the duties that he himself didn't want to do, or whatever. They were given protective rights. Foreign slaves coming and seeking asylum in Israel, according to Deuteronomy 23:15 and 16, were given asylum and protection. The state of Israel even hired state slaves which would be like civil service employees, according to Joshua 16:10 and Judges 1:28. And hundreds of them manned the duties of the temple. They were supported by the state of Israel.

Now in general then, these were household domestic people.

They were really members of the family. In fact, in Exodus 20:17 they are grouped with women and children. They were as much a part of the family as the women and the children. And as the father, the head of the family, cared for the women and the children, he would also care for the servants or the slaves.

They were to be treated with the same love and the same kindness.

By the way, Paul says in Galatians 4:1 that a child was no better than a slave. They had rights, they had privileges. And they enjoyed a very good life, for the most part.

For example, the affection and love between a master and a slave is illustrated by Abraham and his slave, Eliezer. If Abraham had had no son, his entire fortune was to go to Eliezer.

Why? Because the Old Testament provision was that a servant is to be treated like an older son. And there was a great love between Abraham and Eliezer, read Genesis chapter 15 and chapter 24. And remember, too, the relationship between Elisha and his slave Gehazi in 2 Kings chapter 4 through 8.

If the attitudes were right and the hearts were right, it was a good system because it took people and provided a family for them and a living for them and a home for them. And all societies are built on some form of employer/employee design.

And this was just as viable as any. And if the relationship was right and God honoring, it could be very good, it could be a secure home, a loving family, the needs of the slave are met. He would share in the riches and resources of the family. Only when it was abused by the evil hearts did it become bad. And that can be true of any system. And by the way, I might even say that in the South in the past there were some slaves brought over here who went into the homes of very good and godly and Christ-exalting masters who had a very good and fulfilling life under those masters. It's not the system, it's the attitude of the hearts of men. Attitude dictates the whole thing.

So nowhere in the Old Testament and nowhere in the New Testament does it say that slaves are to leave their masters and masters are to release their slaves. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says, "Are you a servant having come to Christ? Then stay a servant. Are you free? Then stay free." It doesn't matter.

Don't be even concerned about it, he says...read 1 Corinthians 7:21 to 24, that's not even an issue. If attitudes are right, that's what matters.

Now let's come from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

The same Jewish approach is still in existence. They are still very commonly in the land of Palestine divided into the people who own land and own business and the people who work for them.

Some of them are day laborers, such as I mentioned in Matthew 20, those that were waiting to be hired for a day. And others are slaves, domestic slaves in a household. We find that there's very little change. The standards and principles and rules are pretty much the same.

I read a book, a very interesting book by Jekonias(?)

Jeremias(?) on Jerusalem at the time of Christ. And I just wanted to understand all I could about the situation relative to slaves and I found some interesting things I want to share them with you briefly. Jewish slaves, if you had a Jew for one of your slaves and that was not uncommon, that was not a demeaning task at all, it was just that there was a contracted employee and you were the employer. And that employee could be beloved and dignified and very skilled at what he did. But if you had a Jewish slave, he was never to be asked to do the most disreputable task which was washing feet because that would be publicly branding him as a slave and it was important to protect his dignity. So they would invariably find a Gentile to do the foot washing. That's what makes the washing of the feet of the disciples by Jesus such a remarkable act of humility. It was more than a Jew would ever be asked to do in the most abject humility.

By law, on the other hand, the slave was equal to the oldest son in the family and he had a right to the same treatment that the master gave his oldest son. He had a right to good clothes, good food, a

good place at the table with the family and a good bed. He could acquire possessions. He could buy things. He could find things and keep things. He could receive gifts and he could shorten his time of service by making payments. He could marry and his master had to take care of his whole family. The six-year rule still prevailed. He could stay or leave for a better opportunity at the end of the six years. That's a very reasonable rule. I imagine every employer would like, if he finds a good employee, to sign him up for that length of time so he doesn't have to worry about turn over. But it also gave an out if the situation wasn't all that it ought to be.

In fact, Jewish slaves were so protected that an old Jewish saying was "Whoever buys a Jewish slave, buys himself a master."

They had it good. And all glimpses of slaves in the gospel record of the New Testament are in a positive light and they show a high level of respect and treatment. In fact, the centurion was burdened and wanted Jesus to heal his slave because he was dear to his heart.

