

## INTRODUCTION

1. We are returning to our study of the book of Ephesians where we're looking at chapter 6, verses 5-9.
2. This section completes what we have been seeing as the consequences of the Spirit-filled life.
3. If you remember in **Ephesians 5:18 (NASB77)** Paul says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."
4. From verses 19 thru chapter 6 and verse 9, we have been seeing what happens in your life when you're filled with the Spirit.
5. Verse 19 of chapter 5 says that you will sing to yourself and to one another; you will give thanks; and you will submit to one another.
6. In other words, wives will submit to their husbands (5:22-24), husbands will submit to their wives (5:25-33), children will submit to their parents (6:1-3), and parents will submit to their children (6:4).
7. Now we're looking at the final two relationships involving slaves and masters or to use terms we can understand, employees and employers.
8. Read Ephesians 6:5-9.
9. Slavery was common during the writing of Ephesians.

10. In fact, It has been estimated that there were some 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire,<sup>1</sup> and that as many as one third of the populations of large cities such as Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus were slaves.<sup>2</sup>
11. Slavery was an accepted institution.
12. It was the gospel that eventually ended all slavery.
13. J. Vernon McGee said, “The very nature of the gospel condemned slavery. It eventually broke the shackles of slavery from the bodies of men and cut the fetters from their minds and souls. Multitudes of slaves came to Christ, as we learn in Romans 16—many of those named there were slaves or members of the Praetorian guard.”<sup>3</sup>
14. When we look at slavery in the Bible we learn that it does not speak against slavery itself, but against its abuses.
15. **Exodus 21:16 (NASB77)** <sup>16</sup> He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.
16. **Exodus 21:26-27 (NASB77)** <sup>26</sup> If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave, and destroys it, he shall let him go

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 544.

<sup>3</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981). 5:275.

free on account of his eye. <sup>27</sup> "And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he shall let him go free on account of his tooth.

17. There were certain types of slavery that were permitted, or even advocated, in the Old Testament.
18. And these were considered to be nonabusive and beneficial.
19. For example, a thief who could not make restitution could be indentured until repayment was worked out.
20. This is certain more beneficial than our modern prison system provides for no restitution of property or money to the victim or restoration of dignity for the thief.
21. Another example of this is found in Leviticus 25:44 where God says that the Israelites were allowed to buy slaves from the pagan nations around them, but fellow Israelites could not be bought or sold, although they could voluntarily indenture themselves until the year of jubilee according to verses 39–40.
22. But according to verses 40-41, 46 during their time of service they were to be treated as hired workers, not as slaves.
23. Deuteronomy 23:15-16 taught that a slave who fled from an oppressive master was to be given asylum and protection.
24. Exodus 21:2 and Deuteronomy 15:13-15 taught that a fellow Israelite could not be used as a slave for more than

six years, at the end of which he was to be given liberal provisions as a form of severance pay.

25. And every fiftieth year, which was the year of jubilee, all slaves were to be freed and returned to their families (Lev. 25:10).
26. A slave who loved his master and preferred to remain with him could voluntarily indenture himself for life by having his ear pierced by his master (Ex. 21:5–6).
27. When Paul writes to the Ephesians in 6:5-9, he is not writing to overthrow slavery or the Roman government or any of its institutions.
28. He is writing to demonstrate the kind of behavior a slave is to have to his master and the kind of behavior a master is to have to his slave.
29. In other words, he is teaching them “Honorable Work Ethics.”
30. Whether their masters or slaves are Christians, they are to be submissive.
31. **1 Peter 2:18 (NASB77)** <sup>18</sup> Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.
32. Now it is clear that Paul has in mind Christian slaves and Christian masters.
33. According to the context, his instructions continue in the setting of the household.

34. John MacArthur says, “The vast majority of businesses in New Testament times were family operated, and therefore most servants were part of an extended household. In agrarian situations the servants, or slaves, worked in the fields or tended the flocks. If the master had a shop the servants worked as craftsmen or helpers. If he was a merchant they would do whatever chores were required to help in the business. In any case, the head of the household was also head of the business. He was usually the employer and the servants were his employees.”<sup>4</sup>
35. So as Paul writes, he is demonstrating the last two relationships in terms of submission: The Spirit-Filled Employee and the Spirit-Filled Employer.
36. Notice first *the Spirit-filled employee* in verse 5.

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<sup>4</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 322.

## I. The Spirit-Filled Employee (vv.5-8)

Paul begins with the common New Testament term for slave (douloi) which indicates “subjection and usually bondage” (MacArthur).

