

Ephesians 6:5–9

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[0 : 0 0] that's Ephesians 6 verses 5 through 9 and if you are able please stand for the reading of God's word bond servants obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart as you would Christ not by the way of eye service as people pleasers but as bond servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man knowing that whatever good anyone does this he will receive back from the Lord whether he is a bond servant or is free masters do the same to them and stop your threatening knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven and that there is no partiality with him this is the word of the Lord thanks to God may be seated well good morning I want to add my special welcome to those of you who are in from out of town celebrating the graduation of various members of your own family it is a privilege to have you especially with us here today

I want to title this sermon come Monday morning come Monday morning what does Sunday have to say about my work day what does the book of Ephesians this book which has presented us with nothing less than a cosmic vision of Christ and the church have to say this book that highlights this enormous task of the Lord Jesus Christ to reunite all things in heaven and on earth under himself this book which highlights Jews and Gentiles distinct from one another at enmity at one time with one another now united in Christ this cosmic book of Ephesians does it ever bend beneath the lintel of my own home does it ever walk the hallways of my own workplace and indeed as Jesus has done the largest things in life he is concerned with come Monday morning the presence of this text is a great encouragement to all in the sense that God's activity in Christ gets to the very weeds of our work day you know according to statistical data the average person in this country will end up spending no less than one third of their life at work think about it that's a lot of time 90 thousand hours hours at work if you're graduating here this year as a senior this might come as a shock to you get ready the job you will be taking will most likely afford you two weeks off in the coming year and the rhythm and the weight will emerge work is what we do i well remember my own entrance into the workforce i was 15 three or four days shy of turning 16 and wanted to attend the chicago cubs home opener in early april unfortunately it was a school day i went to my father and mother's bedroom i nudged him in the early hours and said i'd like you to call in to school to let them know i won't be there he said where are you going to be son i said well i'd like to go to the cubs home opener he said well i'm not going to lie for you i said that's all right i'll take my chances and by the way i need five dollars to get those bleacher seats he rolled over back in the 60s and 70s you know the dads had these big fat wallets didn't have much money in them but they were big and fat with something he pulled out a five dollar bill still in bed held it up to me and i grabbed it and turned to go away and realized he was holding to the bill and he said son this is the last five dollars i give you get a job a couple weeks later i was working now some 45 years beyond those early days of work

i'm still working our children are raised they're gone seven grandchildren have emerged people will come to me and lisa and say what are you doing now that everybody's up and gone and our response is well we're working we're still working we're seemingly always working work what does sunday have to do with monday fortunately right here in our text we have the lord presenting us with a profile of a christian at work he doesn't neglect this area that will consume one third of your life we're presented this profile so that we might see what a man or woman of christian faith looks like at work at work and i hope this morning that will inform you or redirect you or provide proper expectations for you regarding work look at verses five through seven the profile laid down in these words bond servants obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart as you would christ not by way of eye service as people pleasers but as bond servants of christ doing the will of god from the heart rendering service with a good will as to the lord and not to man what we see first is that a christian at work is a person who actually follows a chain of command now this is not uh easy on any of us is it but it's right there bond servants obey your earthly masters the notion of fear and trembling is actually in reference to christ bond servants obey your earthly masters with the fear the reverence the reverence the awe the sincere heart that you would give to christ but what is being said is simply this that bond servants obey their earthly masters that a christian worker follows a chain of command that you actually do what is asked of you by those who require it of you now we better stop on that for just a moment there's nothing in the scriptures and specifically with these words like bond servants and masters in our own north american history there's nothing here that would promote or endorse what we have seen in this country in our wicked history with north american slavery you know some people say that the bible doesn't have anything to say about slavery well it does first timothy chapter 1 verse 6 actually prohibits the man stealing of another in order to propagate your own interests it is actually called something that is out of accord with the doctrine of godliness and that north american practice of slavery which was really rooted in two horrific realities namely this servitude according to race and this racial servitude

in perpetual permanence was the undoing of all things there is nothing here that would indicate that the world that our country rose up out of somehow can be justified ratified consolidated according to scriptural teaching when i am speaking about the work we owe our employer i am not speaking about bond servants and masters in any way in which our country has seen that come to fruition you know in the ancient world there were probably 60 million slaves in the roman empire at this time of writing it was the workforce in fact in rome there were three different types of individuals a slave probably one who was captured by war or one who had pledged themselves into servitude for a particular time or length of service there were also freed men and women but they were not roman citizens they would still have been considered servants so you'll even see it later in our own text he'll indicate at the end of verse 8 whether he is a bond servant or is free he's speaking here of classifications within the ancient roman world those who were in servitude having become captive by war or those who had pledged themselves to an employer to work off a debt or those who had promised their labors for a particular thing and length of service all of these things were there some of them had more rights than others you need to know that even in the ancient world there was books like Philemon indicating to us manumission or how one would be freed from this servitude the horrific nature of the activity in our own country was that manumission went out race went in permanence is embedded and entire people are subjugated on the basis of race here