Palestine also had many Gentile slaves. Some of them were certainly abused as perhaps some of the Jewish ones were. But the average slave cost about two thousand...two thousand times the daily wage...two thousand times the daily wage. They were expensive. And when you brought one in for six years, you gave him the money for the full six years up front. At the signing of the contract he was completely compensated.

Now in general the treatment was so good that people sought this rather than being a day laborer. Turning with me for a moment to the Greco-Roman world where Paul is writing to Ephesus, what kind of situation was there? We've seen the Old Testament, the Middle East and Palestine, but what about Ephesus and other places?

It was very much the same. In the third century B.C., slavery was very bad, very abusive. But from the third to the first century, most historians believe there was a humanitarian movement in the Roman world. And by the time you come to the first century, there is a very much better treatment of slaves than in the second and third century before Christ. The Romans were freeing them all the time and most historians believe there was a great freedom movement generated by the Roman government at the time of Christ.

For example, as early as from 81 to 49 B.C., before Christ, the records show, this is a study by a man named Tenny(?)

Frank(?) titled "Economic Survey of Ancient Rome," the study shows that there were released in the city of Rome in that 30- year period 500,000 slaves and the population of Rome is estimated at 870,000 people. That's a large number of slaves being released. In a three-year period, 46 to 44 B.C., Caesar is supposed to have sent out 80,000 poor people and slaves to colonize other parts of the

Roman Empire. They also freed slaves because every time you freed a slave there was a five percent value tax that the guy who freed the slave had to pay and so the more slaves were freed, the more money came into the government coffers, so that helped them decide to do that, too.

But there doesn't seem to be the abuse. You go a little earlier than that and you see these people who were abused in their roles of slaves. Now let's say this for sure. There were some abuses as there are today in the United States, some employment abuses. That's obvious because men are sinful. But the slaves in the Roman Empire were for the most part better off than their free man counterparts.

I'll give you an idea why. The typical scene is again portrayed by Tenny Frank in his survey, *Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, and this is kind of the scenario he paints. The free man who just sold himself to whoever to do whatever work could be done was paid one denarius a day. Okay? One denarius a day. Compare that say with the soldiers of Julius Caesar, the archeological records say they were paid 225 denarii a year, which would be less than one a day but they were given all their food, all their shelter, all their booty and Caesar Augustus gave them a 3,000 denarii bonus on the twentieth year of their service. One of Caesar's scribes received one denarius a day.

So just a day laborer, a soldier would be around one denarius a day.

Diocletian, in fact, set the wages at one half to one denarius. And let's assume that a free man worked six days a week, okay? And paint a little picture. He works six days a week at one denarius a day, he's going to get 330 denarii a year.

A hundred and eighty four of that would go for his food. They have figured that out. Five to ten of it would go for clothing, and that would be very poor, very ragged clothing. Ninety denarii at least would go for his room, that adds to 279 and leaves him about 35 denarii left for everything else for a full year.

Compare that, for example, with a slave. He received all his food and the best of food that the house had to offer. And the house would have had to have some decent food or it couldn't have employed domestic servants. The best of clothing, the best of places to stay and it is estimated that most of the slaves of ancient times stayed on the top floor of the house, inside the house. And they would have received their housing, their clothing, their food plus 60 denarii a year...spending money, which is double what the other man who is a free man would have had if indeed he had worked every day through the year. So it was to his advantage if he could find somebody that would take him on, to say nothing of the fact that he would then have to feed, clothe all his family whereas the day laborer would have to feed, clothe himself and all his family on those wages. So you can see the benefit was really in behalf of the man who could find a way to contract himself to work as a slave.

Now when you go to the New Testament or the Old Testament, you have to understand this. It was a very workable system. It was a very manageable system. And when you think of slavery, don't think of half naked people in ratty clothes and chains dangling around their ankles. And don't think of people who are being whipped in the back, or smacked with sticks, or were working seven days a week and sixteen hours a day. Think of people who are treated graciously who are a part of a family who have contracted to offer their skills and services for a period of time. And where there was an abuse, there was an abuse in the heart. And that can happen in any situation.

Now with all that in mind you understand why, don't you, in the Old Testament there's no cry to end slavery. And in the New Testament there's no cry to end slavery either because the system itself is only a system. And when good hearted people participate in it, it works fine...it works fine. There were abuses of that system. Let me tell you something, folks, we don't have a slavery system in the United States, but we've got a lot of abuses in our system, too. There are a lot of unhappy employers, there are a lot of miserable workers. And I said at the very beginning, 70 percent of the people on the labor force of the United States hate their job for whatever reason. So the abuse factor is the issue...the evil heartedness is the issue.

