

“Slaves and Masters – Part 2”
1 Timothy 6:1-2
(Preached at Trinity, September 26, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Last week we began looking at the relationship between slaves and masters. Slavery is difficult for us to identify with from our 21st century perspective. Viewing it in the context of the history of slavery in our nation most dismiss the teaching altogether.
We need to draw a distinction between ancient forms of slavery and the form of slavery practiced in the 17-19th centuries. This form was sinful for several reasons.
 - A. It involved kidnapping for profit on the continent of Africa. African gangs captured villages and sold them into slavery.
Exodus 21:16 NAU - "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death."
 - B. Another sinful aspect was the lack of a means for a slave to gain his freedom. One of the issues with the slave trade was there was no means of a slave gaining his freedom. See **Leviticus 25:44-55**
 - C. Racism was another sinful aspect of 16-19th century slavery where one race was considered inherently inferior.
2. We also have difficulty with the whole concept of servitude because of the anti-authoritarian mindset prevalent in our day. There is little respect for all forms of authority.
3. The New Testament has much to say regarding servants. Slavery was very common in the 1st century. It was an accepted part of their culture.
The introduction of Christianity into this culture brought many questions and tensions. Should Christian masters release all of their Christian slaves? Should Christian slaves expect preferential treatment from their Christian masters.
Paul's words give clarification for the church.
1 Timothy 6:1 NAU - "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."
4. The NT neither condemns nor justifies slavery. It simply recognizes its reality - It focuses mostly on the proper behavior of slaves and masters. The N.T. always focuses upon our transformed lives.
5. The earthly minded man places a high priority upon his earthly situation.
The earthly minded slave will not be able to get his mind off of his servitude.
The Kingdom minded slave will keep his mind on how his servitude will best glorify Christ - "so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against."
6. This demands the transforming work of the Gospel.
7. Last time we began addressing the question, what does this passage dealing with slaves have to teach Christians in the 21st Century?

- I. First of all, Christianity doesn't necessarily change our situation or status of life. The external areas of our life will remain the same.
- 1 Corinthians 7:20-22 NAU** - "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 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."
1. Christianity brings us to look beyond this present life. It changes our priorities.
 2. This life is always of secondary importance. We are citizens of another realm.
 - a. If the Christian with cancer makes his recovery his highest priority he ceases to maintain a kingdom priority. How can I glorify Christ with my cancer?
 - b. If the slave made gaining his freedom his highest priority, he would cease to maintain a Kingdom priority. How can our glorify Christ in my servitude?

Ephesians 6:5 NAU - "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;"
- II. Christianity does not take us out from under authority – even if the authority is non-Christian. Only when we are commanded to forsake God are we permitted to disobey legitimate authority. Paul is telling the slaves to submit to the authority of their masters.
- A. For the most part Americans have a strong dislike of authority
1. Most despise civil authority – we dislike law.
 - a. The “defund the police” movement is largely an anti-authority movement. The focus is not on reforming the police but abolishing law enforcement. For many, the answer to the problem of improper law enforcement is anarchy or lawlessness.
 - b. People despise law. They think little about speeding. They are more concerned about getting a ticket than they are about breaking God’s command to obey civil authority.
 2. Jesus taught that we must submit and obey our leaders while maintaining our faithfulness to God.

Matt. 22:15-21 - the Pharisees and Herodians wishing to trap Jesus
 Verse 17 - Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?
 Verse 20 - "Whose is this image and superscription?"
 Verse 21 - "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things which are God's"

Jesus did not take the opportunity to tell us to fight for lower taxes. He only set our attention upon the just jurisdiction of the government.
 3. Paul taught that we must obey the civil authorities

Romans 13:1-2 NAU - "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves."

Paul did not tell us to practice civil disobedience.

4. Peter also taught that we should obey the civil authorities
1 Peter 2:13-15 NAU - "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men."
- a. There is much talk today about civil disobedience. What it means for most it we have autonomy and the right to choose when we will or will not obey. And any law they do not like they call tyranny.
 - b. Civil disobedience is warranted when the civil authorities usurp the authority of God. We have a separation of church and state but not a separation of state from God.
Acts 5:29 NAU - "But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men."
 - c. John Calvin boldly held that we have a duty to obey not only righteous but unrighteous magistrates.
 "We are not only subject to the authority of princes who perform their office toward us uprightly and faithful as they ought, but also to the authority of all who, by whatever means have got control of affairs, even though they perform not a whit of the princes' office. When we hear that a king has been ordained by God, let us at once call to mind those heavenly edicts with regard to honoring and fearing a king. We shall not hesitate to hold a most wicked tyrant in the place where the Lord has designed to set him."¹
 "We owe this attitude of reverence and therefore of piety toward all our rulers in the highest degree, whatever they may be like."²
- B. We've also seen that God has delegated other forms of authority.
1. Family authority – wives subject to their husbands and children subject to their parents
Ephesians 5:22-24 NAU - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything."
Ephesians 6:1 NAU – "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."
 2. Church authority – few today understand the nature of church authority and its proper jurisdiction.
Hebrews 13:17 NAU - "Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

¹ Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol.2, Book IV:20*, Edited by John T. McNeill, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 1512-1514.