Paul writes about those who are underneath the authority of another and they are to carry on their labor as they would unto Christ in fact there's nothing here even really about at will employment if you strike a contract today I think the one I have with the church leadership you'd have to pull it out and show me again I get about 30 days that I could tell you I have a window and I'm walking or you could have 30 days to say no here's your window you are walking that there's this there's this nature of being employed at will that you and I basically are free men and women to work where we want how we want whether or not we want what's really most appropriately directly related to this text would be somebody that goes to med school and the school says

[13:07] I'm going to pay you your education is free but but we owe you or we own you for a length of time or as I was in high school and playing basketball and one of my basketball colleagues went to college on an ROTC scholarship and he went in and said the military will pay for your full education but on the backside you have to give them four years of your time this kind of arrangement this kind of servitude is actually the closest thing we might have to what we have in the text you need to remember when you read the Bible it was written for us not in every respect written to us I'm trying to highlight some of the differences between this text and us but when it comes to us the principle for the Christian man or woman who serves in employment is that they actually are hard working men and women who follow a certain chain of command who have a certain respect for authority now realize this does not make you this is not meant to make any of us complicit in any wrongdoing the country in which we live is an institutional crisis because institutions of authority have violated all manner of things that would benefit those to whom they're under them whether it be the church with its inappropriate sexual mores among its ministers you're not to obey anything on some ecclesial ministerial notion that is ungodly nor are you to be docile or quiet or not uncovering it think of it in regard to law and think of it in regard to our present country and the authority of institutions and our trust in these institutions we have in our day a self-made crisis because of people in authority wielding the authority in ungodly ways and this text when you're to obey you're to follow you're to be a good soldier as it were does not mean you're to be docile does not mean you're to be unquestioning does not mean you could never object doesn't mean any of those things but generally speaking

Christians are according to this text hard-working men and women who show up every week have a certain respect for authority and they work hard what Paul says next takes it even further though it's what begins to separate Christian workers from the rest of the workforce look again at verse five be with a sincere heart as you would Christ or down there in verse six and seven doing the will of God from the heart that that when you get up and go on Monday morning you not only represent the gospel well by respecting the authority structures of the workplace but you also represent the gospel well by a heart attitude that's in the right place he wants your inside heart as well as your external conformity they are to have sincerity of heart and notice with a good will doing the will of

God from the heart rendering service with a good will these two aspects the sincerity of heart and the good will you bring to those that you work for I was thinking of my father someone once asked him what he did for a living he could have said I'm a basketball coach but what he did say is well let me tell you what my job is my job is to make Lenny Wilkins the best head coach he could possibly be well what was he doing he was indicating his work within his role and his role was to assist one who was over him to becoming the very best that he could be that's good will we often think in the workplace of doing good will to those we're serving beneath us you ever think about doing good will to those that are above you that's a harder thing it's easy to look downstream and figure out how can

I serve those here you start looking upstream to serve their good will it's a difficult thing that takes a heart attitude and notice it's contrasted there in verse six with those who are insincere not by way of eye service as people pleasers you know one of my very first jobs out of college I was working security at a local high school and in the summer we had four day work weeks it was nice they were 10 day 10 hour days I tell you what I learned though I had to cover all the grounds of the high school and I was young and I was ready to go work hard and I did and I found that I was running into some people who really their intent was to do as little work as possible and only when the boss was nearby

I don't know if you find this in your workplace some of these guys actually had their chairs set up with views through the window in such a way as they would see the boss coming from far away so that they would have enough time once he was on the way to rise and get to work and please him as he walked in the door and as soon as he would walk out that door would close their eyes would go to that window got through the other door down I mean it might be two hours of down it was built to work but there are those who will do as little as possible or they will only work in such a way as to visually make themselves look good in front of the boss you know them you see these people just don't want to be these people says