In both Roman and Greek cultures, most slaves had no legal rights and were treated as commercial commodities so Paul focuses not on the abolition of their situation but on their behavior, attitude, commitment, motive, and diligence.

### A. Their Behavior (v.5a)

“Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh.”

1. The word “obedient” (hupakouo) is a compound word composed of a preposition and a verb. Hupo means “under” and akouo means “to hear.”

Paul says to the employee or slave, “Get under the authority of your employer and listen with the intent to obey.” This is a command that conveys uninterrupted obedience.

In the parallel passage in **Colossians 3:22** (NASB77), Paul says, “Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth.”

“Those who are your masters according to the flesh” or “on the earth” in this context are your employers and you are to “obey” them “in all things.”

“In all things” has a built-in exception just as it does with all the previous relationships that Paul has already mentioned.

When you are instructed to do something immoral, idolatrous, blasphemous, or to disobey Christ, then you are not to obey your employers.

2. Our obedience should be such that our employer trusts us. Just like in the case of Joseph who was sold to Potiphar in Egypt.
  - a) Genesis 39:6 says that Potiphar “left everything he owned in Joseph’s charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.”
  - b) After Joseph was unjustly accused of raping Potiphar’s wife, he was put in jail but because the Lord was with Joseph, **Genesis 39:22-23 (NASB77)** says, “the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible *for it*.<sup>23</sup> The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.”
  - c) Joseph’s heart is revealed in Genesis 45 when he reveals himself to his brothers after he became the prime minister of Egypt.

He says in **Genesis 45:4-8 (NASB77)** <sup>4</sup>Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come

closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>"And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup>"For the famine *has been* in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. <sup>7</sup>"And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup>"Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

3. Christians are known by their obedience to the Lord

They serve Him first and foremost and men are the recipients of it.

- a) In **1 Peter 1:14 (NASB77)**, Peter refers to us as "obedient children."
- b) **Titus 2:9 (NASB77)** <sup>9</sup> Urge bondslaves to **be subject to their own masters in everything**, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative.
- c) **Titus 3:1 (NASB77)** <sup>1</sup> Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, **to be obedient**, to be ready for every good deed.

- d) **Romans 13:1 (NASB77)** <sup>1</sup> Let every person ***be in subjection to the governing authorities.*** For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

B. Their Attitude (v.5b)

Paul continues in verse 5 by addressing their attitude when he says, “with fear and trembling.”

The phrase *fear and trembling* occurs also in 1 Corinthians 2.3; 2 Corinthians 7.15; Philippians 2.12 (and see the related verbs in Mark 5.23). NIV, Brc translate “respect and fear” JB “deep respect.” This phrase is essentially a type of idiom indicating respect and obedience.”<sup>5</sup>

The word “fear” means (φόβου, *phobou*, “fear, reverence”) and “trembling” means (τρόμου, *tromou*, “trembling, quivering”).

These two words are to be understood in the light of the heavenly Master who is represented by the earthly master. A slave’s allegiance to Christ does not

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NIV New International Version

Brc Barclay

JB Jerusalem Bible

<sup>5</sup>Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993). 153.

authorize him to be rude and disrespectful—just the opposite is true.<sup>6</sup>

So the words **Fear and trembling** do not mean cowering servility and abject terror; they mean a dutiful respect and a **fear** of offending the Lord and the employer.<sup>7</sup>

If he cannot honor and respect his employer for the employer's own sake, he respects him for the Lord's sake as one under whom he is to submit.<sup>8</sup>

1. **1 Peter 2:17-20 (NASB77)** <sup>17</sup> Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. <sup>18</sup> **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect**, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. <sup>19</sup> For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.

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<sup>6</sup>Kenneth L. Boles, *Galatians & Ephesians*, The College Press NIV commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1993). Eph 6:5.

<sup>7</sup>William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 6:5.

<sup>8</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 326.

2. **1 Timothy 6:1-3 (NASB77)** <sup>1</sup>Let all who are under the yoke as slaves ***regard their own masters as worthy of all honor*** so that the name of God and *our* doctrine may not be spoken against. <sup>2</sup> And let those who have believers as their masters ***not be disrespectful to them*** because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these *principles*. <sup>3</sup> If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness.

C. Their Commitment (v.5c)

Paul continues in **Ephesians 6:5 (NASB77)** by calling for their obedience and respect to be “in the sincerity of your heart.”

Their obedience and respect is not hypocritical and superficial but genuine and thorough.

