

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Your Work Matters To God

Ephesians 6:5-9

1999

Introduction

The last few weeks, we've been studying Paul's application of the Bible's teaching regarding conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ Jesus -- and in particular its expression in mutual submission. We are all to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Paul has applied this mutual submission to the husband wife relationship, the husband's role as servant/leader, and last week, children's submission to parents.

- 1) Wives: Voluntarily submitting to your husbands as to the Lord
- 2) Husbands: Exercising authority with sacrificial, Christ-like love
- 3) Children: Obeying those placed over us by God
- 4) Fathers: Developing our children through training/admonition, not intimidation

Today, Paul takes the principle of submission to authority into our work place. It needs to be stated and emphasized that Paul is dealing with slaves and masters in this passage. In Paul's day, it is estimated that there were over sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire -- approximately one third of the total population. As a result, servants were an intricate part of many households.

So you may ask, what does this have to do with me? I'm neither a master, nor a slave. And I would agree with you. But it is also true that, in seeking employment, we voluntarily sell our bodies and minds to another for a limited period of time. We work out a mutually agreeable relationship, and, within the limits of that agreement, we are slaves to those to whom we sell our time and our freedom. So the issues are exactly the same. The question is, "How should we conduct ourselves toward those to whom we have responsibilities of obedience as it relates to our work?" The principles that Paul lays out in Ephesians 6:5-9 apply to employees and employers in every age, whether in the home, business, or in the state. Paul's instruction is just as relevant in a free market economy as it was in a slave economy

I The Duty Of Employees (5-8)

- A. To **obey** their employer

Obey = It is a military term that means to follow orders.

In this context, it means that Christian employees are under obligation to those who hire them to do what they say. It is really very simple. We are to do what the boss says – we are to obey him.

Now some have difficulty with this kind of obedience. But Paul clarifies that this obedience is to our earthly masters.

Earthly = “According to the flesh”

This is important, because, although the Christian slave or employee is under the authority of their master or boss, ultimately he is under the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ. As scripture says, “... there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” Rom 13:1-2

1. Obey them with respect and fear

Phobos = Fear

Not a fear involving anxiety, but a fear based on reverence for God who is holy -- both in grace and wrath.

Tromos = Trembling

This is not a trembling servility, but a “keen sense of one’s shortcomings with a consequent desire not to fall into any mistake.” John Stott

2. Obey them with **sincerity** of heart

Sincerity = “Singleness of mind”; the opposite of duplicity in thought or action.”

“The Christian employee has one goal before him. He is determined to obey his employer as an expression of his commitment to the Lord. Honesty of purpose and whole-hearted effort must characterize the Christian employee.”

Practical application of respect:

Be punctual -- show up on time!

Have a great attitude!

Come to work prepared to give your best.

Make every effort to bring your employer benefit and success.

Never undermine your employer's authority; employees or patrons.

If you have a problem, go directly to your employer and share it.

Be absolutely faithful and trustworthy!

a. Just as you would obey Christ

First of four similar statements in these 5 verses.

This is our standard and ultimate motivation -- to please the Lord!

3. Obey them with unconditional **integrity**

a. Not only when they're **watching**

Do you know what that means? That means working only when the boss is watching. When he turns his back, you quit working. That is eye-service.

The workplace is rampant with men and women who work hard only when they are being watched -- either to stay out of trouble or to falsely impress the boss. Both are unacceptable for the authentic Christian.

Col 3:22 "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord."

b. But like slaves of Christ doing God's will from your heart

Four times the idea is put forth: never work for men -- work only for God. You can work under a man's direction, but remember that you are working for the Lord, that your daily task is work that he has given you to do, and you do it unto him. What a glory this gives to every task. If you approach your work like this you will never have another dull day. You will never be bored stiff with the routine and humdrum of what you have to do if you recognize that you are doing it with the eye of the Lord upon you, with a desire for his approval, and with the recognition that one day it will be made open and clear to all whether you did it as unto the Lord or unto men.

B. To **serve** their employer

1. Serve them **wholeheartedly**

Wholeheartedly = "An eagerness that does not wait to be compelled."

a. Do everything without **grumbling**

Phil 2:14-15 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ..."

b. Be eager to take initiative

Col 3:23-25 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men

2. Serve them as if you were serving the Lord

"The conviction of the Christian workman is that every single piece of work he produces must be good enough to present to God." Barclay

3. Serve them knowing that you will be rewarded with God's **reward**

Col 3:23-25 "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism."

