

**Ephesians 6:5-9**

In NT times there were about 60 million slaves

About ½ of the population had the other half enslaved

And people were coming to Christ from every strata of society

From the very elite and powerful – though not very many

To the lowest level in society – slaves – where revival was occurring

Paul didn't address the socioeconomic system of slavery as good or evil

He was not a political reformist –

Though had you asked him I am certain he was against slavery

How can I say that

Because the reason there is no organized slavery in western nations

Is because Christian men couldn't tolerate it

But he wasn't a political reformer

**Paul was a spiritual reformer**

Paul was concerned about the soul

Paul was concerned about the spread of the Gospel

**And Paul was concerned about how we as Christians should live in**

**And relate to the world**

He wanted the love of Christ to show forth in our lives

And attract others to that same Christ who saved us – slave or free

Slaves were coming to Christ in droves

And Paul's mission was to encourage them to live for Christ

Regardless of their situation

That is the same encouragement he would give you today

**You cannot change your circumstances so live for Christ regardless of your situation**

Long before he was a pitchman for Life Alert

Even before He was Surgeon General of the United States

C. Everett Koop was a respected Christian pediatric surgeon

His specialty was spinal bifida surgery

In an address to the Christian Fellowship of Medicine in England

He encouraged Christian doctors

To be even more strongly committed to the high standards of medicine

Than they already were

His thesis – Be the best Dr. you can be, for Christian doctors should be better doctors than they otherwise would be, because they serve Christ

### **Our position in Christ and obedience to Him**

#### **Should be lived out in the marketplace**

It should affect us at home in school and at work

Dr. Koop's concern was essentially the same as Paul's

As he wrote about the duty of slaves and masters

We would be kidding ourselves if we believed slavery has been eradicated

It's happening all over the world

But slavery as an institution has been eliminated in Western society

So when I read Paul's teaching about slaves and masters

I relate it to the duty of employees and employers

Not because a working person is the same thing as being a slave

But because in the arena of employee-employer relationships

These principles need to be applied today

In today's text Paul gives us

His final example of Spirit-filled mutual submission

We have been studying relationships

And the key to this relationship section is Chapter 5 vs 21

#### **Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**

And the examples Paul gives us here in Ephesians

Put feet on Paul's statement to the Philippians

**Phil 2 – Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. Look out for the interests of others. This was the attitude which was also displayed by the Lord Jesus**

How do you submit to one another

How do you place the interests of others higher than that of your own

Here in chapters 5 and 6 Paul shows us

We have looked at wives and husbands – parents and children

Wives submit to their husbands by voluntarily placing themselves under their authority

Husbands submit to wives by sacrificially loving them

Children submit to parents by obeying them

Parents submit to children by supplying their needs and bringing them up with godly virtues