[20 : 14] Paul work hard sincerity of heart with good will toward those you are working for and you do it as unto the Lord see this is the fascinating thing it's three times there in the text as you would Christ verse five but as bond servants of Christ verse six you will receive back from the Lord verse seven you will render your service as to the Lord verse seven see because I know right now you might be asking why why in the world would I do this why when there's an institutional crisis on people of authority why when everyone who seems to have responsibility misuses it why in the world would I in this country of all places where liberty is supreme why would

I subject myself to the notion that I ought to work hard for somebody when I know I'm going to get the wrong end of that stick because you work as though the one you serve is actually Jesus I don't know how else to put it this actually validates the dignity of anything you do at work you can do it to Jesus you can do it unto Jesus I can do it unto Jesus we had a head custodian of 40 years of a suburban church walk some of us through this building in regard to what it would require to keep the place nice for those who enter and that little foyer bathroom

I watched that man get on his knees and show us how to clean a toilet and he got down and he wiped and he showed us exactly when to fold the towel and where and how many times you get a clean thing out of a fold I was amazed and he got up off his knees and he said every time I clean a commode I think that the Lord of Lords the King of Kings might walk into this church and use this restroom and I and that's what I do when I get on my knees in this bathroom unto Jesus that's the only way we're going to do it you do it unto Christ this gives dignity to any job you ever have I worked at a gas station I worked at a car wash

I worked at a landscaper I worked at a church unto Jesus there's no other motivation to hold me or you in this my wife and I were reading our devotional this week from Spurgeon and he picks up on this moment in the book of Chronicles where there were hedge workers then they were dwelling with the king and Spurgeon goes on to write something very interesting to me he said these potters these gardeners had royal company for they dwelt with the king and although among hedges and plants they dwelt with the king there no lawful place no or gracious occupation however mean can debar us from communion with the divine lord in visiting hovels swarming lodging houses workhouses or jails we go with the king in all works of faith we may count on Jesus's fellowship it is when we are in his work that we may reckon upon his smile ye unknown workers who are occupied for your lord amid the dirt and wretchedness and the lowest of the low be of good cheer for jewels have been found among dunhills and earthen pots have been filled with heavenly treasure dwell ye with the king for his work and when he writes his chronicles your name will be recorded this is what sets the

Christian worker apart from anyone else not what they do how they do it and to what end they are doing it think of it this is what exemplifies Christ did you notice where this text comes put your eyes on this text this text does not fall out of the sky it comes within a larger section chapter 5 verse 18 and 19 on what it is to be filled with the spirit the one who is filled with the spirit marries in this way parents in this way works now in this way go back to chapter 5 verse 2 walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us and how did he do it he was a fragrant offering he was a sacrifice to

[26 : 19] God when you work even under ungodly leadership you can exemplify the Lord who lived under our world and its order see this is this is this is other worldly work you actually exemplify Christ the one who was equal with God the one who was God stood on the threshold of heaven plunged to the earth into the womb of a woman and became a man no not merely a man but a servant not merely a servant but a servant under death and when you work in difficult days you exemplify your Lord!

There's no other way they're going to see the cross except through the one you carry! show the world what it looks like to be a dignified person that's able to question authority at every turn rightly where it needs it that's able to undo!

ungodly authority as we see it but also is able to submit to authority as my faith requires me to it I think this is where your opportunity for witness is going to come the problem is you're living in a day when everybody's telling you to not walk in this way but this is where the witness is going to come you say how am I going witness at work I can tell you how serve those in positions of authority by the integrity of your labor by the sincerity of your heart and when they ask you how in the world did you walk out of that meeting and not saying anything you just look at them and say well I'm glad you asked because

I just sat there and quietly kept saying to myself as unto Jesus as unto Jesus as unto Jesus can I tell you about my Jesus well the command comes with encouragement look at verse eight thank God for this knowing that whatever good anyone does this will he receive back from the Lord whether he's a bond servant or is free knowing that I know I've just asked you to do some hard things and the encouragement comes whatever good you do you will receive back from the Lord that's called compensation do you know who's going to compensate you one day the king of kings and the lord of lords you know who's going to bring recompense that is he's going to make up for that which was lacking Jesus the lord who humbled himself in service to you can you meditate on that I mean

