

**Discovering our purpose  
The master-slave relationship  
(Eph. 6:**

**Intro: If you're into bumper-sticker philosophy, you've probably seen the axiom, "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." For a vast portion of the workforce, that's the best reason they can muster for going to the job each day. According to one poll, only 43 percent of American office workers are satisfied with their jobs. In Japan, the figure dips to 17 percent. In the first century, Christian slaves had even less reason to be enthusiastic about their work. But Paul gave them a way to grasp a glimpse of glory amid the grind. He wanted them to "adorn the doctrine of God," that is, to show the beauty of their faith in Christ by how they work (Ti. 2:10).**

**In the Roman empire there were many slaves. I've read estimates of 6 million. It is clear that among them there were Christians who were slaves and Christians who owned slaves. The apostles did not tell masters to let their slaves go free. They did not tell the slaves to run away or rebel against their masters. They told them how to conduct themselves in such a way that the arrangement itself was transformed into one of mutual respect and consideration.**

**Perhaps some in our society would reject the notion that we could compare the servant-master relationship to the employer-employee relationship. Clearly an employee is not a slave for his boss; but he is under his authority on the job. The slave may not have entered his relationship voluntarily and certainly an employee does. However, the basic principles of authority and mutual respect that govern the master-slave relationship are applicable to the employer-employee relationship.**

**To the Slave**

**Be obedient to master's according to the flesh**

**Be obedient—the same word we studied earlier “to arrange under and to listen”.**

**“according to the flesh”—It is good to remember that whomever you find yourself under, and however difficult life is under their authority, it is only in body that that is the case! In our spirits we are always the servants of God!**

With fear and trembling. These are the words from which we get “phobia” and “tremor”. They suggest genuine respect. In the sincerity of your heart. Singleness. Without duplicity we might say, thus sincere.

As to Christ

Paul enobles the most mundane tasks of life. Each of them is to be engaged in as if we were servants of the

Lord. We look past our immediate overseers to Christ who rules over our spirits. Cf. this theme running through this whole section. 5:21; 5:22, 6:1; 6:5

A significant and often overlooked way that we serve God is in our everyday tasks. Martin Luther understood this when he wrote, "The maid who sweeps her kitchen is doing the will of God just as much as the monk who prays -- not because she may sing a Christian hymn as she sweeps but because God loves clean floors. The Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."

Not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers. The idea is that we do not do a better job when someone is looking because we want to please men; or to let down a bit when no one is looking. God always sees us!

A retired friend became interested in the construction of an addition to a shopping mall. Observing the activity regularly, he was especially impressed by the conscientious operator of a large piece of equipment. The day finally came when my friend had a chance to tell this man how much he'd enjoyed watching his scrupulous work. Looking astonished, the operator replied, "You're not the supervisor?" Howard A. Stein in Reader's Digest

Time theft--deliberate waste and abuse of company time costs the U.S. economy over \$120 billion a year. This loss is three times more than it is for recognized business crime. At some companies 20-40% of employee time is stolen. Office employees are 30% worse than blue-collar workers, perhaps because supervision isn't as close. Workers under 30 are the biggest offenders. Watch out for executives who set bad examples. If the boss is a time thief, employees will be too. Creative Management, in Homemade,

As slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. And so we try to do our work as if it were presented for his approval at the end of the day. My, how that transforms the work place.

The management regrets that it has come to their attention that workers dying on the job are failing to fall down. This practice must stop, as it becomes impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of the staff. Any employee found dead in an upright position will be dropped from the payroll.

## **Render service**

### **With good will as to the Lord, not men**

"With good will"—with cooperative and proper attitude

As to the Lord, not men—Perhaps we might resent the idea of having to serve another man; but the Lord is worthy of such service.

**Knowing whatever good one does will come back from the Lord, whether slave or free.**

There may be times when one may say, "Why knock yourself out for an ungrateful boss?" Good question! Paul says, "You will be paid by the Lord for your work!"  
With that last phrase Paul shows that it does not matter what your position, all must answer to God.

### To the Master

**Do the same things to them.**

**The idea is not of course that the masters must obey their slaves or work for them. It is that the masters have regard for the well-being of his slaves.**

Just as the servant must learn to see Christ where the master is, so the master must learn to see Christ where the slave is! How that would change the work place! The Christian employer treats his employees as if Christ were working for them.

Would you make empty promises to the Lord?

Would you expect the Lord to work for the lowest possible wage?

Would you want the Lord to work under the conditions your employees work under?

What if the Lord was sick or had death in the family, what would you do? What if an emergency situation demanded his help? Would you treat him with compassion knowing that it would cost you in production and expense?

### **Give up threatening.**

In an elevator, "I don't know what makes the boss tick, but I sure know what makes him explode." Orben's Current Comedy

**It is not the angry threats of punishment that bring out the best in us. Harsh supervision makes us tend to cower fearing we will do the wrong thing. But encouragement and appreciation will make us all work harder at our jobs.**

Knowing that:

Their and your master is heaven. We all answer to the Lord.

There is no partiality with Him. The Lord does not play favorites. This may be a warning to the master not to favor one over another. But perhaps it is to say, "The Lord has no respect of persons based on position of people in life". He will reward or punish based on what is right not on what position we have in life.

**Conclusion: All of us can apply these principles. No matter where we are in life, we can treat others with the kindness and respect that is worthy of our calling as Christians. Even on our job we have the opportunity to glorify God!**