And listen carefully, that is why that when the preachers and teachers of the Old Testament went out, they went to speak a message to change the heart. And when Jesus came and the Apostles and prophets went out, they spoke a message to change the heart because it isn't the form of the system, it is the heart. That's the issue.

And the abuses come because the hearts aren't right. And so what we preach is not "Let's overthrow the system," what we preach is "Let's transform the heart." So we're not interested in political or economic or social revolution, we are interested in proclaiming the gospel and creating a spiritual revolution.

And I believe that slavery was ultimately abolished in America as a direct result of the transformed hearts of people who were impacted in the great revivals of this nation. And anyway a man's position in life isn't important, not at all. Your work doesn't bring ultimate meaning to your life, but your Christianity can bring some meaning to your work. And we have that all wrong. We say to people, "What's your name?" "Oh, my name is Joe." "Well, what do you do?" Who cares what he does.

He's not what he does. That isn't...but we ask that all the time. Well, we've got to put it...we've got to have a place to stick him in our little hierarchy of important people and if he says, "Oh, well, I own a bank." "Oh, you own a bank...ahoy."

And if he says, "Well, I fix trucks." "Oh, well, a...gee..."

That is irrelevant...irrelevant. But we are into that kind of thing one way or another, that's what our culture tends to do to us. It's irrelevant what you do.

In fact, in the passage I meant to you...mentioned to you earlier, 1 Corinthians chapter 7, he says if you're called to salvation in the state of being a servant, don't worry about it...don't worry about it. If you're a servant, you're free in the Lord. If you're free, you're Christ's servant. So you're bought with a price by the Lord, you're not even a servant of men so whatever state you're called in, stay there. Don't think because you're a Christian you've got to get out from under your employment situation. No, no. That's irrelevant. Your state of employment is immaterial. Why? We live eschatologically, you know what I mean by that? We're not into what we're doing here, we're into what we're going to do there. You understand that?

So accept the status you're in and give all you've got with all your heart to serve Christ with excellence where you are and don't worry about that. And for mercy's sake don't stratify people as to their worth by how they earn their living. That's irrelevant...absolutely irrelevant.

So, the Apostle Paul is helping us here to understand the culture and the context and the obligation we have. We are to have as believers a responsibility to be good employees. That's what he's saying here. The fact that he uses the word "servant and master" doesn't mitigate against its applicability to us at all because that culture, servant and master, meant what in our culture employee and employer mean. It's no different, it's just a different social setup. And so this is imminently practical for us. And when Paul says, "As many of you as are doulo under the yoke, that is responsible to work for someone else, you must consider your own master worthy of all honor," that's exactly what he means. You better be a good employer...employee rather or the name of God and His teaching will be what? Blasphemed.

Can you imagine what would have happened if the Apostles came into the world and preached slaves rebellion? Can you imagine how popular Christianity would have been if they would have turned it into a revolution? It would be ridiculous. And verse 2, even if you have a believing master, let's assume you have a Christian employer, don't look down on him. Don't think little of him. Don't undervalue him as your employer because he's your brother, you know, I mean if your boss is a Christian, that doesn't mean you can go up to him and say, "Hey, how you doing, buddy?" You know? And presume on some kind of Christian relationship that overrides your employment relationship. On the other hand, you better do service, you better give him service.

So, he says look, I'm not going to overthrow the status quo socially, I'm just telling you to be good employees, whatever the system is. And that's the message to us. And we'll look at it in detail next time. It is a practical message and it does apply to us if we understand the background, okay? So come next week and don't stay away, those 70 percent of you who don't like your job and don't want

more intimidation, you come next time...okay?

Now let's pray together.

Father, we've covered a lot of history this morning and swept through many things. Thank You for making it clear to us how to understand this passage. Help us to be good workers, good doulo for those who are over us, whether they're Christians or non-Christians, to render proper service so that Your name would be exalted and not blasphemed, so that Your teaching would be lifted up and not discredited. We thank You, Father, that we can adorn the doctrine of God by the manner in which we work. Help us to do that and bring honor to the one who has called us, the one to whom we have given our lives and the one whose glory we seek, even our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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