

## **Grace to You :: esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time**

### **Divine Design for the Workplace**

Scripture: Ephesians 6:5-9

Code: 49-38

We return this morning to our study of Ephesians. For those of you who are visiting with us, we have been moving at a rather slow pace through this wonderful letter of Ephesians, written by the apostle Paul to believers, because it's so foundational. And every paragraph we come to lays down another very, very foundational truth about the Christian gospel and Christian living.

The first three chapters of this short epistle dealt with the issue of salvation: the gospel. The last three chapters deal with the issue of sanctification: living as a Christian in the world. And that's where we are. And we have been directed, starting in chapter 4, verse 1, with the word "therefore" into the practical section, after the wonderful doxology that ends chapter 3, a paean of praise, if you will, for the glory of the saving gospel of Christ, the theme of the opening three chapters.

We then come down to earth in chapter 4, verse 1, where Paul says that you are to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"—and that's a call to salvation. Having been called to this salvation, we are to "walk in a manner that is worthy of [that calling]." In other words, sanctification follows salvation.

And how are we to walk? Well, we've been learning that through chapters 4, 5, and 6. If you go down to verse 17, we are to "no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; they too, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way."

And he goes on in verse 22 to say that was "your former manner of life," but you laid aside that old self, "which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and [you have been] renewed in the spirit of your mind," verse 24, "and put on the new self." So we are new creatures in Christ, and we no longer walk the way we used to walk.

How do we walk? Chapter 5, verse 1, as "imitators of God, as [His] beloved children." He is our Father; we are in His family. We show evidence of that by our life. In verse 2 he says, "Walk in love, as Christ loved you and gave Himself up for [you]." In verse 8 he says, "Walk as children of Light." What does that mean? Verse 9, "goodness, righteousness, and truth." In verse 15, "Walk . . . as wise."

So "walk" is simply a picture of daily Christian living. And we have gone through all these aspects of it in the months past, and it's been an incredibly blessed time together.

The key to it comes in chapter 5, verse 18: that is to "be filled with the Spirit." In order to walk this way, you need the power of the Holy Spirit, and you need Him to activate the Word of God in your life. The filling of the Spirit and letting the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as Paul's words in

Colossians express it, are one in the same thing. You submit yourself to the Word of God, and you are therefore submitting to the Spirit of God who's the author of the Word; and when you're filled with the Spirit, you're filled with His Word.

So we can live this Christian life, and it will be evident. The first evidence of it is in verse 19. If you're "filled with the Spirit," if you're fulfilling the desires of the Lord, if you're walking in the Word, you will be marked by joyful praise, joyful worship: "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord"—which is what we do when we gather together, and what you do on your own all the time, as you express the joy of your salvation.

So the first is joyful worship. The second response or result of the filling of the Holy Spirit is constant thanksgiving, verse 20, "Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

So the first two verses responding to being filled with the Spirit have to do with our relationship to God. We praise Him with joyful worship. We thank Him in everything with constant thanksgiving to the Father through Christ.

Then when you come to verse 21, we move from the Spirit-filled life as it relates to God to the Spirit-filled life as it relates to others. Verse 21, "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." What marks all of our human relationships in the body of Christ is submission, submission. We submit to each other, and that's laid out for us in verses 22 to 33 in marriage: The husband submits to the wife's needs; the wife submits to the husband's lead.

And then last week in chapter 6, verses 1 to 4, the children submit to their parents, and the parents submit to their children by not provoking them, verse 4, "to anger, but [bringing] them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Everything is—while there is an authority submission established there (the husband is the head of the wife; the parents are the head of the children), there is mutual submission as each of us does whatever we can do to provide whatever the other needs. We subject ourselves to the needs of all of those around us. To borrow the language from Philippians 2, we look not on our own things, but the things of others, which is what Christ did in His own self-emptying.

So we have looked at the relationships that are most intimate: the marriage relationship and the family relationship. Now in verse 5 we come to the third category of close relationships where Spirit-filled living, godly living shows up. Let me read verses 5 to 9.

"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; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

"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."

Now this is a very practical, very direct portion of Scripture that gives God's divine design for our employment relationships, our work relationships. And just because you need to understand the context and the setting here, you have to understand that in the ancient times, most people who work were attached to a family. It was an agrarian culture. They had land—they farmed that land, or they raised animals on the land—or they had craftsmen skills. And it still was basically around the home where they applied their trade and earned their living.

