

## 2/2/2020 - Ephesians 6:1-9

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Preacher: Benjie Slaton

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Ottawa.
- You can find help more by visiting [gracepeacechurch.org](http://gracepeacechurch.org). Welcome again. If I haven't met you, my name is Benji. I'd love to meet you after the service.
- We'll have some time just casually out there, and I'd love to get to know you and welcome you here. A little bit, well, why don't we read God's Word?
- We have been looking at Ephesians this fall and spring, and so we are coming to the end. We're in chapter 6. It's the final chapter. Let me read from chapter 6.
- Give your attention to God's Word. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.
- [ 1 : 0 7 ]     Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, obey your earthly masters. Your translation may say bond servant or slave, depending on the translation.
- Bond servant or slaves, 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 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 slave or free.
- Masters, do the same thing 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.
- Amen. This is God's Word and He gives it to you because He loves you and He wants you to know Him. Amen. Amen. Something you should know about me is, as you get to know me, you'll find that this is true.
- [ 2 : 1 7 ]     I'm a little bit of a contrarian. When I am given something to do that requires some detail orientation, I will oftentimes do it just a little bit off.
- Sometimes intentionally, like today, maybe not intentionally on some of these details. And part of the reason that I will sometimes do that is because I'm trying to preserve some sense.
- I'm trying to prove to myself that I'm a little bit different and unique. That's not a good thing. It's not a good part of my personality, and it's something that I've been fighting against for a long time to kind of show that I'm somehow above the details.
- You know, I would have been terrible in the military. In the military, you have to do things perfectly every time. That's what is demanded. See, the problem with my inclination to do things just a little bit in a contrarian way is that it actually dishonors the way that God has called me to do things.
- You know, God tells us that we should be doing our utmost, to our best, that my obedience in the little things, in the little details, is a way that I honor who God is.

- [ 3 : 33 ] It's important, even though I sometimes don't think it's all that important. The letter to the Ephesians that we've been reading is this soaring book.
- I mean, it's full of huge themes and big ideas. Most particularly, Paul is saying that there is a mystery going on in the world, and here's the mystery, that God, the immortal God, the eternal, invisible, unchangeable God, is present right with you.
- That God is present in a group of normal-looking people just like us, that He is actually using us, His presence among us, to transform this whole world.
- You kidding me? That's amazing. It's a mystery. That's why he uses the word mystery all over the place. But what's interesting is that Paul never intends for you to just live in the world of big ideas, world-shaping things.
- He's not interested in you going out and changing the world by yourself, by these big ideas. What he's interested in, and what Paul continues to tell us, is that this God-present, Spirit-filled, Jesus-centered life is most powerfully expressed in the mundane realities of your life.
- [ 5 : 00 ] God is present in the mundane challenges of marriage and of child-rearing and of daily work. That's the idea. We can say this another way, that actually what God is doing is He is transforming the world through day-by-day, house-by-house, healthy marriages, well-raised children, and faithful, productive work.
- That sounds really boring. Thanks for the inspiration is kind of what I feel when I say it like that. But even though that doesn't sound very exciting, that's where Paul's focus is.
- Paul is singularly focused on these kinds of mundane realities. Last week we talked about marriage and how he's at work in marriage. You can go back and listen to that if you weren't here.
- It's on the website. This week he's talking about child-rearing and work. And these are the three big spheres of life, right? Now one of my old pastor mentors used to say that when you're doing marriage counseling it always comes down to one of three problems.
- Either sex, or money, or family. And that's ironically exactly what Paul is talking about here. Marriage, family, child-rearing, and work, or money.
- [ 6 : 18 ] Those are the spheres in which things get sideways, but they're also the place where God is powerfully at work in the mundane details. We could say it this way.
- This is as clear as I can say it. That the cosmic realities of the gospel of Jesus Christ are expressed in the most mundane moments of your life.
- God's glory is in the little things. The glory of the eternal God in the little parts of your life. So that's what Paul wants us to see is the little things in parenting and the little things in your work life.
- So let's look at the little things of parenting. Now, I should say this. When I say little things in terms of parenting, I don't mean little as unimportant. You know, if you are in elementary school or middle school, you may feel like you as a child are unimportant.
- That couldn't be further from the truth. Paul here is constantly interested in you. In fact, for Paul and for Jesus, neither of whom had children, they are talking about the blessing and the responsibility of children all the time.
- [ 7 : 30 ] In fact, they are talking about the responsibility of children not just for the family, but for the church. You realize that's one of the reasons that I bring our children up every week gathered around here.
- It's partially to pray for them and to bless them and to send them on and to make them feel important. But a bigger part of it is for you. It's to remind you that you have a responsibility to these little ones.

That they are our little disciples. You know, that's part of, that's one of the reasons that we welcome children into the worship service because, you know, yes, there is time where they need some age-appropriate instruction and encouragement and, you know, and get their wiggles out and all that kind of stuff.

And that's great that they go to children's church. But we want your children to feel like they are a part of the family of God. We want our children to watch you.

Learn what it means to be a mature Christian by watching you. You have a responsibility to them. They are fundamentally part of God's family. We want them to know that and see that.

[ 8 : 36 ] So that's great. But there is specific instruction for you children. What it says is that each one of you is to obey your parents in the Lord.

How about that? What Paul means here, and this is really clear, if you want to show that you love God, the way that you will show that you love God is by honoring and obeying your parents.

