

Workers And Supervisors

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[0 : 00] Well, if you'd open up your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 6, we're continuing on and the light is at the end of the tunnel. We're almost done in the book of Ephesians.

Let me pray for us one more time. God, we thank You for the callings with which You've called us to, the vocations that You've given us, the occupations that You've given us, entrusted to us. Now, Lord, I do pray that You would help us to live out our vocations as to Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.

To Ephesians chapter 6, verses 5 through 9. Let me read. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart as you would Christ.

Literally, as to Christ. Not by the way of eye service as people pleasers, but as 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.

[1 : 18] Knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free, masters, do the same thing 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.

Name that movie. Whistle While You Work. Snow White. Snow White.

Got it. This morning, God is going to call us not to whistle while we work, though that may be an outworking of what he's calling us to.

God is calling us to worship him while we work. Even to worship him with our work, with our vocations, with our occupations, whatever that may be.

So, if you are working part-time at minimum wage, if you're a student, if you're a stay-at-home mom, if you're a soldier, or you are a CEO vested with all sorts of authority and raking in the dough, if you are a Christian, you are to work as to Christ.

[2 : 46] Work as to Christ. God wants you, brother, sister, He wills you to live out your occupation as to Jesus.

So, this morning, five points to help you work as unto the Lord, as to Christ. Point number one, Christians work. Point number one.

Just to clarify something, I hope you realize that work is not a result of the fall. Way back in Genesis chapter 1, before the fall, God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue and to exercise dominion over the earth.

God called Adam and Eve to be stewards to work His creation. They're called to tend the garden before the fall, which means this.

Work is good. We were made to work. We were made to steward God's creation. We were made to use our time in ways that advance God's purposes on the earth.

[4 : 20] But then the fall happened. And when sin entered the human experience, toil entered the workplace.

Sin distorts work by making it toilsome, difficult. And sin enters the workplace corrupting work relationships.

In Ephesians 6, verse 5, I'm not sure if you noticed the first word, slaves. And then Ephesians 6, 5, and then 6, 9, we see the word masters.

Slavery is a result of the fall. Slavery is a distortion and corruption of work relationships.

Slavery is a system that makes people into property in order to accomplish several things, one of which is really cheap labor. I'm guessing that when you hear the word slavery, you think about our nation's history in that blight on our nation of hundreds of years of enslaving Africans.

[5 : 42] sins. Now what you need to realize is that there are some differences between the system of slavery in our country and then the slavery system that took place in the first century Greco-Roman world.

They're not identical. But, they are immoral. Slavery is immoral because it denies a human being's rights.

Intrinsic value as an image bearer of God. That's why it's wrong. It objectifies a human being into a means of production.

One first century writer speaking of slaves said that they're nothing more than a living tool. a means to an economic end.

But you know what? God does not see people as living tools. Our great God sees people made in His image as worshipers. Hardwired to worship Him.

[6 : 58] So all this to say, Christians work because work is good. And the distortion of sin has corrupted our work but now by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ God is seeking to redeem our work.

He's looking to rework our work by reworking our hearts. I haven't asked the glaring question yet. I wake up to that song every morning by the way.

Here's the glaring question. Okay, so Ephesians 6 5-9 Paul is talking about slavery masters, right? Why doesn't Paul in this passage call for the abolition of slavery?

Why doesn't he do that? By not doing that is he condoning slavery? Is the apostle saying it's okay to own another person?

No. And here's why. You've got to remember that back when this was written we're just talking a couple decades out from the death and resurrection of Jesus and so Christianity is a really kind of small thing in the Greco-Roman scene and so there was really no political clout whatsoever but even if they had political clout it's not the modus operandi of the kingdom of Jesus God works from the inside out God works from the bottom up God works from small to big God works from individuals into society so what Paul is doing here is he's addressing an immoral cultural issue on an individual level from within the corrupted system and so

[9 : 16] I know that because elsewhere Paul says things like this this is 1 Timothy 1.10 Paul condemns slave traders he condemns enslavers these are people who would enslave people and sell them into slavery to make a buck in 1 Corinthians 7.21 he actually encourages slaves that if they can to acquire their freedom there's this little book in your New Testament called Philemon and Philemon was a Christian and he owned slaves and Paul wrote him a letter because one of his slaves Onesimus had run away and while Onesimus had run away he bumped into Paul Paul shared the gospel with him and Onesimus became a Christian and so Paul writes this letter back to Philemon and he says in 15 and 16 hey I'm going to send this guy back to you and when he comes back realize he's more than a slave to you he is your brother do you see what Paul is doing right there he's saying you're equal in God's sight even though you may have different occupational roles essentially he's saying you were both bought by the same priceless blood of