And so if they needed help, they would then have relationships, contracts with people who would come and work for them. And that's the setting that you have here. And the reason I want you to understand that is because you're not talking about people who go off to a factory in this setting, you're talking about people who are virtually living with the people who are their employers and their bosses and their leaders, and the people are also living with those who are their slaves.

Now I know when you see the word "slaves" it can put you off a little bit, so I'll try to help define that as best I can. It should be very familiar to us in Scripture because if you notice down in verse 6, we are "slaves of Christ."

Now Christ picked slavery as a picture of our relationship to Him. He is our *Kurios*, and we are *doulos*, slaves to Him as our Master, which is to say that there is a form of slavery which is noble and exalted. In fact, it is such a wonderful relationship that it can be used to describe the relationship that every Christian has with Christ Himself.

What is so noble about slavery? Well, slavery in its purest form—and it is certainly regulated in the Old Testament in wonderful and protective ways, very different from the kind of slavery that you know about in more modern history. But slavery was simply a way that people who needed employment could contract with someone in a relationship that would allow them to work for those people, who then took care of them. And there were some very strict rules about that in the Old Testament, very strict. You couldn't kidnap anybody, you couldn't buy people; there was no human trafficking, you couldn't buy and sell people as such. Furthermore, they were slaves by their own will because they needed to be cared for. Furthermore, you couldn't abuse them. If you did anything to, for example, struck a slave and harmed his eye or knocked a tooth out, he was to be set free. If you ever acted grievously and abusive against your slave, it could cost you your life; there was a death penalty attached to it.

Furthermore, any family member who wanted to redeem a slave could do so by redemption. He could go to the one the slave was serving and say, "I want my family member back. I think we can take care of this individual; we want him for us." They could be redeemed. And even the contracts had to allow for the seventh year when all the slaves were set free, if they chose that, and the jubilee, the fiftieth year. So anytime you contracted with someone for that kind of unique relationship, it was limited by the time. If you only had a few years before the seventh year, you would only be able to expect that slave's work for those few years; he would have freedom to go.

The Old Testament also laid out the fact that if, in Exodus 21, a slave decided that he loved his master and wanted to stay for life, then the master would take him by a piece of wood, by a piece of lumber, and hold out his ear where you'd pierce your ear for an earring and put a hole in it, and that was the way he was saying, "I want to be your slave for life."

So slavery in the biblical sense was a protected thing. It did not allow, in the Jewish context, it did not allow for any abuse of any kind at all. And it was the best of all situations in many cases because you were cared for, housed, fed, welcomed into the family, maybe even in sharing part of the riches of the family. It was a very important place to demonstrate your Christian life, though, in the pagan world.

So by the time we get to the New Testament it's pagan slavery that we're facing, and it's not the kind of slavery that the Old Testament regulated when Israel came back from Egypt and entered into Canaan and Leviticus 25 and parts of Exodus define what's permitted and what's not. This is a very different world. That was a very helpful way to employ people and take their needs in, I think, the deepest level of commitment, because if someone was your slave, you really had to take care of them. You possessed them; they were totally dependent on you, which was the best of all things if you had a good master. And we know people like Abraham had many such servants or slaves and cared for them all.

So it was really an employment relationship. The concept of the word has been so demeaned over centuries because of the abusive forms of slavery. But that's no different than abusive forms of marriage, which doesn't negate the goodness of marriage that God designed. So we have a work relationship, is the next place where we have to demonstrate the transformation of our lives, where we have to walk in the Spirit and show our joyful worship, our consistent thanks, and our willingness to submit to those around us.

Now this is a big relationship even for us today. We don't necessarily—some of you may work and live in the home of your employer, but it's a little more rare. In the Roman world they say there are about fifty million people and probably as many as ten million were slaves. So it was the dominant form of hired work.

But even so, the next—next to family, you will spend most of your time in your life with the people you work with. You might spend more time with other people in the cycle of meeting people in coming and going, but you're stuck with the same people for years, very often, in your workplace. And the average person who works full time works forty-two years, somewhere between ninety thousand and a hundred thousand hours. So you have an awful lot of time and an awful lot of contact with people who need to see what Christianity looks like, right? And that's your task; that's your objective: You put Christ on display. And we'll see that here.

And the key thing that I want you to understand is this: There's no such thing as a secular job for a Christian. You don't have a secular job; you have a sacred job. And your boss is not the guy that you think is your boss or the lady that you think is your boss; your real boss is Christ. And that comes out in this text over and over again—in verse 5, "as to Christ"; in verse 6, "slaves of Christ"; in verse 7, "as to the Lord"; verse 8, "from the Lord"; verse 9, "their Master and yours is in heaven."

