

Worship in the Workplace

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Alright, let's go back to Ephesians, back to the practical part of this epistle as the apostle is writing to the church at Ephesus in this very pagan, secular, Greek, Roman culture and exhorting them as to what living out Christianity in that context ought to look like and he gets to a section on masters and slaves and primarily he exhorts the one under authority, though he doesn't leave out exhortations for the one in authority, and he begins in Ephesians 6:5 going down through verse 9 by saying this,

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh,

Let me just stop right there. In other words, we all have a Master in heaven but that Master in heaven has in his sovereignty put many of us under masters on the earth. As a matter of fact, almost every single one of us has some type of authority on the earth. So he says,

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

You know, when you're converted and I was converted as a young man, and it seems to be the testimony of most everyone, well, I think actually everyone, that some things in your Christian pilgrimage are quite easy, in other words, you just seem to grasp it and have grace to just walk in not perfection but more consistent victory in some areas, and in other areas just keep knocking you down every time you turn around. Well, for whatever reason, this area of honoring earthly authority was just easy for me. Now that would have seemed radical to people who know me because I was a rebel, I was a secularist, I was a liberal as a young college student and I rejected authority. I rejected anybody telling me anything but God changed me when he saved me. Can I get an amen there? Things change when you get saved and when I was taught this biblical principle of submitting to

God-ordained authority particularly the authority of those that I worked for, my employer, it was liberating to me.

Now, you see, the world just doesn't grasp that. I was liberated, in a sense of the word, by enslaving myself with joy to my employer. That was just easy for me. I think with all confidence you could talk to our former senior pastor and ask Dr. Pittman, "Did Brother Jeff serve you and honor you with joy and full submission?" I'm confident he'd say, "Yes, he did." Now I blew it a time or two, I know that would be hard for you to believe but I blew it a time or two and I had to go back to him and ask his forgiveness that I didn't honor him in some things like he had asked me to. But for the most part, that one was easy for me. As a matter of fact, I remember the first time I was taught this biblical principle. I made an appointment with him and as the associate pastor, I sat down with him and I said, "I want you to know from this moment onward my full purpose in serving on your staff is to make you the most successful pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention. As a Christian associate pastor, that's my goal. That's my job. That's what I'm to do." I said, "It isn't about me, it's about the glory of God and the glory of God is best served according to God's word by me honoring you and submitting to you and making you successful." And as a young believer and I came on staff here, I had not been converted that long and as a young believer I was beginning to learn that I didn't just work for my employer, which was the church, though that would have been accurate to say I worked for the church, I didn't just work for the senior pastor, though that would have been accurate, I did work for the senior pastor. Before I became the pastor, we established and that was one of my criteria for coming here that the senior pastor hires and fires his own staff. If I can't have my own staff, then you need to get somebody else. We're not going to have rivalries on the staff and turf guarding and power and control struggles. It's just not going to happen. That's the way it was when I was under the former pastor, that's the way it is now. So it's accurate to say, yes, I worked for the pastor, but what I began to learn was that I was working for the church and working for the pastor as a worship to my Lord. Did you get that? That was a part of my worship unto the Lord.

Now, worshiping the Lord is a multifaceted truth. We corporately worship together as a church and the Bible teaches that's an essential even foundational component of our service and our sanctification and growth in Christ, gathering together and worshiping together, and it doesn't just mean singing together or even receiving the preaching of the word, as foundational as that is, it's our Bible study time, it's our fellowship time, it's our accountability time, it's even times of correction or even discipline in the church. All of that is part of worship but, folks, we are to be worshiping in the workplace. The dividing line between the secular and the spiritual is removed in Christianity. There isn't, "Well, I have this worship part of my life. Then I have this social part of my life. Then I have this work part of my life." No, everything is about worship. When you enjoy the common grace of a football game, you do that noting in your heart that God, "This is a joy that comes from you." That's worship. Look, everything is connected to him, about him, even more than connected to him, everything is centered in him. Your work is worship and so let's learn how to worship better in our work. Now when I say worship, here's basically what I mean, that when you go to work, you have chosen to worship by honoring God's wisdom about the workplace, not man's wisdom; honoring God's wisdom about how to

conduct yourself, not what men may think or feel or do about it, because this isn't about you and it's not about your rights, it's not about your union and it's not about you owning the company. It's about the God you're worshipping at work.

