

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] In your scripture sheet, we are now into Ephesians chapter 6, and we have just begun a consideration of verse 5, Servants be obedient to those that are your masters according to the flesh.

And these servants were not hired hands, they were slaves. And slavery in the Old and New Testament time was radically, radically different from the slavery with which we are historically familiar that was practiced here in the United States during the 19th and 20th century, 18th and 19th century.

In the first place, slavery in the Bible had nothing to do with skin color. In fact, most of the slaves were of the same skin color as the person who owned them.

And almost all of the slavery in biblical days was related to economics. A person became a slave because they had debts that they could not pay, and they would work it off, if you will, under the direction of the master, the one to whom they owed the money.

And it would be an agreement as to how long they would have to work for them. The maximum under Hebrew servanthood was seven years.

[1 : 30] You could not require a Hebrew slave or servant to be in your service for more than seven years. Then you had to set them free. And in the year of Jubilee, which would come around every 50th year, then all of the slaves were automatically set free regardless, just because it was the year of Jubilee.

The Apostle Paul, in a number of places, refers to himself as a bondservant or a bondslave, which is a different category altogether. This is what was realized when someone would be working off what they owed to their master, and they would fulfill the obligation so that the debt is paid, but they would go to the master and make an appeal to him to be a bondservant.

And it had, of course, be an agreement between the servant and the master. And if he agreed to it, then they would have a public ceremony, and the whole towns would gather together, usually at the gate where all these businesses were transacted.

And the elders of the gate would be there, and the townspeople would be there. And the servant would put his earlobe against the doorpost of the door, and the master of the servant would take an awl and bore a hole in his earlobe, just like the ladies today have their pierced earrings.

And then he would insert a little gold ring in that, and that identified that person as a bondservant.

That meant he was a servant who was obligated to the master, but he fulfilled his obligation, and he was free from it.

[3 : 21] However, out of devotion and care to the master, he wished to voluntarily remain as a servant of the master.

And the master then, of course, was obligated to provide room and board and whatever else he needed. That elevated him from the position of a servant to that of a bondservant.

A bondservant was a voluntary servant. That's what the apostle Paul meant when he said he is a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

He was a willing servant of him. And what's more, he considered a privilege to be in that position. So here he is talking about not bondservants, but just regular servants.

And the whole idea of slavery back in these days was radically different. As I mentioned, it was usually an economic thing. One could become a slave because he had a debt he could not pay, and they didn't have anything as a debtor's prison that will come along later in Europe.

[4 : 29] But he would voluntarily assign himself. And you remember, well, you don't remember. I don't remember either, but we've got history. And that is there were a number of Europeans, particularly that would come through the English court in Great Britain, who would have debts that

they could not pay.

And rather than be assigned to a debtor's prison, which is very common, which also meant you didn't have any way of earning any money, and you never could pay the debt when you're in prison. But they had often were given a choice that you could go to the New World and sign on as a slave or as a servant in the New World.

And a number of people came from Great Britain into the colonies under the authority of someone else who literally owned them, and they would have to serve them until their debt was paid.

And, again, as I said, it had nothing to do with skin color. In fact, almost all of these were white. So that was something that existed in the colonies in the 1700s.

[5 : 39] And, of course, we know that when the slave trade actually began, because that, too, was an economic thing, it was not only cheap labor, it was virtually free labor. So that was what we were dealing with then.

Dave? I'm just curious, when did men and women start exchanging wedding bands? Because if you get somebody who's wearing a wedding band like this, is that like you're a bondservant to your spouse?

Well, yeah, actually, it's interesting you bring that up, because in the series that I'm doing now on Marriage on the Rock, I'm working on the 12th volume, and I'm dealing with the issue of couples living together without marriage.

And one of the things that I'm dealing with in this series is, what is it that actually constitutes marriage?

Because it's different in different cultures. And is there a commonality that unites all cultures in the marriage union?

[6 : 44] And in my research, I've only been able to come up with a couple of things. But the example that we have, and I think probably certainly the earliest and the most authoritative example we have, is what took place in the garden when God presented Eve to Adam.

And really, what marriage boils down to, more than anything else, is the creation of a oneness between two people.

And what God did when He brought Eve to Adam, and gave her him, He constituted a union of the two, and that's what is the commonality for marriage.

It's the two becoming one. And wherever these things called marriage takes place, whatever the culture requires, whatever the tradition is, and there are so many different ones, you go to Africa, it's one kind of tradition that they have, and it even differs there from country to country, same way with Europe, same way with the United States, the South and North, etc.

But there is one thing, there is one commonality, and that is, there is a public recognition, and when people gather together to constitute the witness band of what is taking place, it is effectively an announcement to the whole community that this man and this woman who are being united in marriage are now unavailable to everybody else.