I don't know what it is exactly when it says you're going to receive back from the lord but i started meditating early in the morning hours what what are we going to receive well we're going to receive something we're going to we're going to receive commendation well done and from him well done you endured that well well done good faithful servant jesus is going to call you a servant too don't forget that you're going to be my servant he says well done sir you're going to receive commendation you're going to say he's going to say come sit at my table your table his table then he's going to come over your left shoulder and say how many of these brussel sprouts do you want and the king of kings is going to serve you at his table and you know what you're going to say my lord no this is not right this cannot be how is it so how is it that i am so fully eternally joyfully compensated and he's going to say well you gave yourself to me and you walked in an ungodly world in ways that emulated my very character and i'm so glad that we can sit together for eternity it's going to be amazing it's going to be humbling i guarantee you when we are at that table we are all going to want to get out of our chair and serve the king of kings and he's going to stand at the head of the table and say no that's not the way it works here the son of man came to serve i'm going to keep serving and we're going to say i have never been so overpaid in my life your 90 thousand hours of honorable service will one day be recognized well i know that your mind might be done but the text isn't and so i'll be brief but notice verse nine it moves from the profile of the christian worker to the profile of the christian employer or manager or overseer verse nine masters do the same to them and stop your threatening i love the directness of the words he gives to those who are in oversight here you're presented with the profile of the christian who actually has to employ people maybe you oversee people most of us actually oversee people and are overseen by people most of us this whole text matters because we find ourselves in both seats depending upon who we're thinking of but this seat is directed to those who are managers those who are overseers and what he says is very simple do the same to them in the book of colossians he puts it this way in the same kind of text treat them justly and fairly and the word fairly fairness is the word that you and i would get equality so there's no inequality at play in the scriptures on the masters and the service not in the christian church the masters are to treat the service the employers treat the employees the managers those who they manage equally as equals with justice fairly

[34 : 00] they're to be in a sense big hearted they're to seek the good of the employee just as the employee was seeking their good in other words you're to treat the people that work for you the way you want to be treated oh if the world could get this right treat the people that work for you the way you want to be treated i was thinking of studs turkle he's chicagoan oral historian he did a book called work the opening line is great this book being about work is by its very nature about violence violence to the spirit as well to the body it's about ulcers as well as accidents about shouting matches as well as fist fights about nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around it is all above all or beneath all about daily humiliations and the reason work is normally about humiliations is that those who are actually overseeing haven't considered the teaching of the text treat those who are working for you as you would like to be treated this gets down to their pay this gets down to their hours this gets down to their benefits this gets down to providing for them as you would want to be provided for

I worked for a landscaper once man it was hot we'd worked hard and this is one of those firms you know showed up on payday sorry no checks boys i'm dealing with some you know payment issues are coming to me we got people paying me but I got nothing for you man that dude got in this big old pickup truck must have been 60 grand well that was back then might be 60 grand now that thing had that great long diesel sound to it off he went to his nice home i'm single young scraping it no paycheck till he decides he's gonna give it to us I kept thinking to myself as he drove out of sight sell that thing there's my paycheck in it as unto

Jesus I was in a board meeting another organization I run you know inflation's running about 8% right now 10% depending upon what's going on we had we had factored in certain percentages on pay raises they were well beneath all that stuff I had the greatest board in the world these people in business Christian men and women look at this thing and they're like no no this this isn't right I mean you can't you're like you're gonna be lessening their purchasing power based on what's going if you can't figure this out this year you better figure out how to figure out over a two or three year period because this has to be figured out beautiful and notice it says do not threaten too many brow beating bosses they're out there they better not be in here well if they are in here you need to come to Christ so you won't be that by the time you get out there and notice

I'm done just as the command of the Christian worker was not without a word of encouragement the command to the one who oversees the worker is not without a word of warning notice the repetition of the phrase knowing that for the worker we saw it in verse eight knowing that you're going to get a reward but for the one who's overseen verse nine knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven in other words it says by the way let me have you remember you got to serve somebody and you are and he's in heaven that's what everyone who manages someone needs to have in mind when they think of those that work for them Dylan said it best you gotta serve somebody Jesus is Lord he's in heaven all authorities to him if you're working for 90,000 hours work well you will receive your reward if he's asked you to oversee people work well and fairly with the warning that you will arrive before him one day and you want him to say well done servant our heavenly father your word holds us all accountable and it's hard sometimes your word but we know as your followers that if the world is to see a portrait of our crucified

Lord at some level they're gonna ask us about our cross help us to bear it well encourage us with the reward that will come and thank you for warning us lest we mistreat others in any way in Christ's name we pray amen for