Now Paul comes to this third aspect of the social order and he purposes to set this one right-side up just like he's dealt with the marriage and he's dealt with the home and he's dealt with parenting and children and how they're to respond. Now he takes us to this area of what and our text refers to as masters and slaves and we'll talk about that in a moment but that parallels our understanding or our experience of employers and employees. What we find is that God's pattern for society is not eliminated for Christianity, it's illuminated by Christianity. God didn't tell Christians, "Now go in here and radically change the social order." There are too many among the brethren today that think a major cause of Christianity is to change the social order and to rid the society of injustice and there's all this group-speech today. Now listen to your pastor: where there is clear dishonoring the humanity of another being and respect for fellow human beings or hurtful things toward other human beings, I and we are foremost and firm against that as wrong, but to say that my Christianity mandates that I have to be about social causes, now that is not biblical. As a matter of fact, you're going to always be in a wicked culture, if you chase all of those things, you'll never get back to Christianity and it's absolutely undeniably documented in church history as churches begin to get involved in social causes, they gradually lost the Gospel and I can take you to thousands of churches that have a very tiny smidgen of true Gospel but they all have a whole lot about social justice in their work. You see, when they start talking about this stuff, those of us who have been around for four decades we think, "Wait a minute. I've seen that before." And in the 60's and 70's there was the social work movement in churches and whole realms of churches in sects of evangelicalism left the Gospel, grasped the cause of social work which had good in it, by the way, but it's not the foundation of what we're about as Christians and here's why: because wherever you find yourself in culture and the Scripture would say it this way, wherever God called you, you're God's freeman in that situation even if it's an unjust or in-just situation. You may be a man slave but you are Christ's free man.

So until Jesus returns, there are going to be inequities in this earth and we should address those as we can but never lose the main thing. How many people have gone to hell, gone straight to hell sitting under ministries that thundered the cause of social justice but soft-pedaled at best the Gospel of Jesus Christ? It's a travesty and it's a shame and I'm convinced minority communities have been grossly manipulated by shysters in doing this. How are you helping men when you pull the Gospel away from them and give them something else? You're not helping them.

Well, liberty in Christ does not liberate one from God's ordained structures of authority, it liberates one to be free within these structures. A wife that comes to Christ is not liberated from her husband's headship, she's liberated in that headship. She's free and joyous in it now. The man who comes to Christ is not liberated from his employer's authority, he's liberated in that authority and in that responsibility to that employer. And on and on we could go. He begins to learn that since God has changed his heart that his motive now in his work is the glory of God and the good of others. If he's working for an

employer, he wants to work so he advances the good of that employer because that's his worship now; that's what his Master in heaven has ordained and commanded and clearly instructed him to do and be a part of.

"Husbands, love your wives." Notice the point here, the husband is in the position of authority in the home and over his wife but how is he to conduct himself now that he's changed as a Christian? Now he leads in headship loving his wife like Christ loves the church. Everything has changed.

He says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger." These are the verses we've already looked at in chapters 5 and 6. What does he say? The father did not lose his authority as head of the household and as the parent over the child, but now everything's changed in the way he's going to exercise and live out that authority.

Then he tells masters in chapter 6, verse 9, "Masters, give up threatening. This is your brother in Christ now. You're not to function that way anymore." Everything is changed about the master/slave or employer/employee relationship because of Christ.

So this true illumination of the authority structures radically contradicts what's coming out of our so-called progressive or liberal social experimenters because their approach is completely about man and man's need and what's good for man – now listen – not what's good for God's glory. Are you hearing me? We can't be driven by what we feel in our emotions is best for man, we have to be driven by what God's word tells us is best for the glory of God. Now listen to me: and that will always result in what is best for men. It always works that way. For example, the progressive liberal will say too many wives are abused by oppressive and evil husbands. Well, some wives are abused by oppressive and evil husbands and that ought to be dealt with firmly and criminally when appropriate and the church should get involved in its area of responsibility, but the answer in feminism is let's just throw out all the biblical order of the home and marriage. Let's just get rid of all of it. That's the wrong approach. No, let's do what Paul says, keep the God-ordained structure because you're going to ruin yourself if you ignore that, but let's be different kind of people within the structure.