Today we have come to the last example

The employer-employee relationship

How does this submissive mindset work itself out in the market place

The conflict between employers and employees has waged since time began

Employers want more profits – employees want easier work and more money to do it

Both sides want lower taxes for themselves – government protection

And even subsidies

The heart of the problem for both sides is greed and power

It was this clash that has destroyed the American automobile industry

How different it would have been if God's principles had been applied

**In every aspect of life God's plan is one of authority and submission**

And these are the two pillars of Biblical labor relations

To avoid chaos someone must lead and someone must follow

But the authority to lead is not based upon inherent superiority

**Husbands parents employers possess authority as a stewards of God**

**To be used for His purposes and according to His principles**

When that happens it changes the environment for the better

Submission is not just one way – it is to be mutual

The worker looking out for the good of the company

The company looking out for the good of the worker

If you could work for a company that followed these principles

Can you imagine what a delight that would be

In today's passage

Paul is still dealing with the practical aspects of the Spirit-filled life

How should a Spirit filled employee work

How should a Spirit filled employer treat his employees

### **Let's begin with the submission of employee**

Very few of us are bosses – most of us are employees

So what do we as employees owe our employer

Paul lists a number of things

### **The first thing employees owe employers is obedience**

The word Paul uses for obedience is the same word

He used when he told children to obey their parents

Paul had a tremendous vocabulary so this word is not used by accident

### **In terms of the work to be done**

### **Employees stand in the same relationship to employers**

### **As children to their parents**

They are to obey them

I like the way Paul says it in Colossians

**Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord**

It is the employers job to determine what must be done

And in many cases how it is to be done

It is the employees job to do it – pretty simple - pretty straightforward

Not quite

Let me give a caveat - a warning - something to be wary about

### **The employee is not free to disobey God even if his employer tells him to**

Peter with the rest of the apostles were taken before the Sanhedrin

And commanded to stop speaking of this Jesus

### **Peter's response – We must obey God rather than men**

If your employer is asking you to sin – quit

I was fortunate in that I worked in an industry that was founded on the concept of

“utmost good faith”

And the company I worked for believed in being straight

But not everybody has been blessed like that

If your company asks you to push the envelope

You must ask yourself the question – if I do this am I sinning

And if the answer is yes – then don’t do it

If asked to do something wrong – offer an alternative

You aren’t mute and many companies encourage an upward flow of ideas

But for heaven’s sake don’t ruin your testimony for the sake of a few bucks

If you don’t do what you are asked

You might have to quit and you might not get the chance

You might be pushed out before you can quit

But it is better to look for a job than to sin against God

And I can assure you if they ask you once and you do it – it won’t end there

When you say no expect to be persecuted

When Peter refused to quit speaking of Jesus he and all the apostles were beaten

Listen to their response to this – **They went on their way from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame in Jesus name**

Consider yourself worthy to suffer for the Lord

**The Lord knows the price you are paying on this earth to honor Him**

Refuse to do illegal or sinful work

**But willingly do all the honest work assigned**

If you don’t want to do the work – don’t complain - get another job

But if you are going to take the money from the company – work to earn it

**Remember under every circumstance you are an ambassador of Christ**

So do your work as unto the Lord – heartily and cheerfully

**Paul says the second thing employees owe employers is respect**

**Obey your masters with fear and trembling**

Now interestingly enough the words Paul used here

Are the same words

He uses to describe the Christians relationship to God – fear and trembling

This is not cowardly fear – like a dog that’s been hit too often

It is a proper respect and reverence

Is this hard to do – it sure can be

Particularly if your boss is unwise or arbitrary

**But remember in every situation ultimately you are serving Christ**

Even in the difficult situation

Your relationship to Jesus is the key to the entire paragraph

You are to obey your employer as you would obey Christ

**You are to respect your employer as you respect Christ**

We are called to live Godward lives

**For everything we do on earth reflects on our relationship with God**

We obey our boss as we would obey Christ

Strive to win their favor as slaves of Christ

And serve them as serving the Lord

We are to obey them – we are to serve them with respect and

**We are to serve our employers with sincerity**

The word sincere comes from the Latin and means “without wax”

In the ancient world pottery making was an important trade

If a commodity could flow it was usually stored in pots

Crafty potters would sometimes cover up the cracks in their pots

By filling them with wax

Eventually the wax would melt and your pot would leak

If before you purchased it you held the pot up to the light

You could see the cracks and tell where the wax was – but not always

Good pottery was sometimes stamped with the words sin cera – without wax

As proof of its quality

**As employees we should give our best to the task we have been assigned**

Our work should be able to withstand careful scrutiny

Hold it up to the light and you will find no hidden cracks in it

We should be obedient serve with respect and sincerity

**And we are called to be loyal employees**

Several years ago they surveyed management of large corporations

As to what they valued most in their employees

It wasn't hard work – or even honesty – although they were high on the list

The one character trait valued most by management was loyalty

It's not easy to say what Paul said and keep it in one sentence – but I'll try

**Obey them not only when they are watching you so that you can win their favor, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart**

