

Ephesians 6.5-9 Slaves and Masters

Verse 5

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh – It is estimated that 40 to 50% of the Roman Empire was made up of slaves at this time. Many slaves were well educated and served important household roles. Many Roman slave owners were lazy and gained status with many slaves. The New Testament never tells slaves to revolt. Social reform was not the focus. Reflecting the character of God was, and is, our call. Note 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 for a proper balance.

With fear and trembling – In the context this is directed toward God. He is the One who will ultimately evaluate our service.

In the sincerity of your heart – Mind, will, and emotions! See Colossians 3:22-23.

As to Christ – Who is the boss? We serve Christ in everything (Col. 3:23).

Verse 6

Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers – Work the same when your boss is not watching as you do when he is watching. The Lord is *always* watching!

But as slaves of Christ – Our obedience is not to human masters but to Christ!

Doing the will of God from the heart – God’s will is that we live our “secular” lives with a heart of service to Him. Christianity is not just a few hours on Sunday. It is living every moment of life in submission and reverence to God (1 Cor. 10:31). There is really no such thing as *sacred* versus *secular*.

Verses 7 - 8 Our Motive for Obedience

With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men – Attitude is key! Wanting the best for those in authority over us should be our goal.

Knowing – In order to obey with the right attitude we must know that our service means something.

Whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord – The Greek word translated “receive” is always used of a reward or payment for service rendered. The word is *komisetai* from which we get our English word “commission.”

At the judgment seat of Christ we will be rewarded. The parallel passage is Colossians 3:23-24,
Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Whether slave or free – Our status in life has nothing to do with our possibilities for eternal reward! Paul considered his earthly accolades as “rubbish.” Instead he wanted to be known as a servant of Christ (1 Cor. 4.1-5). Faithfulness is the key to receiving praise from God!

Verse 9 God’s Instructions for Masters

And masters, do the same things to them – What are the same things? Treat them in such a way as to receive a reward from God. Masters should serve God in exactly the same way as slaves serve God.

Give up threatening – Motivation by reward is much better than motivation by threats.

Knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him – There are master/slave relationships on earth but the reality is that the Lord is master of all. Someday He will evaluate how each person lived his or her life on a moment by moment basis.

Relationships determine our testimony!

Titus 2:9-10,

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

Adorn = kosmeo from which we get cosmetics.

1 Timothy 6:1,

All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.