So almost every verse identifies the fact that your real Master is the Lord Himself, and He's the one that's going to render the verdict on your work. And it's in that environment of your work that you need to live the Christian life, filled with the Spirit, joyfully worshiping, constantly being thankful, and submitting yourself. This is healthy. You say, "Well wait a minute, I thought work was cursed." Well you're right; it's cursed.

Genesis 3, God cursed Adam and said, “You’re going to have to work the ground. You’re going to have to work diligently six days a week, and you’re going to have to sweat and toil, and there’s going to be all kinds of obstacles—thorns and thistles—and it’s going to be a difficult task because you’re dealing with a cursed world. And in the end you’ll go back to dust.”

But although the world is cursed and work shows the reality of that curse, the Bible is very adamant that we need to work. There is nothing worse than someone who doesn’t work. That’s really serious. There used to be a saying, “Idle hands are the devil’s plaything.” And in a fallen world you need something to occupy you, and work is what God has designed.

There has even been, since the time of the Reformation, something called the Protestant work ethic, which developed in the Reformation because all of a sudden there was a completely new approach to work. Up until the Reformation, Roman Catholic people would “work,” do good things, do things well to earn their salvation, thinking that that’s how you earned your salvation. That was the Catholic work ethic: You have to do what you do so you can gain heaven.

The Protestant ethic was this: You have been transformed, salvation is free, by grace you have become a child of God, and now you work for the benefit of others. You work for the benefit of others, not to earn your own salvation, not to find your way into heaven, but to demonstrate the power of the gospel to change you from a person who is self-serving to a person who is others-serving. That’s the Protestant work ethic. And it is the Protestant work ethic, starting with the Reformation, that changed the world. And even to this day, the most flourishing nations, economically, are those that experienced the Protestant Reformation.

So we are slaves of Christ, and that’s a beautiful picture of what slavery, in its noblest, should be. Christ bought us, right, bought us with His own blood—loved us, bought us, took us in, and actually adopted us as sons and daughters, and promised us everything we would need. All spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ are ours. He promised to be our Savior, our source, our protector, our security. And He promised one day He would gather us to Himself in His kingdom in His house, where He’s preparing a room for us, and reward us eternally with an everlasting reward that has been laid up for us in heaven.

I can’t think of a better relationship than being a slave of Christ. And He takes full responsibility for us. He is the perfect illustration of what a master should be and what every slave would want.

It wasn’t that way in the Roman world. So this is new. This is offensive, to talk about Christians being slaves of Christ, because slavery in the Roman world is an ugly reality. One historian says on the island of Delos, in one day as many as ten thousand slaves were sold. There was human trafficking. There was kidnapping. There was defeating an enemy and then taking an enemy captive and hauling them off to your nation and selling them off as slaves. The Romans were bitterly cruel toward their slaves. Slaves had no rights, no right to court, no right to personal defense, and very often no right to kindness. And by the way, Exodus 21:16 does say that if you ever “steal a man”—any trafficking—you should “be put to death.” So no one was to be taken and kidnapped into slavery. No cruel slavery could be defended on Old Testament grounds at all.

But by the time you get to Rome, slavery has changed. In the book of Leviticus you have chapter 25, which talks a lot about slavery and what is allowed, and the thing that’s repeated twice in Leviticus 25

is that you can't take dominion over a slave, that you have to treat him with kindness as if he or she were a member of the family. In fact, in Deuteronomy 23, an interesting little word there about this: It says, "Don't return an escaped slave from a cruel master; let him live with you."

So like any relationship, it can be abused. Like parents abuse kids and like husbands abuse wives, or wives abuse husband, slaves and master could abuse each other. That's why it's so important that the Holy Spirit control that relationship.

Good relationships would be illustrated in Luke 7. I'll show you a good relationship, and a most interesting one, I think: a Roman centurion. So he's a significant person. He commands a hundred soldiers in the Roman legion, and he has a slave, and he just happens to really love this slave, which would be the best of that relationship in ancient times. And it says in Luke 7, verse 2, "A centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, 'He's worthy for You to grant this to him'—"You need to heal this centurion's slave; he's worthy—"for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue."

He had been influenced by the Jewish relationship, the Old Testament perspective for the slave. This is someone for whom he had great affection, and he wanted him well. And these Jewish people had influenced him so much that he was a donor to the synagogue in Capernaum—a Roman centurion.