It's really interesting to me and, boy, I don't want to go too far down this road, but the women's movement, for example, that talked about all of this stuff about liberating and empowering women and when they do survey after survey, study after study, women are not happier and women increasingly look to their new surrogate husband, the federal government. Now the federal government has got to be this protector for them and this provider for them, and given the kind of security that God meant for them to find in a godly husband. They can't get away from the fact that God made them to want and desire this kind of care and protection in their lives.

So the answer, Paul says, to how we're to function as Christians is that God's power through the Gospel transforms the human hearts and then this transformation in our hearts empowers us now to live out these social relationships in the way God originally intended, without the selfishness and sin that leads to abuse and injustice toward one

another. Of course, as we are changed as employers in this particular context, and as employees, then we show God's wisdom in how much greater it is than man's wisdom and that's true worship when we embrace and honor God's wisdom over man's wisdom and God is glorified, and that's what we're all about.

Now I've done this many times but just a brief word on slavery here. We notice here that when Paul is talking about these social relationships, he gives a high and holy parallel to the first two but not the third one. For example, in marriage he talks about marriage is the picture of the relationship of Jesus Christ, the groom, with his church, which is his bride. Then he talks about children obeying their parents because it's divinely ordained. But then he doesn't give the same kind of weighty spiritual parallel to masters and slaves, as a matter of fact, in Titus the apostle wrote about that they were men-stealers or slaveholders and he lumps them together with murderers and others; that Christianity once it begins to be lived out eliminates the evils of slavery in the way, if you will, it's lived out and expanded in the lives of those who maybe had once embraced it.

Now historians tell us that during this part of Roman and Greek history, perhaps one-half of the population of ancient Rome were slaves. Now it's really complicated because there were a lot of various levels and types of slavery; many people just hired themselves out and they were much like a contracted laborer and then you had the far other end of the spectrum where many people were bondslaves, had no rights whatsoever, they were like a piece of property, and then there were some levels in between. Some were well-treated and honorably treated. I think Onesimus and Philemon would be a great example of that. Others were brutally abused and even killed. And when people are so critical of Christianity and, listen, those who profess to be Christians, they profess Christendom, have made serious errors and mistakes but don't just leave out the rest of the world when you say that. When slavery existed in this country, slavery existed all over the known world. All races, all skin colored people held slaves to some degree so don't believe the lie of the modern liberalism that it's just this Western European white problem. There are evils there, trust me, we all know that and we ought to be repentant of those things, but slavery existed everywhere. In the ancient Roman culture, it was just a part of the fabric of society and I believe Paul's point is we can't start or we're not going to start a movement, we're going to show people how if God in his sovereignty doesn't change the culture soon, you can still be God's freeman in Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, I remember reading about William Wilberforce and British Parliament. William Wilberforce, you might ought to read about him sometime, a passionate, wholly devoted Christian member of British Parliament and he began a movement by himself to abolish slavery in Great Britain and when he first began to speak against it, he had not one person supporting him but it was his Christian conviction that led him to be steadfast. I don't remember if it was 20 or 30 years, but it was many many years before finally he convinced enough members of Parliament to vote with him and slavery was abolished.

So it's Christian principles that have done the most to rid the world of slavery. As a matter of fact, it wasn't, what, two years ago we were in India and talking with a notable

Christian leader in India and he had men to give testimonies of their Christian conversion and their call into ministry. Brother Steve, you were with me, were you not? And we were sitting there and one of those brothers said that he had just come out of enslavement. He was a slave to a Muslim family and evidently in India that's still quite common in the Islamic religion which leads me to wonder why the hypocrisy of those who are of the liberal mindset, they ought to be with every other breath criticizing and condemning Islam. It is the most abusive religion to women, to children, to those who are not of their religion. It's just abominable and in some places around the world it's actively and openly a practice of slavery among them.