Jesus I read this quote by a commentator this week Christianity's primary emphasis has always been the transformation of individuals to influence society not the transformation of society to influence individuals the gospel works from the inside out from the bottom up from small to big from individuals leavened through culture and society just because Paul doesn't call for the abolition of slavery doesn't mean he condones it he's working against slavery from the inside out by helping people see that the gospel changes your hearts and therefore changes how you relate to other people so now the question becomes okay how do we take a passage like this written to slaves and masters 2000 years ago and bring it to apply on our vocational situations today how do you do that well here's how first you got to realize it's written to Christians so Paul wrote this letter to Christians in Ephesus 2000 years ago and the majority of the people in this room are Christians today so it's going to get some traction but as far as I know there's no slaves in the room is anybody in the room owned by another person are there any masters in the room someone who owns another person so though it's written to Christians there's still some differences so here's how we're going to apply it here's the key though there is not a slave master authority structure in place in our culture today there is an authority structure in place nonetheless those who are under authority workers and those who are exercising authority supervisors hence the title of the sermon workers and supervisors with that realization

God is calling us this morning to work as to Christ whether you're a worker or a supervisor everybody is going to work as to Christ so now the question becomes how do Christians work as to Christ Christ and so point one Christians work point two now Christians work from within out of our hearts intrinsically motivated in Ephesians 6 5 if you look there where Paul writes with a sincere

heart Paul's not talking about that nine ounce muscle pumping blood through your body right now he's talking about your crank house of why you do what you do when he writes in 6:6 that we are to do the will of

God from the heart he's talking about your inner man your inner being and 6:7 when he writes to render service with a good will he's writing of something that comes from within a Christian he's writing about what motivates you what motivates you to work the way that you do your crank house so what Paul is doing here is motivating us from within which means this no matter wherever you are no matter what time it is wherever whenever no matter what you're doing we can be motivated to work use our time as to Christ we are to have an internalized motivation to work working from the heart as Christians we are to work a certain way because of something we treasure in our hearts and that something of course is

[15:14] Christ did you notice all the references to Jesus in this passage look at verse 9 masters knowing that he who is their master and yours is in heaven that master is Jesus verse 8 those who do good those who do goodwill will receive back from the Lord Jesus verse 7 rendering service with the goodwill as to the Lord Jesus and not to man verse 6 but as servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart as servants of Christ and verse 5 those under authority are to do what those in authority tell them to do out of fear and trembling with sincerity of heart as to Christ it's all about Jesus verse 5 is a really interesting verse you see those words fear and trembling it's rarely if ever used that phrase fear and trembling rarely if ever used of one human being's relationship to another human being it always is used of a person's attitude of heart towards God and so when you read the word fear think reverence think awe an awe that makes you shake that's the word tremble it's a reverence that controls your body it's a reverence that controls all of who you are another word for it is called worship with sincerity of heart that word sincerity actually means singleness of heart integrity of heart oneness unity in undivided focus of heart one heart all in for

Christ with fear and trembling with a sincerity of heart singleness integrity of heart as to Christ it's all about Christ Jesus Christ is all glorious do I have an amen our love for him our reverence for him compels us to live our lives at work our occupations for him so when your supervisor in the flesh tells you to do something you say yes yes and your yes is actually a yes that goes right through your supervisor to Jesus your obedience to your earthly supervisor is obedience to your heavenly master Jesus so the fear and trembling in verse 5 that's not fear and trembling at your supervisor earthly supervisor that's fear and trembling with an integrity of heart at

Jesus how's that for a motivator well how does that happen how does a Christian live for Christ in the workplace well the good news is not that complicated what you really need to do first and foremost is set your heart on Christ that's where it all starts the way you do that is by looking to Jesus in this great book it's called the Bible it's all about him hey when was the last time that you were in a gospel that you were soaking up Jesus like your nose was like right there what would it be like to come to shore with him that country of the garrisons what would that be like I've had the privilege the last couple Sundays to be preaching at our Sunday morning breakfast and I've been preaching out of the gospel of Mark and I'm not sure who's benefiting most

I love it it's like Jesus is awesome he's amazing his authority over nature his authority over the demonic his authority over disease and ultimately over death he's amazing it changes the way I roll every day it changes the way that I use my time believe it or not you know what you don't have to be a preacher in order to have your heart set on Jesus are you having a hard time at work the first place to check is where your heart is in order to work as to Christ from your heart your heart must be freshly awed daily awed by Christ himself Christians work as to Christ from within the heart point three