Your faithful service may go unappreciated or unrecognized on earth, but there is an unfailing reward for faithful service

Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done."

C. To evangelize their employer and co-workers

1. Pray for them

1 Tim 2:1-4 "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

2. Submit voluntarily to their authority

1 Pet 2:13-15 "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men."

3. Love them and do them good

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

4. Be a shining example of Christ

Matt 5:16 "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

We find in Titus 2:9-10 four more responsibilities of employees:

Titus 2:9-10 "Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

5. Try to please them

6. Do not talk back to them

7. Do not steal from them

Employee theft is the #1 source of financial loss for the average company

8. Show that you can be fully trusted

D. Hey, wait a minute!

1. What if I don't think my boss deserves respect?

1 Pet 2:17 “Show proper respect to everyone...”

Biblical respect has little to do with the actions, attitudes or behaviors of the person in authority. It has everything to do with God who has, for His own divine purposes, placed that individual in authority over us. Very much like the wife married to an ungodly man, the employee, by respecting the employer God has placed in his life, submits himself to God’s authority.

2. What if my boss is unreasonable, inconsiderate and harsh?

1 Pet 2:18-25 “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”

3. What if my boss never rewards me or acknowledges my efforts?

Luke 17:7-10 "Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

4. What if my boss is an unbeliever?

1 Pet 2:12 “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

5. What if my boss is a Christian?

1 Tim 6:1-2 “All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them.”

II The Duty Of Masters/Employers (9)

A. To treat their employees with **equity**

Matt 7:12 “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

1. Treat them with respect
 - a. Provide an encouraging & motivating environment for them to work in
 - b. Give full consideration to your employees needs/concerns/ideas
 - c. Treat them fairly and justly
 - d. Never reprimand your employees publicly

2. Treat them with fear of God
 - a. Pay them fairly

Col 4:1 "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."

 - b. Pay them fully and promptly

Lev 19:13 "'Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight."

3. Treat them with sincerity of heart

Matt 20:25-28 "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

 - a. Just as you would Christ

4. Treat them with unconditional integrity
 - a. Not only when others are watching
 - b. Like God's undershepherd, do God's will from your heart

- B. To **esteem** their employees
1. Manage them wholeheartedly with Christ-likeness
 2. Manage them as fellow **heirs** of Christ
 3. Manage them knowing that you will be rewarded

- C. To not **threaten** their employees
- In Paul's day, the master had total authority over their servant's lives. The master, had the legal right to threaten, scream at, and even beat his servant if he felt it was needed in order to get the job done. Vicious cruelty was common among pagan slave owners. The servant, on the other hand, had no recourse – no legal rights, could not speak and could not act against his master without experiencing severe and sometimes deadly results.

- But the Christian employer, he is not to treat his employees in this manner ...
1. Knowing that God is the ultimate **authority**
 2. Knowing that God is not **partial**

God is not impressed by our houses or cars, or by our status in society, or by the fact that others bow down to us, or run our errands for us. He is totally unimpressed by this. He will deal in utter honesty with us, as men before him, regardless of our social standing. Remember that he is the one who said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me," {Matt 25:40b KJV}. Also, "inasmuch as you have not done it unto these, you have not done it unto me," {cf, Matt 25:45 KJV}. He is the one who says, "Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Do good to those who despitefully use you," {cf, Matt 5:44}. Therefore the whole of life is to be lived with the awareness of the Lord's watching you.

Conclusion

As Christians we are to stand apart from the world. How you live in this area has a great deal to do with whether you are living a life worthy of the calling you have received in Christ Jesus

If you are an employee. Be God's servant.

1. Recognize that your job is a gift from God
2. Recognize that your job is God's calling for your life (at least for now)
2. Recognize that your employer is God's handpicked authority in your life
3. Recognize that your job is your Christian mission field
4. Recognize that god will reward you for your faithful service

If you are an employer: Be God's undershepherd.

1. Recognize that as an employer, you are to model the leadership style of Christ
2. Recognize that your employees are entrusted to you by God
3. Recognize that your leadership at work is your Christian mission field
4. Recognize that God will reward you for your faithful service

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