So this guy was finally released from his slavery, he became a believer in Jesus Christ, and now he's a Gospel minister and he talked about how that was a part of his past and that God had brought him out of that. In the book "Revival and Revivalism" which talks about the true revivals of the Great Awakening, Samuel Davies was a preacher during that time and he noted in his notes about the results of his meetings that one of the movements of God in the churches was the slaves and the masters were becoming together as one in Christ and the separation was no longer seen. That's the beautiful thing we ought to be seeing when Christianity is lived out as it ought to be lived out. Now you and I on this side of all of this can look back and say, "Yeah, but....." And I understand that, but do you notice what a radical thing it would have been for those people in that day to say, "There may be an authority and responsibility thing, there may be more to an employer/employee thing, but we're one in Christ. There is no superiority of one to the other. There's no inherent superiority of one race over the other." That was a radical breakthrough and it's Christianity that helped bring that to pass.

Looking at the balance of things, look at 1 Corinthians, if you will, chapter 7 right quick. Would you turn there? 1 Corinthians 7 and let's start in verse 24 as Paul addresses this same thing to the church at Corinth, the beautiful wisdom and timelessness of the Scriptures because if there had been a social justice crusade that Paul lived out, he would have caused a lot of...as a matter of fact, historians say if that had happened in Christendom at this time, the pain and suffering among slaves themselves would have been unthinkable. So you have to be careful how you just lump everything into this simplistic mold. You have to understand the times and what's being worked out of and what's being worked through.

1 Corinthians 7, look at verse 20, "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it," another way to say that is don't let that be your chief burden or concern, "but," notice here, "but if you are able also to become free, rather do that." By all means, strive to be freed of that but if God's sovereignty doesn't allow you that, you can still honor your master and worship him faithfully. Did you hear me? Now you listen to me all the way through this sermon because there's a catch at the end of it, alright? There'll be a test later. Verse 22, "For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was

called." Paul's point again is not promoting slavery, his point is whether or not you get out of that social condition does not hinder you at all in worshiping your Christ.

"I'm in a bad job. I'm abused by my employer." Well, if it's criminal abuse, do something about it. Find a new job if you possibly can but getting a better boss who is kinder to you is not the key to you worshiping Christ better. You can worship Christ and honor him where you are and by the way, have you forgotten when you signed onto this thing to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you signed on to persecution, you signed on to slander, you signed on to be maligned, lied about, have of everything you say being twisted to put you in a bad light. You signed on to possibly incarceration. You signed on to possibly martyrdom. If you didn't you need to meet with an elder and we need to talk about dismissing your membership. None of us are ready for that and do you know how we know we're not going to probably have it soon? Because we don't have the grace to handle it yet. If it's going to happen next week, you'd be given the grace to handle it. You only get the grace when you need it. But that's what we signed on for so if God has ordained you have an unjust or difficult situation, get out of it if you can but your purpose as a worshiper of Christ is not to eliminate that unjust situation, though if possible certainly do so.

Well, talking about this worship in the workplace, I. we need to worship as employees in the workplace by deeply respecting the God-ordained authority of our employers. Let's go back to our primary text, Ephesians 6. Worship in the workplace, employees by deeply respecting the God-ordained authority of your employers. Again, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling," that's the way you would be before your God, "in the sincerity of heart, as to Christ." Now again, our freedom in Christ does not free us from submission to earthly authority. Authority and submission are God's ideas. They are absolute. Jesus honored his Father's authority, for example. John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." He put himself under the authority of the Father and his Father had him nailed to a cross. Listen to me, perk up and listen: if Jesus' Father nailed him to a cross, why can't your father put you in a place that's not so fair and not so happy sometimes? What's wrong with that? Are you better than Jesus? Look, don't look for it, amen? Work to get out from under it if you're in an unjust or difficult situation but don't say, "As a Christian, I'm not supposed to be like this." Of course, Jesus is now seated in a place of honor and authority in heaven and so will you if you're faithful to Christ, proving you're a true believer.

We are liberated in Christ from the sinful flesh and its lust tempting us to rebel against authority. The enslavement of the flesh to lust and rebel and to think only of myself is a slavery. Did you get that? When you have this notion in your mind, "I've got to get out from under this man, I've got to get out from under these parents, I've got to get out from under this unjust situation, that's the goal of my life," you're enslaved to that, you're not free in your situation as Christ can make you free.