[8 : 32] They are pledged to each other. That constitutes the marriage, and there is to be no introduction of a third party. In other words, both of them are taken out of circulation insofar as potential for a maid is concerned.

And the whole public recognizes that, and I think that commonality may be the only one that exists in all of the cultures. And then, of course, the water is muddied when you get into multiple marriages with multiple wives, because that's a different situation.

But anyway, I'm too far afield now from that. So let's get back to our text, if we may. This is dealing with the attitude. Yes? One other thing, getting this off track in a different direction, but I just recently learned that with slavery, with black slavery, there was much more of it in Africa than there ever was in our colonies.

And it was the same skin color. Blacks, you know, slaves of other blacks. Yes. And many more slaves stayed on the continent of Africa than ever came across to North America.

Yeah. The slavery thing, the slavery thing knows no bounds, either color, economics, or whatever. It's, it's worldwide. And it went out in the centuries before it ever came over here.

[9 : 54] Yeah. And I remember, I remember reading accounts of the, the white slavers with their slave ships would come in to African ports.

And they would contract with some of the local African chieftains who then took up the task of going out into the, the bush and corralling and rounding up their fellow Africans and bringing them to the

shore and selling them to the white slavers.

So, there's all kinds of blame and responsibility to go around. I don't know that there is anything more inherently evil than for one person to have another person as their property.

And even a husband and wife, when they marry, they do not become each other's property as such because they maintain their own individuality and their own identity.

They do not lose their personhood because they get married. But in slavery and especially the way that it is traditionally practiced and the way it was practiced here in the United States is simply an evil of indescribable proportions that one person could own and have life and death authority over another human being.

[11:32] I can't think of anything more contrary to biblical teaching than that. But we know that's what we were dealing with for quite some time. So, when he's talking about servants here, Coney Bear renders it bondsman, Montgomery calls it slaves, and this is the way it's rendered in the original.

It's douloi, and it literally means slaves. And says that this is the attitude with which they are to be a servant or a slave.

Be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ, not with eye service as men pleasers.

Now, the Apostle Paul has been accused of a number of things and neither of which are actually true. First of all, the feminists have accused Paul of being a woman hater, and they get that from his attitude regarding women teaching men, and he says that women are not to be in a position of spiritual authority over men.

Well, for some feminists, that automatically makes Paul a woman hater. and yet at the same time, they completely ignore what I've referred to as Paul's bombshell when he delivered it to the first century Christian community that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church in a sacrificial way.

[13:13] I've never heard a feminist quote that verse, but it is there and it gives the true attitude that the apostle Paul had under the inspiration of the Spirit of God that a husband is to love his wife in a sacrificial way whereby he is willing to meet her needs at the risk of not meeting his own.

In other words, a husband who is worthy of the title will always put his wife and her interests ahead of his own. And that's exactly what Jesus Christ did for the church and he is our model.

So a husband is to be self-sacrificing for the needs of his wife and she is to find in him the security and the comfort and the love and the care like the church found in the person of Christ.

And that's the model that is given. We saw that earlier in Ephesians 5. We'll not go back there. But here he is talking about the attitude, the inner attitude with which one is to serve a person to whom he is obligated.

And the text says not with eye service as men pleasers. 20th century New Testament renders very well, not only when their eyes are on you. And actually what we have here is really a good formula for the kind of employee an individual ought to be to the person who signs their paycheck.

[14:47] And that means we are to provide an honest day's labor for an honest day's pay. And it means that we are to perform our responsibility in a way that is marked with integrity not only when the boss is watching.

And that's what the text means when it says not with eye service as men pleasers. In other words, there are a whole lot of people who are employed who will do a good job as long as the boss is standing over them watching.

But when the boss leaves, then it's goof off time. And that's exactly what the text is talking about is that not only when you are under their scrutiny and some employees, some employees are described by their employers, well, he works well, but only under close supervision.

And if the boss isn't going to be there for the day, then the man may take advantage of the boss's absence to just do as he pleases or shrug off on the work or whatever.

And what Paul is saying is that we are to be people of integrity who will fulfill our responsibility whether the boss is there looking at us or not, we are to have the kind of character that is self-obligating to do what we are paid to do and do it to the best of our ability, regardless of whether we're being watched or not.

[16:28] So, not with eye service as men's pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. Someone has put it this way, we should fulfill our work obligations and do what is assigned to us and what we have agreed to do, just as if Jesus Christ was signing our paycheck.

And think of it in those terms, and it brings forth a new kind of responsibility and attitude toward the work. Work, work is one of God's greatest blessings, because in work and labor, man is not only able to produce, but he is able to satisfy his own need of self-worth and contribution and value and a sense of accomplishment.