Verse 6, "Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I'm not worthy for You to come under my roof.'" This is a humble man. This is a centurion, this is a commander, this is the guy at the top of the pile, this is the drill sergeant over the hundred troops; this is someone who's a rough, tough guy, has some kind of an ego, the ability to lead in very, very dangerous endeavors. But he's very humble, and he doesn't want Jesus to trouble Himself by coming all the way to the house.

Verse 7, "For this reason I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed." He's not only humble, he believes. Capernaum was a busy place. Jesus did lots of miracles there. And he had come to believe that He had that miracle power. "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed"—"I've seen it. I know how authority works, and I've seen Your authority over disease. I know authority when I see it"—"[I'm] a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." So he had a relationship with a slave in which he said, "Do this!" and he does it, which is the right authority-submission relationship. But he had such profound affection for the man, he was brokenhearted that he was dying.

"When Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, 'I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.'" Wonderful. A Roman centurion with more faith than Jesus found in the people of Israel.

Verse 10, "When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health." The Lord healed his slave, gave the man back his slave. That's a good relationship; that's a loving relationship. That's a relationship in which he says to the guy, "Go," and he goes; and that's how it works. But he loved him as well.

Now we're talking about human relationships, folks. You understand that, right, not spiritual relationships. In Christ, Galatians 3:28, "there's neither bond nor free." Right? In the kingdom those things don't even exist. "There's neither male nor female," "Jew nor Greek," "bond or free." So we're simply talking about slave relationship.

Another great illustration of a good one was the illustration of the book of Philemon. Philemon had a slave by the name of Onesimus. Onesimus ran away. That was a crime that would be punishable by one of two things: put a letter on the head, sort of like Hester Prynne in the early American novel, where you mark somebody *fugitivus*, an escaped slave, which would then make him a criminal the rest of his life, unable to hide himself. So that was one possibility with a slave that ran away. The other possibility was execution.

So Onesimus leaves Philemon, his master, and he takes off to get lost in the crowd at Rome and runs into Paul, and he comes to Christ. And Paul says, "You have to go back. You have to go back." And he writes the letter of Philemon and tells Philemon, "Take him back. Take him back as a brother in Christ." "You go back, you serve the one to whom you belong, and you are brothers in Christ, but you still have that relationship." Kind of like husband and wife—there's a leader and a follower, but in Christ there's equality.

The Old Testament condemns any kind of ill-treatment of anyone in any relationship. It's certainly true in slavery. But it does understand that in the ancient world it could be the best of all possibilities for people who needed to be cared for. The world was rough and tough and hard and dangerous, and protection and security and provision was a huge necessity.

So that's sort of the big picture. So we come into the book of Ephesians, and Paul is going to talk to the people in Ephesus who are part of the Roman system who are used to slaves. As I said, there were millions of them. And Paul is going to revolutionize their understanding.

As I said, I gave you two examples already of good masters. The centurion had come to believe something about Jesus Christ. He had come to believe enough that Jesus responded to his faith. And Philemon was a believer to start with, and so Paul wanted Onesimus to go back and restore that relationship with him. But in the other part of the world, slavery was brutal.

So this is a hard word. Go to verse 5. The first part of this text is the submission of the slaves: "Slaves"—*doulos, douloi*—"be obedient to those who are your masters." That's what slaves do. Or if you want to put it in the contemporary vernacular: If you work for somebody, do what they tell you.

Life is pretty simple. I've said this for years to the students at The Master's University. They ask me, "How can I be successful in the future?" and my answer is, "Do what they tell you. Just do what they tell you. Do it well, do it as unto the Lord, and you'll be amazed at how unique you will be. Just do what they tell you. That's what someone employed is responsible to do."

But that was abused in the Roman days. There were all kinds of abuses. In fact, they were so common that there's some things that were written in that era I'll just share with you, to give you a bit of a perspective.

Varro, a Roman writer, divided agricultural tools into three groups. The mute tools were vehicles, the inarticulate tools were cattle, and the articulate tools were slaves. So you were seen as just a beast who could talk; that was pretty much it.

Cato gave advice to a man taking over a farm—and this is in an ancient document. But Cato said this: “Old slaves must be thrown out on the scrap heap to starve. When a slave is ill, it is sheer extravagance to issue him normal rations. The old and the sick slave is only a broken and inefficient tool; get rid of them.” Gaius, the Roman lawyer, said, “The master possesses the power of life and death over the slave.”