When your employer gives you an instruction, obey it for it's ordained of God that you obey it and do it as unto Christ. Not begrudgingly but unto Christ. Secondly, not only

because it's God-ordained authority, secondly, we're to do it with reverence knowing it's God's wisdom. Verse 5 he says do it with fear and trembling. In other words, you are in awe of the fact that, "My God has developed it to work like this. This is God's teaching. This is God's wisdom that we're to function like this." This phrase "fear and trembling" in verse denotes an attitude of reverence and awe in the presence of God.

I've heard and this is not that unusual a testimony of church members who tried to honor their employers and I've heard of the employers coming in and one way or another saying, "Why are you so devoted to me like this?" And they're able to respond back, "Well, it's not about you," as if to say, "Well, you don't deserve it," and they don't but it's your Lord's wisdom. You see, that's the way you worship, you honor the Lord's wisdom in your workplace. Do you want to get ahead in your workplace? Then you work for your employer like working unto the Lord and you see how God will work on that employer's heart to move things to your advantage and to your good. I've seen it 101 different times.

Now this is not the slavish terror of an unbeliever when he says "do this with fear and trembling," it's the believer who's been delivered from the bondage of human intimidation because now he's enslaved to Christ so he says, "What can man do to me? How can you hurt me? I'm Christ's property. I'm freed from being intimidated by you." It's not a factor of being a victim, you're the victor in Christ no matter what that guy or that woman, whoever's authority is trying to do to you in the workplace. Now you're Christ's slaves and he demands and commands that you render loyalty, obedience to him and he's asking you to honor your earthly employer for his sake, therefore, glorifying him and honoring his wisdom in the workplace. We obey our earthly employers looking all the while beyond them and looking with reverence and awe at the Lord whose wisdom gave us this instruction.

Then he says do it with heartfelt sincerity. It's God's ordained principle that we honor earthly authority. We're to do it in reverence for his wisdom that designed it to work this way, and then he says do it with sincerity. In verse 5 he says, "be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart." It means without wax. In other words, you don't just go through the motions with a grumbling under your breath, you do what you do knowing that, "My Lord deserves this kind of obedience and this kind of conviction and this kind of conduct out of me in the workplace. This is what my Lord has ordained."

We are enslaved to Christ hopelessly and happily. We're his servants. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul will talk about himself being the bondservant of Jesus Christ. We have a new heart of love and affection for Jesus Christ and from this new heart of love and affection for Christ we serve our earthly employers knowing that the performance of these earthly tasks is related to his rule in our lives. So the separation of the secular and the spiritual or the sacred is abolished. All that we are involved down here on the earth is under his leadership and is done in order to please him and is done as a worship unto him.

Now, I know some of our businesses and I thank God for them, they have Bible study and prayer and ministries within their workplace. That's wonderful but that's not more

spiritual than expecting that employee to work for you like working unto the Lord. That's not more spiritual than expecting him to give you eight hours work for eight hours pay. So we don't separate one is secular, one is spiritual. That's spiritual too, amen? That's as much a worship. I mean, I've known people who were involved in Bible studies that work and get up out of their Bible studies and start running down the boss. They're not true worshipers, they're just learning some knowledge of the Bible in their head.

You're to be a worshiper of Christ in your workplace for the glory of God with heartfelt sincerity. Literally that word "sincerity" means "without wax." You remember the illustration pots in that day were kind of painted over with I don't know where they got their paint, but they would paint them over with something and they would sometimes get a cracked pot. Have you ever heard somebody say, "Well, he's a crackpot"? He's just got something faulty underneath the surface. Well, underneath the surface of the paint they'd have a crack and they'd fill it in with wax so it wasn't a true thing. It wasn't sound all the way through. It had a crack in it. Paul said, "Make sure as a Christian you don't just go through the motions begrudgingly, you work for that guy like you're working unto the Lord from the full intent of your heart as a worship unto Jesus Christ."

Tied into that, without begrudging hypocrisy. That means no ulterior motive, verses 6 and 7. In other words, I'm not just going to do this to get an advance, I'm not just going to do this to get a promotion, I'm not just going to do this to get a salary increase. Now it's hard to keep that from being in the back of your mind but you fight that down and say, "No, I'm just doing this to worship Christ." If that comes, hallelujah. As a matter of fact, there's nothing wrong with asking for any of that in a respectful way but that's not the motive, the motive is, "I'm worshipping Christ."