There is a sense of satisfaction that is gained only from the expenditure of one's labor, labor, and it cannot be gained through any other way.

It is, work is man's noble endeavor, but you know, in our fallenness, we've lost track of that. We've reversed the biblical model.

The biblical model is you labor six days a week, and then you take a day off. That's the biblical model.

[18:05] And the day off of rest and relaxation is designed to fortify and equip you and refurbish you to start the new week again on Monday and do the same thing over.

And today, we pretty much reverse that. What a great many people do, especially in Western culture, is we work five days because we have to in order to enjoy the weekend.

And we stretch the weekend, and it's two days, and that's Saturday and Sunday, not just Sunday like it used to be. So, we work to get the two days off rather than use the two days to refurbish us for being able to work.

So, it's almost like work has become a dirty word, and it has lost its appeal in the minds of many.

And the name of the game for a lot of people, let's face it, is see how much money you can get for doing the least amount of work.

That's the mentality that we're in today. And it affects productivity and everything else. But, you know, fellas, it's just one more example of how man in his fallenness takes virtually everything God has provided, and we twist it.

[19:28] we turn it around, we make it the opposite of what it was intended. That's what human fallenness does. Dana? Bill Cosby, in one of his routines, said it one way, part of what you said, not the last part.

So, I've been an employer, I've had people working for me, and they just can't wait that they work for Friday, and then they come back Monday and they look a lot worse than they were on Friday. all too often. Brian? I think what Paul's also saying here is that there's a difference between maturity and youthfulness.

The young man doesn't know how they work, whereas the mature man has learned how they work. That's true. So, when you're dealing with it, Paul is dealing with the mature man, and representing that, but understanding that the youthfulness, such as Timothy, when he's writing Timothy, that the need for that instruction and that direction, that he might be able to do that.

Right, yeah. Yeah. The distinction between those two, even if you're a servant. Yeah, absolutely. Appreciate that. One thing we haven't mentioned is pride in a lot.

[20:45] Yeah, there is. A sense of satisfaction of accomplishment that comes only through labor. Yeah. That comes through youthfulness learning what it is. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The employer sometimes has to make the atmosphere such that you take pride in what you're doing.

Right, yeah. But even more so, you have to take pride in what you're doing, even if the employer doesn't. Yeah. There's a lot of things involved. Roger? You guys don't know Charlie Hinkle, but he was a man's man.

I looked up growing up. Put a man and a boy to work together and they'll get something done. Put two boys together and they'll have fun. Yeah, two boys will find a way to have fun.

You know, you're right, absolutely. You know, the key, I think, one of the most valuable keys, if we can keep this in mind, is that if an employee wants the ultimate in job security, all he needs to do is find ways to make himself valuable to his employer.

[22:00] And that's really the key. Find ways to make yourself valuable to your employer. So that if somebody has to go because of economics or downturn or whatever, it won't be you.

Oh, I can't let so-and-so go. I need him too much. He contributes too much. And that's real job security. And that's getting it the decent way rather than simply having the union protection so that your job is secure no matter how lousy you are as a worker.

Yes? A friend of mine, Steve Green, retired from Navistar, and at one point he hated that job. He hated the company. Yeah. And an old-timer came up to him one time.

He said, Steve, instead of working for the company, do your best job for what? Yeah. And Steve said, yeah, I agree with that, but I just can't do that for Navistar.

Steve didn't know what it said. And when he adopted that philosophy, he's very close. Yeah. Well, it does make a difference. Like I said, if you can think in terms of Jesus Christ signing your paycheck, are you still willing to take that paycheck for the work that you did and that you feel you have it coming, an honest day's work for an honest day's pay?

[23 : 23] Any other thoughts? Anybody? Yeah, Dagwood and Mr. Dithers, they are a pair, are they not?

Okay. Not with eye service as men's pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart. And there is the key.

The heart is a reflection of the attitude. When your heart is not in it, that will be reflected in the quality of your work.

And when your heart is in it, that will be reflected. And it makes all the difference in the world. With good will, doing service. From the heart, with good will. From the soul, with good will, rendering service.

With good will, fulfilling your service. 20th century New Testament says, give your service heartily and cheerfully. Not begrudgingly, not in a resentful kind of way, but put your heart into it.

[24 : 33] And by the way, if we do that, if we go about our job with the right attitude, it's amazing how much more quickly the hours fly by, rather than being there in a begrudging kind of way.

It's a mindset, to be sure. Do it as to the Lord, and not to men. And there is the key.

When you consider the Lord is the one who's provided you with this job, and you do it as unto him. Knowing, not thinking, or suspecting, or hoping, but knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord.

