

Be An Excellent Worker

Ephesians 6:5-8

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. (Ephesians 6:5-8 (NASB))

Over these past few weeks, as we have studied through these blessed scriptures, it has become so very obvious that God is not only intensely interested, but is also intimately involved in every detail and every venue of our daily life. And as these scriptures clearly tell us, with God, all things have to do with relationships, the relationship between husband and wife, the relationship between parents and children, and now, here in these words, the relationship that we are to have with our employer.

And in these relationships, God has made it clear to us that such relationships are always accountable back to Him, Personally.

Today, as we spend our time examining God's desires for us regarding our employment, may I begin by suggesting that most Christians probably have no idea how very important our relationship with our employer is to God, but it is! And God makes that plain and clear to us here in these words by repeating on five separate occasions that our work for our employer is directly accountable to Him.

Note as we begin, that God is intensely concerned about our response of "obedience". "Obedience"! It is so very clear throughout all these scriptures that "obedience" is one of the most desired and most "noble" of all our behaviors, beginning first in our response to God and then on out to any and all those that He has placed in authority over us.

And "obedience" is clearly one of those "free will" choices that God leaves within the hands of man, a matter of "choice" on our part, and "obedience" never seems an easy choice for us to make. There are always so many other competing ideas and philosophies and choices that get in the way. And too often, the most ardent of "antagonists" to our response of obedience comes from within our own souls, and that from "pride". "Pride"!

As we have said on other occasions, “pride”, “our personal ego”, “our claim to our right to our self” is without equal as the most powerful force for evil that we will ever deal with, especially because of its ever-presence within us. And “pride” is never satisfied to live alongside other influences within us. Pride must always dominate.

We have only to consider the very first ever choice made by man, that of God’s first children, Adam and Eve. Their instruction towards obedience was so very simple and limited, with only one “law” restricting their behavior, just one. “Don’t eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”. Every other thing and opportunity was permitted, except that one thing.

And is that not the way of our souls. We can have ten thousand other things that are permitted us, with only one thing that is forbidden, and we will be continually tantalized by the one forbidden thing until we eventually give in to it.

With Adam and Eve, we don’t know how long they remained faithful and obedient, perhaps a long, long time. But by them eventually making that one seemingly “small exception” everything changed, and they and every other person who would be born of their seed were eternally changed by it.

And again, their failure was rooted within this one concept, “obedience” or “disobedience” and was brought to fruition by the one fatal flaw of “pride”.

Satan, their tempter, understood it all too well. “Pride” had also been his downfall, bringing on disobedience. And unfortunately, pride loves to develop friends and followers to its ways. And satan did exactly that, first with a third of the angels, then Adam and Eve, and now you and me.

But why am I bringing Adam and Eve, and the devil, and “ego”, and “pride”, into this consideration that God has placed before us in this passage about “employment”? It is because “ego” and “pride” will most always be the determining factor as to whether or not you and I remain obedient in the matters of our employment.

May I say that again . . . “ego” and “pride” will most always be the determining factor as to whether you and I remain obedient in the matters of our employment!

Here, God is using the circumstance of “slave” and “master” rather than of simple employment. But the concept of obedience remains the same. Yes, those “masters” actually “owned” the “person” of the slaves, and such ownership is not present within our employment today. But with either and both of those circumstances, no man ever

actually owns another person's soul. And God makes that clear here in these first few words of our scripture passage,

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh,
(Ephesians 6:5)

Owners are masters over the fleshly bodies of their slaves, but never masters over their souls. And such must also always be kept so in matters of simple employment. Workers must never allow a condition to exist where the employer has sway over their souls.

Granted yes, our employer's control may at times really seem that invasive and overpowering, but it must never be allowed to truly be so. There is One and One only who is permitted to be a true owner of our soul and that is God alone.

But what are we to do when our employers become over-bearing such as took place with the Egyptian task-masters with the Hebrew people? If our employer becomes so unreasonable in their demands of us, are we ever allowed to be "disobedient"?

For you and me, our first option can always be for us to "quit" and walk away from our over-bearing employer. But do we ever have a "right" to be disobedient to them while we remain their employee?

During the "industrial revolution" of a century ago, disobedience was the path taken by workers in some of the labor industries, the steel mills, the railroads, the automobile factories, the coal mines and other similar employments. Those men believed that they really needed to keep their jobs, but also felt as if they were being mistreated by their employers. And they chose the route of binding together and forming "labor unions" to represent them.

A question . . . As we consider God's admonition towards "obedience" to our "masters", is the mandatory arbitration that "unions" require a form of "disobedience" by the workers? Does that violate these commands given here?

So many employers across our nation are already "union shops" and to work for those employers requires that all workers in that shop be a member of a union, giving a worker no choice if they work for those employers.

These and other factors like them can complicate our understanding of how to apply God's guidance from these scriptures. But we must always be diligent in our efforts, because we are ever and always accountable to Him.

May I read these words for us again? Verse 5 . . .

