

"Servants, Obey Your Masters"
(Ephesians 6:5-9)

Introduction: In our society today, there is an appalling degeneration of the work ethic. If you have been out of the work force for a while, or if you are in leadership, you may not notice it as readily. But if you are working among the blue-collar workers, you have probably noticed that many work only to be seen of men; they work hard only when those who are in leadership are watching. It is almost as if the job description is rewritten to state "You are to do all in your power to make your employer think that you are working diligently, when in fact you should try to get away with as little work as possible with the greatest pay and benefits."

The Scriptures, on the other hand, in this area, as in all others, call us to a much higher standard, a much more godly work-ethic. All that we do is done in the presence of the holy God and so is to be done with all our might as unto Him, to be approved of Him, and not unto men. And what the Spirit of God is exhorting you this morning is,

Christians workers, you are to render the best service you can to your employers, as to the Lord; and employers, you are to treat your employees with the same respect.

I. *Christian Worker, You Are to Render Obedient Service to Your Employer as to the Lord.*

A. *The Situation of Slaves Then Is Similar to Employees Now.*

1. *It is true that slaves were owned by their masters.*

a. *One became a slave in a variety of ways.*

- (i) One could be born the son or daughter of a slave.
- (ii) Many in Roman culture left their children exposed in order that they might die. Anyone willing to rear them could use them as slaves.
- (iii) A parent might sell his children into slavery because of financial difficulty.
- (iv) One might sell himself into slavery to pay off a debt.
- (v) Some were made slaves as punishment for crimes.
- (vi) Some were made slaves by subjugation.
- (vii) And some were kidnapped or made slaves through piracy (New 1124).

b. *But however they became slaves, they were to obey their masters according to the flesh, i.e., their human masters.*

- (i) They had many and varied responsibilities.
- (ii) They were to render obedient service to those in authority over them.

2. *But employees hire themselves out for the same services.*

a. *Slavery has been done away with in our culture.*

- (i) In that culture there existed both slaves and employees.
- (ii) In our 20th Century American culture, we don't

have forced slavery.

- b. *But yet we similarly sell our time and labor for wages.*
 - (i) When you are hired by an employer, you agree to do a particular job for a particular wage.
 - (ii) You are employed to do many of the same tasks which slaves would perform in their society.
 - (iii) There are those in authority over you, who control your actions to a large extent during the hours of your employment.
 - (iv) In essence, you might say that you become their slave and they your master for that period of time
 - (v) After the time has elapsed, however, there is no more that they can make you do.
 - (vi) But you can see that this text has application to us our situation today: YOU ARE TO WORK FOR YOUR EMPLOYERS IN THE SAME WAY THAT A SLAVE IS HERE COMMANDED TO WORK FOR HIS MASTER.
 - (vii) Both bond and free are held accountable to the same principle. Both will be judged according to the same standard.
- c. *Therefore, you are to obey your employer. (BUT HOW?)*

B. *You Are to Serve In an Attitude of Fear, with Sincerity of Heart.*

- 1. *It is not that you are to fear your employers.*
 - a. *You are to respect the authority that they possess for it is ordained by God, as well as husbands, parents, and government.*
 - b. *We have seen that we are to respect all authority ordained by God.*
- 2. *Rather, it is the Lord whom you are to fear and serve with sincerity.*
 - a. *IT IS GOD'S AUTHORITY WHICH IS THE BASIS OF THIS DELEGATED AUTHORITY.*
 - (i) If it is ordained by Him, it is to be respected because it is derived from His authority.
 - (ii) In essence, it is God whom you are serving.
 - (iii) TO REJECT THEIR AUTHORITY IS TO REJECT GOD'S.
 - b. *And having the proper view of God is the key to obedient and whole-hearted service.*
 - (i) Human beings are creatures needing motivation in what they do.
 - (ii) If we have no inclination to do anything, we won't do anything.
 - (iii) The Bible exhorts us over and over again, that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
 - (iv) It is the proper motivation to holy living.
 - c. *Once we lose the fear of God, in the proper sense, we lose all motivation to holiness of life.*
 - (i) Yes, we are in a loving relationship with God.
 - (ii) He loves us and we love Him.

- (iiil) But oftentimes we drag God down to our level, or worse, we conceive of Him as our slave.
- (iv) When this happens, and we lose a healthy fear of our infinitely holy God, we lose all motivation to live a holy life. HOLINESS IS LIVING COMPLETELY SET APART FOR GOD'S GLORY.
- (v) You must maintain a sense of the infinite distance between you and God.
- (vi) You must fear God and His warnings against sinful slothfulness.
- (vii) And you must render service to Him in holy fear, with all your heart.

C. Further, It is Not to Be by Way of Eye-service, as Men-pleasers, But As Servants of Christ. (This is the opposite of holy service).

1. Do not do your works to be seen by men.

a. Do not only go as far as the outward appearance.

- (i) To be a man-pleaser is to try and please men at the expense of a principle, at the expense of pleasing God.
- (ii) You know how the sin within you tempts you to look more productive than you really are.
- (iiil) You know how it tempts you to project an appearance of one much more knowledgeable and skilled than you are.
- (iv) The boastful pride of life is one of Satan's greatest weapons to injure your soul.
- (v) Sin is very deceptive, and will trick you into putting on a good show, when in reality you are hardly putting any effort into your work.

b. You are not to serve only as one seeking to please "men."

- (i) The motivation for the slave to labor is very slight.
- (ii) The slave would not better his station by adhering to this principle, whereas the employee may expect a raise or promotion.
- (iiil) But you are not to work to put on a good show for men, but your are to labor to please God.