And my motto for that is, God will not be in the debt of any man. God will not allow us to go lacking for something we deserve by way of reward or recognition.

He will honor that. God will not allow a man to owe him anything. And he is not a demanding taskmaster.

[25 : 48] His yoke is easy. His burden is light. He does not make unreasonable demands upon his people. And we can be grateful for that. The same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond, that is, whether he is a slave, or whether he is free.

And this is a really peculiar kind of situation because in the first century that Paul had to address these churches to whom he wrote, these congregations were made up of slaves and free men, both.

And this is one reason that Paul is addressing those in the congregation of Ephesus who are slaves. He's pointedly telling them what their attitude is to be.

And in the first century, there were congregations that were mixed and made up of slaves and of free men. And that meant in virtually every congregation, you're going to have people who are of ability and of means, and you're also going to have people who are very poor, poverty stricken, living at that line.

And this brings forth then again the need for the congregation to be a caregiver and a provider. One of the principal responsibilities of the church.

[27 : 21] And this has been largely lost sight of today in our culture because we've got welfare, we've got food stamps, we've got all kinds of things. But in the first century, one of the cardinal rules and principles for the church was to care for the widows and the orphans.

And let me tell you, that involved finances, that involved shelter, that involved provision and food and everything else. And it was a real communal thing whereby the church accepted that responsibility and those who were people of means in the congregation gave to the support of them.

And you recall that incident back in Acts chapter 7 and the hubbub that developed over the meeting the needs of the widows. And some of them were not being addressed.

And that brought about the appointment of deacons. And a deacon simply is one who served.

That's the meaning of the word. The deacon was one who served.

And they were called waiting on tables. Well, these guys weren't waiters. They didn't go around with a towel over their arm going from table to table. What would you order? But the waiting on tables meant that they were caring for the physical needs of the people in the congregation who were

unable to care for their own.

[28 : 42] There was no welfare system. There were no food stamps. Those things didn't even exist. They were all dependent upon one another. And it was, frankly, it was an extremely efficient system.

Because, and here's a big item, because in the way that a church was able to help widows and children and the poor, they also had a built-in opportunity for accountability.

And in a government program, that does not exist. The provision for whatever it is that the government is providing, whether it's aid for dependent children, whether it's welfare, whether whatever it might be, there is no way that the government can efficiently and effectively hold the recipients accountable for what they give them.

In other words, they give a man, the county, the state, the feds can give a man \$200 in food stamps.

But they cannot keep him from selling those \$200 worth of food stamps for \$50 and going and buying lottery tickets with it. They can't do that.

[30 : 05] They can't control that. There's no accountability. And this goes on. But when you're dealing in a smaller situation like in a church, there are questions that can be asked and there is accountability that can be maintained because you're doing it on a much smaller level and you're doing it on a face-to-face personal level.

So the possibility for efficiency, effectiveness, the dismissing of waste and fraud and abuse is minimized.

But in the kind of thing we've got with the state and the feds, it's impossible. And we've got what we've got. Pat? I've always thought that where we really messed up God's plan was back then the church was people to just follow Christ.

And then man came along and we put into all these different denominations. And when that happened, now we can't do what they were able to do back then. You're so right. Absolutely. Why churches can't get that and get back to that type of thing?

You might just don't understand. Well, in the first place, it would involve a massive, massive re-education process that first of all they would have to be willing to undertake.

[31 : 22] And I don't see that as happening. And then you'd have to have government cooperate with that. And of course, you know, it's just the thing has become so monstrous and so huge that it's just out of control.

Yes. We talked earlier today about how society has changed. And another way society changed is back in those days, everybody knew each other.

Everybody, you grew up and you died with the same friends and family around too. Society is so mobile now that we don't know each other the way we did back then. We've lost some of that accountability to do that.

Yeah, and the interstate has contributed a lot to that. Plus, probably nothing has contributed more to the alienation of families more than employment because so many jobs, when kids graduate from high school or graduate from college and they're looking for a job, they get an interview with this company and the first question they're asking is, would you be willing to relocate to Seattle, Washington?

You know, well, if you want the job, very often, you're going to take it. So, that plus the interstate highways has really divided families and there was a time, there was a time when, when grandchildren and children and grandparents were available to each other and aunts and uncles were available to each other and cousins were available to each other.

[32 : 52] But in this culture, so many are fractured and scattered and I know we've got telephone and we've got the internet, but that's not the same. Not the same as being together. So, that's just part of the price that we are paying for what is called a modern society.

Well, guys, we've dealt with a number of issues here. I can't say we've solved anything. We've described a few things, but appreciate your participation.