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. (Ephesians 6:5-8 (NASB))

May I paraphrase this text for us, substituting the word “workers” for the word “slaves”? “Workers, be obedient to your employers, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, just as you would be towards Christ Himself, and not just because your employers are watching you, so as to please them while they are watching, but as obedient servants to Christ, doing the will of God with all your heart. And workers, do not do your work “grudgingly”, but be of “good will” and “cheerful” toward your employers as you serve them, just as you would be if you were working directly for Christ Himself and not for men, because in fact, you truly are working for Christ; and it is Him who will reward you for your service.”

. . . Consider some of these first words from the Lord, “workers, be obedient with fear and trembling”. Those words, “fear and trembling” have to do with “reverence and respect”. And for the most part, that is a strange concept to the average worker of today.

We seldom hold our bosses in high esteem. Yes, we fear getting fired when we do something wrong, but that is more of a self-centered fear than having to do with reverence towards our boss.

It seems more often that our culture promotes “resentment” towards authority rather than fear and trembling. But may I give us warning! Here in these words, respect for our masters and accountability to God for our behavior are too closely intertwined together for us to get careless about respect and fear and trembling. Because note these next words!

5 . . . 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. (Ephesians 6:5)

Note that connection that God makes here, relating our response to our boss as being no less than the response we would have to Christ Himself.

Consider this closely folks, and recall that the Lord Jesus knew every thought that each of the people around Him was thinking. And such is also true with you and me. Each

and every moment, Christ knows our every thought. He knows if we have “sincerity of heart” or if our response is half-hearted, even resentful. And He takes our response as being “directly in His own face.”

And just as we must want the work of Christ to be successful throughout the earth, so also should we want our employer to be very successful. And our work should be sincere to accomplish their success. And we should take great joy in knowing that we have done our part to make our employer successful. These words again . . .

5 . . . 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. (Ephesians 6:5)

And this “sincerity of heart as unto Christ” is carried on forward within the next words “not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

Folks, may I give this the emphasis that it deserves. God is being so very clear to us here, “the way you respond to your boss should be no less reverent and respectful and obedient than the response you would have to Christ Himself.”

And I must confess that in that regard, I have personally spent much of my work life in disobedience to God. Yes, I worked hard, and for the most part did a reasonably good job, but on this count, I often failed miserably. And even if my bosses thought well of me, God knew my thoughts and I have no doubt that God will have a lot to say to me about it when I stand before Him in judgment.

Yes, I have repented and I am saved and going to heaven. But God will still be talking to me about my behavior. Why do I say that? Listen!

14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14 (ESV))

No, I will not be punished for those things because I am saved and have repented of them, but these words are clear, God will still bring them into our conversation during judgment.

This word “eyeservice”,

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. (Ephesians 6:6)

Folks, “eyeservice” is deceit and manipulation, and neither is acceptable to God. And note the words of verse 7,

7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, (Ephesians 6:7)

This “good will” has a strong sense of “well-intention and cheerfulness”. May I suggest how this “cheerfulness” can be had, even in a stressful job? In our Catechism, the first question is, “What is the chief end of man”, and the answer is to “Glorify God and enjoy Him forever”. That folks is the secret to doing our work “cheerfully” and with “good will”. If we can simply grasp within our soul that our work for men is to be done “as to the Lord”, “for Christ Himself”, then we will do our work well, glorifying Him. And as we glorify Him, He will reward us back with enjoyment and good cheer within our soul. And that is what is being said in this verse 8 . . .

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord. (Ephesians 6:8 (NASB))

Folks, the simple promise from God is that if we will do our work for our employer in an excellent manner, then abundant blessings will flow back to us.

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord. (Ephesians 6:8 (NASB))

These words are a promise with a guarantee from God!

I had reason to share these words with a young friend this past week. He has some disabilities that hinder his being able to do the more complicated forms of work, but he is able to work in a low-level job. There, his boss is not kind to him, and is given to profane outbursts, discouraging my young friend terribly with his berating and belittling comments.

My young friend asked me how he could deal with it. My advice was almost exactly as these words are given, that if he will work hard all through the day, being careful to always be cheerful and to do a good job, as unto the Lord, then God would reward his good efforts by slowly closing the mouth of that unkind man.

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord. (Ephesians 6:8 (NASB))

These words are plain to understand and are a promise from God, that if, and as, we do our work in an excellent manner, cheerfully and with a good attitude making our employer successful, then the Lord Himself will reward our efforts.

So then, my prayer for each of us is that God will open the eyes of our hearts as we go through all the activities of daily life, and especially as concerns our workplace, and that we will be able to truly realize and recognize God’s personal involvement in all that

we do, that yes, we do work for men, but our real contract is between us and Christ Himself; that if we will do our work for Him, then He will bless us and reward us beyond measure! I'll close with these words from Colossians 3 . . .

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily (from the soul), as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. (Colossians 3:23-24 (NASB))