No ulterior motive, verses 6 and 7, "not by way of eyeservice," eyeservice means self-promotion, doing what you do to attract the attention of others to yourself. Then he says, verse 6, "not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers," in other words, they do not focus in reverence and awe upon God, they're looking only at their human employer and serving him to the advancement of themselves and for self-praise. When you work for your employer for self and self-praise, if that's the primary motive, listen, you've lost worship and you've lost God-centeredness. All of a sudden you're self-centered and God's not glorified, his wisdom is not honored and he's not being worshiped in the workplace.

Well, lastly, we worship as employees by working under their authority with this genuineness, with this sincerity of heart like working unto the Lord with fear and trembling and awe of God's wisdom that's called us to do this and finally knowing the Lord will reward you. Look at verse 8, knowing the Lord will reward you, "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." Look, if God puts you under somebody, maybe they won't treat you just right all the time but you'll give an account to God to how you respond to them. If God's put you over others and you don't treat them just right, you'll answer to God for how you treated those under you. But there will always be some over and there will always be some of us under but we should look to getting our reward from the Lord. Someone said it this way, the last day is a motivation for the present day. Knowing, in other words,

knowing we'll receive this reward, we know certain things so we are free from certain things. Let me say that again, we know certain things, God's going to reward me, glorification day is coming and the eternal state is so vastly superior and longer than this one. The Bible says this earthly pilgrimage is a mere breath and then it's over so what the Lord is saying is, "Okay, you're in an unjust, difficult, unfair situation for a season. Worship Christ in it. It's nothing compared to eternity. If you can get out of it, get out of it but don't think your Christianity depends upon it." What if Daniel had been like that? What if Joseph had been like that? "Well, you've mistreated us Jews in this captivity." No, they honored their God in their captivity and guess what happened? And then God set them free as a testimony to his glory, amen? Boy, we need some righteous crusaders for social justice and not this man-centered approach to it.

Just a few verses. 2 Corinthians 5:6, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." 2 Corinthians 4:14, "knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," and the work of the Lord for you is your workplace, you spend more time there than most places. Worship God there, "always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." You say, "Pastor, it's difficult. It's a toil." Yes, but it's not in vain in the Lord. God's grace is sufficient for you to faithfully worship him by the way you conduct yourself in the workplace.

So you must know that the Lord will reward you. "What if my employer does not reward me? What if he does not compensate me properly? What if he does not appreciate me?" Well, remember you're not ultimately working for him, you're working for the one who will give you the eternal reward.

It says he will render to each one, verse 8, it means his omniscient eye misses nothing. You may be in a situation and somebody's treating you unfairly, they're unjust toward you in some ways, their demeaning of you in some ways and that's wrong but here God's in heaven probably saying, "I'm waiting for you to get the right attitude about it. I'm waiting for you to serve and honor them like you're serving and worshiping me and get your eyes off yourself then I might remove your circumstance if I can get some character built in you." Are you hearing me, church? God's more concerned with your godly character than your social advancement. God's more concerned with your godly character than your social justice though he is concerned about that, biblically balanced. It wasn't just for Daniel to be locked in the Babylonian prison or Joseph in an Egyptian prison, but they honored God where they were and God brought them deliverance.

II. Employers must treat employees with God-ordained compassion and good will. So he ends in verse 9 with this phrase, "And masters, do the same things to them." What things? Sometimes be obedient to them if they have genuine needs, verse 5. Sometimes with fear and trembling serve and take care of them and do it with sincerity of the heart, and don't do it by the way of eyeservice as a man-pleaser but as a slave of Christ. Render good service to them as unto the Lord, verse 7, knowing that you're being an employer unto the

Lord who will answer for the Lord and receive your reward from the Lord. Some of us Christians who are in places of authority need to give a little more thought maybe sometimes to how we care for those under our authority.

So here's what you've got to understand, you're talking about a social revolutionary, of course, this was for the church, this was for brothers and sisters in the church, this is written to a local church, but this was radical and revolutionary in the Roman culture of this day. "Masters, do the same thing to your slaves? Are you kidding me, Paul?" And Paul said, "No, I'm not kidding you because you've had the new birth and now you're capable of embracing this where before you could not, because you've experienced the new birth." There was a proverb of this day and the proverb said, quote, "All slaves are enemies." That's how entrenched this abusive mentality of masters towards slaves was so this was a radical liberation within the Christian church of the master/slave relationship. It did not abolish it but it radically transformed the relationship.