August, Caesar Augustus, supposedly crucified a slave because he killed his pet quail. Vedius Pollio flung a slave, still living, to savage eels in his fish pond because he broke some dish. Juvenal talks of a master who delights in the sound of cruel flogging, thinking it's sweeter than song.

Abusive slavery; that's why eventually in Rome there was a slave rebellion. A Roman writer summed it up when he said this: “Whatever a master does to a slave, undeservedly in anger, willingly or unwillingly, in forgetfulness, after careful thought, knowingly or unknowingly, is judgment, justice, and law.”

What is Paul going to do? Does he urge rebellion? Does he say, “You all need to rebel; you need to pull off a revolution”? No. That's disruptive of the social order. He says, “What you need to do is be obedient. Do what they tell you.” Great message here. Simple, profound. “Slaves, do what they tell you.”

In 1 Peter chapter 2, you have an illustration of this same thing in a household slave, verse 18, 1 Peter 2, “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect.” He's talking here, and the word is “household slaves,” *oiketes*. “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.” Oh. That's too bad that's here.

Why? “For this finds grace”—literally—“this finds grace, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.” So you're not treated fair at work, you're going to get grace; you're going to get sufficient grace.

“What credit,” verse 20 says, “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 grace with God.” Then he goes on to say, “You've been called to this purpose.” You've been called to suffer unjustly at work. “Christ suffered for you, [and left] you an example” of how to suffer. How should you suffer? He never committed a sin, and never “any deceit found in His mouth; and while He was being reviled, He didn't revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Commit yourself to God, and accept this suffering. Don't be disruptive. Don't be a rebel.

I mean, your job is a sacred calling where you are to put on display the power of the gospel in your life, and it starts with the right behavior. Behavior: Be obedient to those who are your masters. That is the right behavior, whether they're reasonable or unreasonable, fair or unfair.



Look at 1 Timothy 6, and we get the same instruction, verses 1 and 2, “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor.” That’s a blanket statement. You are to honor your master. You “are to regard [your] own [master] as worthy of all honor”—why?—“so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.” You can’t, you can’t be a rebellious, cantankerous, disgruntled employee and make somebody believe the gospel transforms your life.

And oh, by the way, if you have a Christian boss, verse 2, “Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they’re brethren”—don’t take advantage of that—“but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.” Tell everybody.

You submit to your boss, even if he’s unreasonable. You submit to your boss all the more if he’s a believer. And you’re tempted to abuse that relationship or to take advantage of the fact that he’s a believer and he’s more kind to you, and so you give him less because you think he won’t be harsh.

Titus 1:9, “Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that [we] will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers, deceivers,” et cetera, et cetera.

Then in chapter 2, we have the responsibility to hold the faithful Word, to exhort with sound doctrine, but then to live it. Go to chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, “Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not stealing, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.” You’re adorning the doctrine of God our Savior. You’re adorning salvation.

So the right act is obedience. The right perspective is—back to verse 5—“according to the flesh.” This is just for now. This is just temporal. In Colossians 3 it says, “on earth”—it’s human, it’s temporal, it’s earthly. The employer has authority, and you are to submit. You submit. This is for here and now.

And you do it with a right attitude. The attitude comes next. The action, the perspective—it’s an earthly command—and the attitude: “with fear and trembling.” In other words, severity, seriousness. This is respect and reverence. You fear offending. You fear enough to tremble.

Now who are you fearing and trembling here? Are you afraid of your boss? Are you trembling at your boss? No. Your fear and trembling is related “to Christ”—at the end of the verse. It’s because you’re a slave of Christ. It’s because you’re called to do the will of God. It’s because your service is to the Lord. It’s because your reward, verse 8, is from the Lord. It’s because both your Master and your master’s Master are God.

So you’re always bypassing the human authority. So you have the right action (obedience), you have the right perspective (it’s earthly), you have the right attitude (fear and trembling), which means you deal with reverence—that is part of what it means to think of your job as a sacred trust. And there’s a fourth thing to think about, and that is the integrity of it, “in the sincerity of your heart.” Honest, upright, undivided, conscientious, loyal commitment to the work that you’ve been called to do and placed into by Christ.

And then the motive: “as to Christ,” verse 5. This is a crucial point. Everything goes directly to Him. There’s no such thing as a secular job. Your life as a believer is constantly an act of worship, and it is to demonstrate the transformation of the gospel in every relationship. Consider it you’re serving Christ.