Paul is thinking about the person who works hard only when the boss is watching

A friend of mine worked for a company

That didn't require people work on Saturdays

But most of them did

One guy showed up at 8:30 every Saturday morning and just sat around

If the boss didn't show up he went home

If the boss showed up he went to work

When the boss left within five minutes he was gone

Know anybody like that – well Paul says don't be like that

Give faithful steady service

That comes from having your heart in the right place

**Be as faithful to your employer as you are to Christ**

Whether they are watching you or not

That involves loyalty – loyalty to your employer

And a desire to see the work done and company succeed

We should be obedient serve with respect sincerity and loyalty

**Finally we are called to work wholeheartedly**

The NASB says to work with good will

The NIV uses the term wholeheartedly

John Stott says that we should work

As though our heart and souls are in it

That really sums up all that went before it

Work wholeheartedly – work with good will

If you owned a company

Would you like an employee that was obedient respectful sincere loyal and worked wholeheartedly for you

I kind of think so

I know that some of you are bosses

And you'd give your right arm for those kind of employees

**As Christians we are called to be those kind of employees**

We are called to be **Hard working unselfish doing all that we can to achieve the corporate goals**

Paul says there is a significant reason we should do this

**There is a reward waiting for you**

**Render service as unto the Lord knowing that whatever good thing each one does he will receive it back from the Lord**

**When you fulfill your obligation to your employer God will reward you**

That's a promise

Work like that and God will reward you

When Paul wrote this he was certainly speaking of heavenly rewards

It wasn't practical to believe a slave owner would reward a slave

But the important part is this - Paul wants you to know that

**Rewards – earthly or heavenly do matter**

We live in an age when it is considered unseemly to work for God's reward

We should work for God for the sheer joy of doing it

And working for a reward somehow is supposed to demean the motive

But it doesn't

Jesus spoke of rewards for obedience rewards for undergoing persecution

And rewards for belief

**Blessed are you when men persecute you on account of me. Rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great**

He who receives a prophet in a prophet's name receives a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in a righteous man's name shall receive a righteous man's

reward

**For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and He will reward every man according to his deeds**

And then Jesus says this of His return

**Behold I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me**

I want to encourage each of you right now – **work for the reward**

Don't be ashamed of it – don't be bashful about it

Be a good employee for the reward – serve the body of Christ for the reward

The reason God tells us of rewards

Is to use it as a motivating factor in our service to Him

**God tells us about rewards so that we will know about them and work for them**

They are not secret

God has promised us rewards as an incentive to do His will

**Finally lets look at the duty of employers (READ Verse 9)**

Having described the duty of employee to employer

Paul now turns his attention to the duties of those who are in charge

Now listen

**Employers are to treat employees exactly as employees are to treat them**

Paul writes - Masters do the same things to them

Bosses are to be servants of their employees

They are the leaders and the kingdom of God knows only servant leaders

**Employees should be treated with respect sincerity and loyalty**

In other words

Employers should treat employees as they would want to be treated

When this kind of mutual respect is show in the workplace

Incredible things can be accomplished

R C Sproul wrote the book The Search For Dignity

In it he discussed a phrase he heard

The phrase was “dropping the head”

He couldn't figure out what it meant

Then one day he was visiting a sick friend in the hospital

The nurse was in the room and the doctor arrived

The nurse smiled at the doctor and the doctor looked down and away

The nurse's smile disappeared

While he was thinking about this a man pushing a laundry cart walked by

He saw the nurse looked up and smiled – the nurse looked down and away

The smile on the face of the man disappeared

He realized that this was what “dropping the head” meant

It was a refusal to acknowledge the other person

It was like saying that other person was invisible

That he or she did not count

Have you ever had that happen to you

Have you done it to others

**People want to be appreciated and acknowledged**

In the final analysis that is what matters to most people – ahead of money

It is part of our search for love – and acceptance

And as Christians it is not the position we hold that matters

High or low – management or labor

We are all created in the image of God and inhabited by the Spirit of God

**What matters to people is that they are treated with dignity**

**They are treated as though someone cares about them**

**That they have real worth**

Christianity declares – You do have real worth!

You are made in God's image! Jesus Christ died for you

What you do does matter!

And most importantly - You matter!

You matter to me and you matter to God

That is lived out in the family and in the workplace

And it is shown in our submission

First to Christ and then to each other