Christians work according to a higher standard let me ask you a question whose eyes are you most aware of at work your human supervisor's eyes or the eyes of Jesus in verse six God tells us that we are to obey the will of our unseen master in heaven over doing the will of our supervisors on earth I've had a variety of jobs over the course of my very short life variety of jobs my most notable job was I was the assistant maintenance man at an upscale trailer park in the state of

[21:24] New Jersey it was interesting to say the least for a summer but over the course of my life there's one thing I've noticed about a certain kind of worker when the boss is away this guy is leaning on a shovel telling stories looking busy without actually working anybody know who I'm talking about but when the boss steps onto the work site this guy is like a tornado of productivity he's throwing dirt talking shop looking the part maybe even breaking a sweat this is an example of

what not to be when Paul writes not by way of eye service as people pleasers that describes someone who's a people pleaser who's just looking to do things by way of eye service actually this person is an example of a divided heart an insincere heart a lack of integrity he is one type of worker when the boss isn't there than another type of worker when the boss is there that type of worker is more concerned about what his human supervisor thinks than what

Jesus thinks about him because one who is motivated by Jesus works the same way all the way through this guy this people pleaser he will do what he needs to get done to keep the boss happy but make no mistake about it the real person he's living for is himself here's how to know when you're living for your unseen master in heaven you do his will from your heart no matter what why because his will is the most important thing to do why is that well if you're a Christian you may be presently employed by company x y and z but you will be always always a slave of Christ Jesus hmm hmm I thought slavery was immoral how can someone be a slave of Christ Jesus is that immoral well most slavery is immoral but there's a kind of slavery in which a person freely submits themselves to the lordship of another and when a sinner initially puts their faith in Christ Christ by his blood frees them from enslavement to sin and to death and the devil and the payment Jesus pays to free a sinner that way is his own life and having been liberated from the slavery to sin a Christian then joyfully reverently submits themselves fully to the lordship of Jesus Christ every day for as long as he has breath and if you think that coming under the lordship of Christ means being reduced to some kind of object of no value you couldn't be further from the truth when one becomes a slave of Jesus instead of being worthless lifeless purposeless hopeless and joyless one finds fullness of word fullness of life fullness of purpose fullness of hope fullness of joy Jesus himself said I came that they may have life and might have it abundantly to the full to become a servant of Christ then is just another way of saying I'm living my life totally for Christ because he's totally worth it even if that means

I must displease my earthly supervisor I'm a servant of Christ first and foremost and I will do his will what we're being told here is this to obey the will of God from our hearts you can sum up his will in two commandments commandment number one love God with everything you got number two love your neighbor as yourself and if those two commands function as guardrails on the path of holiness and you're walking that path you are living your life in obedience to the will of God you can be confident that you're pleasing him when that path leads you through your eight hours of work every day the fourth thing I want you to see Christians work with eager affection look at verse seven rendering service with a good will as to the

[27 : 05] Lord and not to man that word translated good will in the ESV or wholeheartedly in the NIV it's a word that kind of means a couple things in English there's not like a one English word that gets it it means eagerness with affection the idea is to do your work with an eager kindness of heart so maybe coming from the other angle of what it's not may help what this is not is doing your work begrudgingly or complainingly or lazily or procrastinatingly why it's right there because we work as to the Lord and not to man he is our motivation we work as if we are doing our work for Jesus because ultimately we are doing our work for

Jesus it's all about him he is our master and he wills us to work eagerly as to him who you work for makes all the difference it's the difference of being joyful at work and not and what we are being told here is that whatever work you do whatever your occupation may be do it as to the Lord your master Jesus Christ so here's what I would recommend for this work week approaching us very quickly make that three word phrase as to Christ your work mantra well you may be asking what does this as to Christ eagerness look like well I took a shot four examples the fifth is from true life first one is this what as to

Christ eagerness looks like at work Jim we've got a backed up toilet by the loading docks and you know the CEO is taking a tour of the plant in 20 minutes it smells like something died over there I'm going to freak out can you take care of it three words come through your mind as to Christ yeah I'd be glad to do that can you show me where the plunger and containment suit is I'll be right there you're a young mom better yet you're a mom with kids under two you've just changed and fed junior for the second time that night and it's 209 a.m.

you go back to your bed you look at the clock you do some math you start thinking man maybe I'll wake up at a glorious 730 I'll actually get five hours of uninterrupted sleep this is amazing you close your eyes you look over at the clock it's 337 a.m.

oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh move your legs over the side of your bread as to Christ as to Christ you make your way into the baby's room and you say it's okay sweetheart mommy's here mommy's here to help mommy's here to serve another illustration you know Tammy I uh I know you're religious and everything but I also know that you like working here and now how long have you been here now five years maybe I think you're up for promotion right well here's what I need you to do for me would you mind going through last quarter sales numbers and just increasing my numbers by five or six percent across the board if anyone asks you don't even say anything by the way would you get that to me in just a couple days because

[31 : 45] I got to present those adjusted figures in a powerpoint for next week's sales meeting well your heart sinks as three words come across your mind as to Christ excuse me sir I'd rather keep my integrity than get a promotion I cannot change those numbers you're a student that's your occupation and your teacher has assigned a ten page paper on to kill a mockingbird that's due in four weeks your first thought awesome I've got three and a half weeks just to kick back then three words come into your mind as to

Christ you look at your watch realize you have an hour before dinner so you go to the library you check out the last copy of to kill a mockingbird and start reading as to Christ as to Christ eagerness that's what it can look like here's the true to life situation before becoming the lead pastor here at Christ the King Church I actually served as a youth pastor of another church and at that church the church had hired a man his name was Dominic is Dominic to keep up the building and one particular day I was walking through this building's multi-purpose room to find Dominic doing two things simultaneously he was sweeping the floor and I'm guessing it must have been his 350th time sweeping that floor but it was the other thing that he was doing that stirred my heart he was singing to his Savior he didn't hear me come in and he was pushing the broom away from me so he didn't see me either but he was singing to Jesus while he was sweeping

Dominic was sweeping as to Christ he was worshipping while he worked you see the difference that Jesus can make in the way he worked here's another difference it makes by and large when Jesus is your motivation for working you should be a joy to work with you should be a joy to work under you should be a joy to work over your as to Christ eagerness makes you a joy and it's all about Christ the fifth thing I want you to see Christians work for a future review and reward Christians work for a future review and reward you see that in verse 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does this he will receive back from the Lord whether he is a slave or free a review of a lifetime is coming for each of us your lifetime will be reviewed and Paul writing to both slaves and masters he appeals to this future reckoning in verse 8 and it's also implied in verse 9 knowing that your master in heaven is impartial he judges impartially

Paul is reminding both workers and supervisors that Jesus sees all and will recompense all each one accordingly now according to 2nd Corinthians 5:10 every Christian will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and so if you're a Christian in the room and all of a sudden you hear the word judgment you're going to stand before Jesus and you get this big lump in your throat because you're like man is he going to let me in or not be assured your salvation has been secured based upon the faithful and finished work of Christ on the cross what we're talking about here is a judgment of our faithfulness to him we're to be sobered that we will be held to account for the way we live our lives so 2nd

Corinthians 5:10 says this for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body whether good or evil so what you need to know Christian is that though you're saved you don't need to fear damnation you don't need to fear being cast into the lake of fire but what you do need to realize is that there is a review coming and the one who is going to review you is Jesus himself he has authority to review your life now regarding the reward notice in verse 8 that whatever good anyone does this he'll receive back from the Lord it's a promise so here's what that means has ever anybody been overlooked at work has anybody done good things at work and nobody noticed Jesus noticed though our good work may be unintentionally overlooked by our supervisors or may be intentionally ignored by our supervisors because we're light in the

[37 : 54] Lord and we may be a thorn in the side we can be confident that our Lord Jesus sees with a comprehensive vision of everything that we've done at work and he knows the good that we've done and the promise here is that he will repay us for our faithfulness to him it's all about him the parallel passage in Colossians 3 adds a bit of a warning it says this for the wrongdoer will be

paid back for the wrong he has done so our future review of a lifetime holds both promise for good and evil promise a recompense of reward and consequence we're not told what the consequence is but you can be sure to this reward is going to be awesome every Christian has a review of a lifetime coming and a large part of that review will be the evaluation of what each of us has done occupationally how we have used our time at work and as we seek to please our master

Jesus as to Christ even when overlooked we hold on to the promise that he will reward our faithfulness to him it's all about Christ so let me just wrap up by saying this this passage is in our Bibles to help us Christians see how God changes the way that we are to work we work as to Christ work is good we work from our hearts Christians work according to a higher standard the will of God Christians work with an eager affection joy Christians work for a future review and reward when we worship through Christ through our work we will stand out as light of the Lord let's pray Lord Jesus you are our master and we are so grateful that you have bought us with your blood and you have called us to obey you God we don't want to obey anybody else we want to honor you above all and out of that love other people God I pray for those in the room who have hard work situations God would you draw their gaze to you in Jesus name amen