

Sermon 24: Christians Working for God's Glory: Ephesians 6:5-9

Text: Ephesians 6:5-9 "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever 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..."

Introduction:

- **The Roman World:**
 - **Three classes of people:**
 - **Free citizens:** Born into citizenship or acquired through military service or purchase.
 - **Free non-citizens:** Conquered people without citizenship, freed slaves (some who gained conditional citizenship and wealth), and poor day laborers.
 - **Slaves:** Legally subordinate and highly vulnerable with limited legal protection.
 - **Social Dynamics:** Constant tension and struggle between these classes.
- **First-Century Ephesus:**
 - More than likely, a high percentage of Christians at Ephesus were slaves or poor day laborers.
 - This teaching provided practical instruction to shape how they should work and relate to one another in a godly way.
 - It dignified their work even when society disregarded their status.
- **Our Contemporary Setting:**
 - Modern society has many built-in protections: minimum wage laws, age requirements, and workplace injury safeguards.
 - While our systems are significantly different, the principles found in these verses are as relevant today as they were then.

Summary: Understanding our relationship to Christ should transform how we view authority, work, motives, and reward.

Proposition: We must embrace a uniquely Christian view of our daily work.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Truth 1: Glorify God even in circumstances you did not choose: 6:5

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ..."

- **The following statement does not validate or institutionalize first-century slavery:**
 - There were many terrible injustices perpetuated then, which still exist today.
 - Scripture never validates those injustices.
 - It simply frames how Christians can honor God and think properly in all circumstances.
- **Old Testament principles validate this premise:**
 - **Slave trading was a serious capital crime: Exodus 21:16**
"He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death..."
 - **Servants and masters had equal dignity before God: Job 31:13-15**
"If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, When they contended with me; What then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me in the womb make him? And did not one fashion us in the womb?"
- **New Testament principles validate this premise:**
 - **The first century social order did not determine Christian identity:**
 - **Colossians 3:11** "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all..."
 - **1 Corinthians 12:13-14** "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many..."
 - **People of different social standings were to be loved sincerely and embraced as brothers in Christ: Philemon 1:15-16**
"Perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved...both in the flesh, and in the Lord?"
 - **While it is possible to glorify God in all circumstances, this reality should not hinder pursuing better opportunities: 1 Corinthians 7:20-24**
"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men..."

- **Paul's approach further drove home the point:**
 - **He addressed servants directly: 6:5** "Servants, be obedient to them..."
 - **While unequal in society, He addressed servants and masters as equals before the Highest Master: 6:8** "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free..."
 - **He gave them equivalent expectations: 6:9** "Masters, do the same things unto them..."
 - **He emphasized God's impartiality: 6:9** "Neither is there respect of persons with him..."
- **If first-century Roman Christians could glorify God in their work, so can we.**

Truth 2: Work in a distinctly Christian way:

- **Our position in Christ and relationship to Him must shape all interactions: Ephesians 1-5**
 - We are "in Christ..."
 - We are called to "walk worthy of our calling..."
 - We are called to "put off the old man..."
 - We are called to "put on the new man..."
 - We are called to "walk in love..."
 - We are called to "walk as children of light..."
 - We are called to be "filled with the Spirit..."
- **Servants must work in a distinctly Christian way:**
 - **Focus on serving Christ: 6:5** "In singleness of your heart, as unto Christ..."
 - **Be motivated to do His will: 6:6** "As the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart..."
 - **Submit to Him as your Lord: 6:7** "Doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men..."
 - **Pursue His eternal rewards: 6:8** "The same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free..."
- **Masters must rule in a distinctly Christian way:**
 - **Remember you will answer to Him: 6:9** "Knowing that your Master also is in heaven..."
 - **Remember He does not show arbitrary partiality: 6:9** "Neither is there respect of persons with him..."

Truth 3: Serve Him:

- **Our relationship to Christ should radically reshape our motivation and understanding of our work:**
 - **Negatively: 6:6** "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers..."
 - Don't do it only when others are watching.

- Don't do it only for what you can get out of it.
- Serve for the audience of one.
- **Positively:**
 - **Consistently do what is required: 6:5** "Be obedient..."
 - **Do it sincerely without strings attached: 6:5** "With fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart..."
 - **Do it from the heart: 6:6** "Doing the will of God from the heart..."
 - **Do good willingly rather than begrudgingly: 6:7** "With good will doing service, as to the Lord..."
 - **Do it with confidence God will reward faithfulness: 6:8** "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord..."
 - **Recognize the limitations of human authority: 6:6** "Doing the will of God..."
 - It is God's will that we submit to human authority.
 - It will never be His will to submit to human authority in conflict with His word.
- **The primary motivation is not temporal in relation to man.**
- **It is eternal in relation to God.**

Truth 4: Submit your management to Him:

- **Paul placed significant restraints upon the authority of first-century masters.**
- **Whether servant or master, all will face Him.**
- **This should radically shape how we treat others:**
 - **He will justly reward what is done: 6:8** "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord..."
 - We tend to consider the tendency to abuse authority.
 - Paul rather highlighted the opportunity to bless through authority.
 - Masters could use their authority for tremendous good.
 - Paul exhorted them to do what was good.
 - **He will hold everyone to the same standard: 6:9** "Ye masters, do the same things unto them..."
 - Don't manage for human approval.
 - Be consistent in the way you manage others.
 - Don't manage with strings attached.
 - Do it from the heart.
 - Do good willingly rather than begrudgingly.
 - Do it with the confidence God will reward faithfulness.
 - **Never abuse authority: 6:9** "Forbearing threatening..."
 - Your authority is always delegated from God.

- It is always limited by God.
- You will be held accountable to Him.

Application: Embrace a uniquely Christian view of daily work.

- **Examine yourself:**
 - Are you a Christian?
 - Are you growing in grace?
 - Are you living for eternity?
- **Examine your foundation:**
 - The ability and motivation to live this way starts with the gospel.
 - We are sinners saved by grace.
 - We must walk in newness of life.
 - We have the indwelling Spirit to empower us.
 - We must live for eternity.
- **Work for His glory:**
 - **Employees and students:**
 - Do your work honorably for His glory.
 - Don't do it only when others are watching.
 - Don't do it only for what you can get out of it.
 - Do good willingly rather than begrudgingly.
 - Rest in God's future rewards.
 - Never disregard His objective will.
 - **Employers and teachers:**
 - Use your position and influence for good.
 - Don't manage for human approval.
 - Be consistent in the way you manage others.
 - Don't manage with strings attached.
 - Do it from the heart.
 - Do good willingly rather than begrudgingly.
 - Do it with the confidence in God's future rewards.
 - Never abuse your authority.