Now Paul expands on that verse in the next verse, verse 6, “not by way of eyeservice.” You need to have the right diligence so that you’re not simply doing what you do when you’re being watched, “as men-pleasers.” You’re not a man-pleaser; your boss is not the one you are to please—that’s explicit. That’s what people in the world do: They do enough to please the boss when they’re watching.

Well I have good news for you. Your boss is always watching. Here your boss misses nothing, nothing, not a split second of your life. So there has to be deep integrity as you do what you do as to Christ, and you do it as slaves of Christ, and then the end of verse 6, “Doing the will of God from the heart.” That’s the same thing as “sincerity of . . . heart” at the end of verse 5. Sincerity of heart, and then in verse 6, “doing the will of God from the heart.”

The heart is the idea that this is deep in your convictions. Your obedience, your Christian walk in the workplace comes from the heart. Verse 7, he says, “With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,” which is another way of saying what he said in verse 6. “With good will”—eager anticipation, anxious willingness. Have an eagerness to work “as to the Lord,” because He is the one that you serve, “not . . . men.” Every single piece of work you do, every hour of every day, every job, every task, you do for the Lord. That’s what it’s saying.

The money is never your motive; the joy in serving the Lord is always your motive. And if you follow that path, and you have the great incentive in verse 8, “Knowing that whatever good thing each one does,” as known by the Lord, “this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.” When it comes to eternal rewards, there are no ranks, OK. Not going to be any bosses. There aren’t going to be vice presidents, presidents. There are not going to be any managers, and not going to be any people at the bottom of the totem pole. That’s not an issue at all.

When the Lord lays out the reward, when He gives back, it’s not going to be based on the rank you had and position you had. The great incentive: He will reward you. He’s the final paymaster. He’s going to cut your eternal check. In Revelation 22, Jesus said, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” And there’s no strata in heaven, there’s no levels; it’s just the reward for what we did faithfully for Him. So you’re working for the Lord. You have a sacred life, you have a sacred calling, and your work is sacred.

Now verse 9. We have a few minutes left to talk about the submission of the masters. And you say, “Well, they only got one verse.” No, not really, because it says this: “And masters, do the same thing to them.” Now there’s real submission.

What do you mean, “Do the same thing”? Work with your employees “with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as [if you were working for] Christ, not by way of eyeservice,” not something superficial, “but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service” to the slaves, “as to the Lord, not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.”

He doesn't have to list it all again because it's the same list, the very same list: You do the will of God, you do it from the heart, you render service to the Lord, you demonstrate fear and trembling, sincerity of heart, you do it as unto Christ, and you do it in anticipation of His eternal reward. And oh, he adds one thing in verse 9: "Give up threatening"—stop the intimidation, no place for threatening, any kind of verbal abuse—"knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there's no partiality with Him."

So what is basically demanded of the slave is demanded of the master. There's still an authority relationship there, submission relationship in the function. But behind the function God is evaluating only how each one served Him. And on that impartial basis, as far as any earthly stratification is concerned, God gives an eternal reward.

I don't know if you think about this. You may have thought that you're getting a reward for coming to church. Yeah, I think that's part of it. But your real reward is going to be based on your work. And not necessarily your work for the kingdom, although certainly that is that you're laying up treasure in heaven, but you serve the Lord in your job. And how faithfully you did that, and took the difficulties that came, and didn't rebel but committed yourself to a faithful Creator, and leave the final paycheck to Him, that's going to determine your eternal reward. You don't want to think lowly of your job; you want to think so highly of your job that you understand it is a way in which God has designed for you to earn eternal rewards—how you do it, both as a manager and an employee. Everything in life is sacred for those who belong to Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, this is so practical. Help us to be able to make application, even starting tomorrow. Help us to understand that we're slaves of Christ. We do everything we do as to the Lord. We serve Him. He is our Master. And our job is simply an earthly, temporal reference point where we can put on display our love for Christ. How we work demonstrates how much we love Christ. Help us to understand that.

Discontent, laziness, disloyalty, stealing, being disgruntled, unthankful is service rendered to the Lord, and as such would be sin. We wouldn't consciously treat Christ that way, but we have been told that how we function in the relationships that are very intense and very often long lasting—in our work—is service rendered to the Lord, for His glory, for our eternal reward, and so that the gospel will be put on display by our contentment and our joy. Help us to live that way, and thus adorn the doctrine of the gospel, in Christ's name. Amen.

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