The word “sincerity” (haplotes) refers to a “single-hearted devotion” (UBS). It is “uprightness” (Rienecker) and “integrity” of heart (LEH). It refers to “one who is free from pretense and dissimulation” (Thayer).

John Gill says this is “readiness and cheerfulness, without hypocrisy and dissimulation, and with all integrity and faithfulness.”<sup>9</sup>

1. The parallel passage in **Colossians 3:22** (NASB77)<sup>22</sup> 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.
2. Paul told the Thessalonians believers in **1 Thessalonians 4:10-12** (NASB77) to excel still more,<sup>11</sup> and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you;<sup>12</sup> so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

The idea is to do well the work we are assigned to do, without complaining, bragging, criticizing the work of others, or in any other way being disruptive.<sup>10</sup>

D. Their Motive (v.5d)

“as to Christ.”

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<sup>9</sup> John Gill, John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, (E-Sword).

<sup>10</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 327.

Colossians 3:22 adds, “fearing the Lord.”

When you are rendering proper service to your masters, you are in fact serving the Lord.<sup>11</sup>

That’s why Matthew Henry says, “They should have an eye to Jesus Christ in all the service that they perform to their masters.”<sup>12</sup> It is Christ you are serving.

John MacArthur says, “A Christian’s primary concern about his job should be simply to do it well to the glory of God, **as to Christ**. Being filled with the Spirit brings practical results, including those of being a reliable, productive, and cooperative worker. And whenever a Christian is submissive to the Holy Spirit his accomplishments are **as to Christ**, because Christ is both the origin and the goal of his obedience. He does everything out of love for Christ, by the power of Christ, and to the glory of Christ. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do,” Paul says, “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).<sup>13</sup>

#### E. Their Diligence (vv.6-8)

Paul continues in verses 6-8 by showing the effects of right behavior, a right attitude, a right commitment, and a right motive. They will not work by way of

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<sup>11</sup> Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, (E-Sword).

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (E-Sword).

<sup>13</sup> John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 327.

“eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. <sup>7</sup> With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”

1. They do not work by way of “eyeservice”

“That is, not with service rendered only under the eye of the master, or when his eye is fixed on you” (Barnes).

“eyeservice” (ophthalmodoulia), refers to service performed “without dedication or a sense of inner obligation” (Fri) but to “attract attention” (GING) or “impress others” (UBS).

“It is labor when the master is present, but relaxation and laziness as soon as he is gone.”<sup>14</sup>

It is a natural tendency to slack off when the employer is away, but it is a form of dishonesty. The Christian’s standards of performance should not vary according to the geographical location of the foreman.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976, 1980). 540.

<sup>15</sup> William MacDonald and Arthur Farstad, *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995). Eph 6:6.

One who is obedient, respectful, committed in doing his work to Christ does not need to be checked up on, because he always does his work to the best of his ability, whether or not anyone else is around. And he works just as hard when he is passed over for a raise or promotion as when he is being considered for them. He does not do a good job to make a good impression on other people (as do **men-pleasers**) or to promote his own welfare. If he gains those things, they are incidental to his primary motive and intention. He works diligently because to do so is **the will of God** and is the sincere desire of his own **heart**.<sup>16</sup>

2. They do not work as “men-pleasers”

“Men-pleasers” (anthropareskos) is literally “one who tries to please men at the sacrifice of principle” (BAG).

“It may mean human approval in general, but here it probably has the masters in view, again in contrast with service that is performed in order to please the divine Master.”<sup>17</sup>

- a) Again the parallel passage in **Colossians 3:22 (NASB77)** <sup>22</sup> Slaves, in all things obey those

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<sup>16</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 327.

<sup>17</sup>Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians*, UBS handbook series; Helps for translators (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993). 153.

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

b) Paul told the Thessalonians in **1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NASB77)** <sup>4</sup> But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, *not as pleasing men* but God, who examines our hearts.

3. They work as “slaves of Christ”

“Slaves” translates the Greek word *doulos* which refers to one who is “bought or owned” (MacArthur).

Christian slaves are those “who no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Cor.5:15).

To be “in Christ” is to live exclusively “for Christ,” that is, to live at His disposal and for His benefit.