Masters of this day would threaten beatings, sexual harassment, they would sell male slaves sometimes, separating them from their wives and their children never to see them again. So Paul said, "That's over for you. You're a Christian now." And I'm convinced and I think the exhortations to Philemon concerning Onesimus from Paul was, in effect, "The master/slave relationship is over. He's your brother now. He may work for you but the concept of the day of master and slavery is over."

So this would be outrageous, it would certainly be a revolutionary and when he tells them those masters, give up all threatenings, that's all forms of manipulation or demeaning or terrifying slaves with threats. That was not to be allowed any longer. That must not come from your heart if you're a Christian employer. Now look, I understand, guys, I employ people, in a sense, on my staff and there are people who are difficult people and they do not have character and they have to be dealt with. I certainly understand that but that's not what this is talking about. It's talking about just abusing your power to serve yourself and not caring about the person under you. But masters are commanded here to take the same kind of loving spirit back toward those under them because he says here in this last phrase, for there is no partiality with God. You have as much dignity and standing with God no matter what your social standing is, slave or free man, master/slave, king or peasant, whatever it is. You're equal before the Lord. The Lord will judge without partiality. Colossians 4:1 says it this way, "Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven."

So while Christianity does not command or instruct us to be a part of social justice movements, we do support justice in the culture but it is never our primary cause. But we're not trying to change society, we're trying to change hearts which does change society. You may say, "Brother Jeff, that's easier said than done. You haven't been where I am. You're not experiencing what I'm experiencing." I can tell you somebody who was, the man who wrote this was.

Look down, if you will, at verse 20 of chapter 6, "for I am an ambassador in chains. I'm a slave right now myself," Paul says. "I'm performing my ministry enslaved unjustly by the

evil intent of the tyrant Caesar. The government is endorsing this slavery of me right now." The scholars tell us he uses the plural for chains because in that day if they used the singular for chain, it was the common custom of a prisoner being chained to one soldier but often if they wanted to really be treacherous to you, demeaning to you, they'd chain your hands and your feet together and they would use the plural, in chains.

So Paul writes and says, "I right now am enslaved for the Gospel," but he uses this paradoxical phrase, "I'm an ambassador in chains," because in this day if you were an ambassador for another king, no other king would dare mistreat you because that would be an act of war against the kingdom. They represented the king. So he said, "I'm an ambassador but I'm an ambassador in chains." Here's what he's saying, "I gladly honor my Christ enslaved in this situation." As a matter of fact, probably every slave in the Ephesian church was treated better than Paul was being treated right now. He said, "I'm accepting my role in these chains for the cause of my God. I'm accepting my role in these chains to worship my God."

Now how many of you have a tough situation out there? The goal is for you to worship and honor your God, not your personal rights or fairness or so-called equalities. Should we be for those? Absolutely we should but we can't control an unregenerate, God-hating world and sometimes we find ourselves in those situations. If we can change it, change it, but if you can't, you can still worship God in it.

Now starting with Pastor Jeff, how many of us tonight whether employers or employees have some repenting to do? We need to say, "Lord, help me be better. Help me to be a more faithful, true worshiper." Whether you're the employer or the employee in the workplace, our worship isn't just in here, it's not just in our quiet time, it never ends. Be a worshiper, honoring his wisdom in the workplace. Confound your employer with your joy to work for them as unto the Lord. Are you alright? Isn't God's wisdom good? You can't get this at Happy Church. They're not saying this stuff. This ain't the cool thing right now but it is the truth. By the way, this will work 100 years ago, 500 years ago, 1,000 years ago, 2,000 years ago and it'll work 100 years from now and 500 years from now, and that's the way it's written how it's written because it doesn't confine us to one particular cultural setting, the wisdom of God in putting his truth together this way that it has applicable principles for every context in every culture and every place. Thank God our culture is not where the ancient Roman culture is but, folks, there's a lot of slavery going on in America right now that doesn't look like the old slavery but it's slavery because in reality, you're not free until you're free in Christ.