2. You are not doing your service merely for men, but for the Lord who loved you and redeemed you to Himself.

a. The motivation for our service is out of thanksgiving to the Lord who rescued us from death, hell and the grave.

- (i) Remember that you were on the broad road to destruction.
- (ii) In your situation the Lord interposed to save you by sending His only Son to die for you.
- (iiil) The Lord has washed away your guilt with His own precious blood.
- (iv) He has provided you with His perfect righteousness.
- (v) And He has called you to a holy vocation: to serve Him in whatever your hands find to do with all your might.

- b. *And so you are to do the will of God from your hearts.*
 - (i) You are no longer to live according to your own desires.
 - (ii) DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT YOU WERE PURCHASED WITH A PRICE, AND THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER YOUR OWN? THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODIES.
 - (iii) This is not to be grudging labor, but work done with a good heart and a ready spirit.
 - (iv) If you are not serving the Lord in this way, or not at all, you must ask yourself the question, "IS IT REALLY IN MY HEART TO SERVE THE LORD?"
 - (v) We usually do the things that we WANT TO DO.
 - (vi) THE THINGS WE REALLY WANT TO DO WE PURSUE WITH ALL OUR MIGHT.
 - (vii) If you really want to serve the One who died for you, you will do so with all your might.

- c. *Serve with zeal as to the Lord and not men.*
 - (i) The work that you do is for your Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (ii) You are not serving man, but the One who died for you is the One whom you are ultimately serving.
 - (iii) If you are really thinking; if you are really aware of this, how fervently ought you to serve Him?
 - (iv) HOW MUCH EFFORT SHOULD YOU PUT INTO IT?
 - (v) YOU ARE TO SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART, MIND, SOUL AND STRENGTH, WITH ALL THAT'S WITHIN YOU!

- d. *For you know that the Lord has promised to reward all the good that you do in Christ.*
 - (i) Each will stand in the day of judgment and receive a recompense according to what he has done.
 - (ii) Whether you were a slave or master, employer or employee will not matter.
 - (iii) What does matter is that you have discharged your responsibilities with faithfulness.
 - (iv) Always remember, all of life is a preparation for eternity, and what you do in this life determines forever your state in eternity.

- e. *SO SERVANTS/EMPLOYEES RENDER YOUR SERVICE TO YOUR MASTERS AS TO THE LORD!*

II. *Christian Employer, You Are to Treat Your Workers With the Respect Due Them as Fellow Brethren, and Not Seek to Please Men.*

- A. *You Are to Do the Same Things to Your Employees.*
 - 1. *It is not that you are to obey them, as they you.*
 - a. *"The same things" are commensurate to the change in position.*
 - b. *They are to serve you as they do Christ.*
 - c. *You are to have authority over them as Christ does over you.*

 - 2. *You are not to threaten them.*
 - a. *He says "give up threatening."*
 - b. *Christ is the example you are to follow*

- C. *Christ is not a cruel taskmaster, but One who cares for His sheep.*
3. *But you are to treat them as Christ treats you.*
 - a. *Christ does not put up with slothful behavior from His people. Paul said if a man does not work neither should he eat.*
 - b. *But He provides all that they need to serve and glorify Him.*
 - (i) **Yes, He puts His sheep to work in the Kingdom, but He provides all that His sheep need to do the best job possible.**
 - (ii) **Christ doesn't load His sheep down with unrealistic expectations.**
 - (iii) **He doesn't expect them to perform beyond what they are humanly capable of doing.**
 - (iv) **But He does expect the best that His sheep can give Him, out of a heart of love and thanksgiving.**
 - c. *You are to treat your employees with the same consideration.*
- B. *Remember, You Both Serve the Same God, and He is No Respecter of Persons.*
1. *You both worship the same God who is in the heavens.*
 2. *God does not see you in your position as more worthy, but sees all in Christ equally.*
 3. *On the day of Judgment, God is not going to defer to you because of your rank in life.*
 - a. *Remember, He is the one who determined that rank.*
 - b. *Your greater authority will mean greater accountability*
 - c. *But all will be judged equally.*
 - d. **IN CHRIST THERE IS NEITHER JEW NOR GREEK, NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE, NEITHER BOND NOR FREE, BUT ALL ARE ONE IN CHRIST.**
- C. *Therefore, Seek to Be Acceptable to the Lord, and Not to Man.*
1. *Your peers may ridicule you for your deference to your workers.*
 2. *They may ridicule you for not making them work harder than they should, for as small a wage as you can get away with.*
 3. *But remember, it is the Lord God whom you are seeking to please, not man.*
 4. *Therefore do all things in life to be acceptable to Him and not to men.*
 - a. *Both slave and free, both employer and employee will stand before God.*
 - b. *You may think of all the excuses you want to in this life and justify any amount of sinful behavior.*
 - c. *But the standard by which God will judge your works has been given to you in advance and you will have no excuse.*
 - d. *Strive to honor the Lord first, no matter what the personal cost to you in this life, and He will richly reward you on that day.*

- e. *And it is fitting that we meditate upon the great day of God's judgment as we prepare to come to His table this morning.*
- f. *All of life is preparation for that great and awesome day when we will stand before Him.*
- g. *And as we saw earlier in the message, it is Christ, through His perfect life and atoning death, who alone makes us fit to stand before the Lord in that day.*
- h. *And this is what we are here to commemorate this morning in the Lord's Supper: the death of our Savior that prepares us for the judgment.*
- i. *But as we prepare to come to the table, let us again profess our faith as Christians by turning to p. 846 in the Trinity Hymnal and reciting the Nicene Creed together.*