² *Ibid.*, 1516.

- C. Occupational authority – these verses apply to this by way of implication.
1. Again, we have to understand the nature of God’s delegated authority. Christianity did not take slaves out from under the authority of their masters.
William Gouge wrote in his book, “Domestical Duties”
 The mind and opinion of the slave “must be informed and resolved that the place of a master and a servant is lawful and warrantable: that God in general ordained degrees of superiority and inferiority, of authority and subjection: and in particular gave to masters the authority which they have and put servants in that subjection wherein they are. God hath given express commandment unto masters to govern their servants: and unto servants to be subject to their masters.”³
 2. Again, Christianity does not dissolve existing relationships. There was often confusion here among the early Christians
 - a. Some thought that since God saved them, they should leave their unbelieving spouses - Paul said NO!
1 Corinthians 7:12-14 NAU - "But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy."
 - b. The Gospel transforms relationships. Godly men love and protect and serve their wives and Godly wives love and obey their husbands while they care for the home.
 3. Slaves resented their Christian masters retaining their position of authority.
 - a. Doesn’t Christianity remove all distinctions?
Galatians 3:28 NAU - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
 - b. Christianity does not remove racial, sexual, or social distinctions. But it transforms them.
1 Timothy 6:1 NAU - "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."

³ William Gouge, *Domestical Duties*, Puritan Reprints, (www.puritanreprints.com, 2006), 434-435.

- III. This passage gives us instruction regarding employee/employer relationships. It says much about how we approach our jobs as Christians.
- A. We need to have a proper Biblical theology of work
1. Paul is telling the slaves to labor as to the Lord. If they have believing masters, they should serve them as brothers in Christ. They were not to despise their work because their setting was not ideal.
 2. Many in our generation hate their jobs. Americans have lost their work ethic – we longer place a value on work
 - a. We do not take pride in our work. Productivity remains low.
 - b. Made in USA does not have the appeal that it once did
Why are Japanese cars more reliable than American cars?
 - c. We want high pay but minimum work
We are consumed with materialism, the desire for creature comforts, and the love of pleasure. The recent pandemic relief revealed this horrible ethic. People are content to stay at home and collect their unemployment. They have found it more lucrative than working.
 3. For the Christian work is a sacred duty. We must see everything we do in relationship to God.
Our jobs have value because this is where we live out our Christian lives.
Ephesians 6:5-7 NAU - "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,"
- B. Our employer is “worthy of all honor”
1. This includes respect, obedience, and dutiful service.
 2. Even the employers who are harsh and unfair are to be honored because of their position as superiors.
 3. "so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against."
 - a. Our behavior affects how others perceive our God
 - b. Our ability to put forth our doctrine is dependent upon how we live consistently with it. Our lives should never contradict our doctrine.
 - c. Christians should be the very best workers
We should be punctual, respectful, and hard working.
- C. The Employee’s relationship to the believing employer
1. He must not expect special treatment
Even if a mature Christian is working for a new convert.
Even if it is an elder working for one of his church members.
 2. He must remember his responsibility to the brethren
Our faithful duty makes his job easier.
We should promote his wellbeing.

Conclusion:

1. This was important instruction. Paul adds: **1 Timothy 6:2 NAU** - "Teach and preach these *principles*."
2. Paul is writing to Timothy at Ephesus. Paul also addressed this in his Epistle to the Ephesians.
Ephesians 6:5-7 NAU - "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,"
3. John MacArthur points out several truths from this passage as they regard the relationship between Christian employees and their employer⁴ --
 - Believers are to serve their employers obediently.
 - Believers are to serve their employers faithfully. They are to fully carry out whatever tasks are assigned to them.
 - Believers are to serve their employers respectfully honoring those God has placed in authority over them.
 - Believers are to serve their employers as unto Christ. (With good will doing service, as to the Lord) This means with excellence doing the very best job we are capable of.
 - Believers are to serve their employers diligently. (not with eye service). We should not work hard only when the boss is looking.
 - Believers are to serve their employers humbly (not as men-pleasers). We must never show off to ingratiate ourselves with others.
 - Believers are to serve their employers spiritually (doing the will of God from the heart)
4. Our chief duty whether a slave or a master or whatever else our lot in life is to live like a Christian. When we fail at this, we are merely giving the world ammunition to attack Christianity. So, Paul adds: "so that the name of God and *our* doctrine will not be spoken against."

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 234.