**Romans 14:8 (NASB77)** <sup>8</sup> for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

“The essence of slavery is subjection, usually involuntary, to the will of another. Apart from his choice in the matter, a slave is obliged to fulfill an alien will. Jesus’ intimate word to His Father in

Gethsemane perfectly sums up the slave's attitude: 'Not My will, but Yours be done' (Matt.26:39). The slave is totally at the disposal of his master, completely subject to his master's will. He lives solely for the benefit of his master, and the service he must render has two elements: obedience to explicit commands, and, where there are no specific directives to follow, action that will please his master. Obeying and pleasing the master--this is the service rendered by a slave."<sup>18</sup>

Those who are simply out to please their masters are slaves of men, but the writer wants his addressees to see themselves primarily as slaves of Christ. Their allegiance lies ultimately not to other people but to Christ, and their aim should be not to please men but "to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (cf. 5:10).<sup>19</sup>

4. They do "the will of God from the heart"

This refers back to verse 5 and the phrase "in sincerity of your heart."

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<sup>18</sup> Murray J. Harris, *Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ*, (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999). 95.

cf. *confer*, compare

<sup>19</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002). 421.

**Colossians 3:23 (NASB77)** <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, *do your work heartily*, as for the Lord rather than for men.

5. They work with enthusiasm

This is what Paul means when he says in verse 7, “with good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

The words “good will” (eunoias) refers to “wholehearted zeal” (Fri), “eagerness” (LN), or “enthusiasm” (GING). It “expresses the attitude of the worker who does not need prompting or compelling” (MacArthur).

- a) Solomon said in **Ecclesiastes 9:10 (NASB77)** <sup>10</sup> Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do *it* with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.
- b) Paul said in **Romans 12:11 (NASB77)** <sup>11</sup> not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

This is the attitude of the Spirit-filled Christian who knows “that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord whether slave or free” (v.8).

No good thing done in His name and for His glory can pass His notice or fail to receive His blessing.

John MacArthur tells a story of an elderly missionary couple who were returning home on a ship after many years of sacrificial service in Africa. On the same ship was Theodore Roosevelt, who had just completed a highly successful big game hunt. As the ship docked in New York harbor, thousands of well-wishers and dozens of reporters lined the pier to welcome Roosevelt home. But not a single person was there to welcome the missionaries. As the couple rode to a hotel in a taxi, the man complained to his wife, “It just doesn’t seem right. We give forty years of our lives to Jesus Christ to win souls in Africa, and nobody knows or cares when we return. Yet the president goes over there for a few weeks to kill some animals and the whole world takes notice.” But as they prayed together that night before retiring, the Lord seemed to say to them, “Do you know why you haven’t received your reward yet, My children? It is because you are not home yet.”<sup>20</sup>

## II. The Spirit-Filled Employer (v.9)

Paul now turns his attention to *the Spirit-filled employer* in **Ephesians 6:9 (NASB77)**<sup>9</sup> And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both

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<sup>20</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 328.

their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

A. He Exhorts Them to the Same Behavior

“And masters, do the same to them.”

This does not mean that the masters are to render service to the slaves as the latter do to them, but that they are to treat them with the same Christian principles and consideration that the slaves show to the masters.<sup>21</sup>

B. They Are to Give Up Threatening

The words “give up” (aniemi) means to “stop” (GING) or a “relaxation of tension” (Fri). It suggests “the idea of loosening up, or releasing” (MacArthur).

“Threatening” (apeile) refers to “the threat of punishment” (LS).

The Spirit-filled employer uses his authority and power as little as possible and does not throw his weight around or lord it over those under him. He is never abusive or inconsiderate. He knows that he is a fellow slave of Jesus Christ with his employees and is accountable to the same Master.

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<sup>21</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, c1984). Eph 6:9.

He also knows that before God he is no more important or worthy in himself than the least of his employees, because there is no partiality with Him. And he plays no favorites because God plays no favorites.

### CONCLUSION

1. Spirit-filled believers—whether husbands or wives, parents or children, employers or employees—are to be mutually submissive because they are equally loved, equally cared for, and equally subservient to a common **Master**, their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.<sup>22</sup>
2. What about you?
3. Does this describe your walk with Christ?
4. Are you Spirit-filled? If so, you will have a song in your heart to the Lord and a song that is shared with one another. You will have a thankful heart as well as a submissive one.
5. Let's check our hearts now.
6. In light of what we talked about this morning, are you serving your employer in this manner?
7. Do they see this kind of difference in your life?

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<sup>22</sup>John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, c1986). 329.

8. This kind of living makes for effective evangelism.
9. Peter said in **1 Peter 2:15 (NASB77)** <sup>15</sup> For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
10. Have you fully surrendered your life to Jesus Christ?
11. Are you one of His slaves?
12. If not, I want to call you to repent of your sin and turn to Him as the only One who can save and forgive you of all your sin.
13. Do that now as we pray.
14. Let's pray.