The best way to show that you love God is the way you treat your parents. Now, this is practice for life, right? Because there's a promise here. The promise is, if you obey your parents, life is going to go pretty well for you.

In fact, Paul is quoting from the Ten Commandments. We could say it this way, and it's hard to realize this when you fall under the category of a child, whether you're very young or whether you're much older.

it's hard to realize that for thousands and thousands of years and billions and billions of people, every single one of them had to learn that this was true. They all had to learn.

[ 9 : 40 ] Every person in here had to learn that it's important that you honor and obey your parents, that life gets harder when you don't learn how to do that. And so, as you learn to obey your parents, now you're practicing for how life is going to go for you.

See, you can't live an honorable life without practicing that sort of obedience at home. I remember when I was a teenager, I have this vivid memory of being a teenager and I had the car that I was able to drive.

It was not my car, clearly. The car that I could borrow. And it was outside and I was grabbing my keys because I was going to hang out with my friends who I really liked and I was getting out of the house with my parents who I really didn't like and my siblings and I have this vivid memory of yelling kind of behind me as I was running out the door and slamming the door behind me.

Going off to be with the people I really wanted to be with, my friends. Because I thought in my youthfulness, I thought I could go be a fun, engaging, helpful, delightful friend while being a teenage terrorist at my house.

But what Paul is saying is you can't do both. Who you are at home is who you are, is who you really are. And you have to know that.

[ 11 : 02 ] You can't live that way. Now, I will tell you, it's true that your parents are really hard to honor. The older you get, the more you realize your parents are really hard to honor.

And Paul doesn't give them a break. You should know that Paul doesn't give them a break in this passage. He talks to them as well. He talks to parents. Actually, he kind of summarizes it down and he talks to fathers.

Did you notice that? He's talking to parents first. Children, obey your parents. And then in verse four, fathers. Don't provoke your children. Why does he, why does he shape it down to fathers?

Well, you know, I might could speak out of personal experience that maybe it's because we fathers have the tendency to get a little bit angrier at times.

We get, we have the tendency to be prone to be unreasonable. And what Paul is saying is that we as parents are to use our authority in a way that blesses and doesn't enrage our children.

[ 12 : 03 ] And so what that means is there are things that are more important than what I'm feeling in the moment as a parent. Than what I want to get accomplished in that moment.

Now, I get it. Like when you've got a four-year-old, trying to get shoes on a four-year-old can derail an entire afternoon. I get it. And holding the line with a teenager can enrage the teenager through no fault of your own.

But what God is calling us to is the idea that we as parents are called to more. We are called to see every little act of parenting as a way that we are expressing our faith in God.

As a way that we are seeing that God is present in our lives and in our children's lives. That everyone is an opportunity for discipleship. And that's really hard.

I don't know about you, but most of the time I don't feel like a stellar parent. I feel like most of the time I see all the ways that I'm failing as a parent and all the ways I want to get better if you're anything like me.

[ 13 : 12 ] If you're struggling as a parent, you need to know you aren't alone. This room is full of parents that, how should we say, have some experience that would love to help you walk through the difficulties that you're experiencing.

But here's what you need to know. This is the fundamental thing for parents. You need to remember that God loves your children more than you do. God is more invested in the future of your child's life than you are.

And that gives you a sense of grace for failures. That gives you a sense of confidence that God is at work. There is grace here for parents. Okay, we'll come back to that.

But let me move on. So the little things of parenting, the little things of work is what he talks about next. But to deal well with what Paul says about work, we really need to clarify what he's talking about when he talks about bond servants and slaves and masters.

How do we understand that? That feels really old. Well, in the Greek world in which Paul lived, they had a robust slavery system. Most cultures in the history of the world have had that.

[ 14 : 27 ] That system was very different than the system of slavery we saw in the United States. And we need to make a couple of distinctions. Here's the first distinction.

Number one, slavery in the Greek world was not permanent. Okay? This was a way that the society had figured out how to deal with tragedy. So the primary breadwinner in your home dies.

You become in debt. The crops don't, they fail you one year. You have a prolonged illness. You can't work. You are in debt. How do you deal with that? Well, in this society, you would sell yourself off to someone so that they would pay your debt and you would work off your debt.

And when you finished working it off, you'd be freed. Permanent slavery was not a piece of this. It was temporary. In fact, slaves would be able to amass assets while they were enslaved.

Some slaves became very wealthy while they did this. So that's the first thing. It wasn't permanent. Second thing is, it was not race-centered. You could be someone of any race, of any social standing, of any class, of any nationality, and you could find yourself in this position of slavery.

[ 15 : 42 ] In fact, what people have said is that in a city like Ephesus, a big metro area, area, you could have as many as one-third of the population be enslaved at this time period.

So, slavery in the United States, however, was overwhelmingly dominated by a racial orientation, as you know. A racist ideology that tried to justify it.

So, it's very different. Okay? The third thing, and this is just simple, so, is the, should we read Paul as slave master equals boss worker in our modern world?

Not exactly. It still is a different system. You don't have nearly the kind of, you know, you've got a tyrant of a boss, you just go get another job. You know?

Indeed.com, I'm going to find another job. You couldn't do that. There was, it was less mobile, and so it is, it does have different dynamics.

[ 16 : 42 ] And so, a lot of people ask, well, why isn't Paul, like, condemning slavery then? Well, he does in other passages, not in this one, but part of the reason is, is that probably a very large portion of the church in Ephesus was enslaved.

He was dealing with the reality of the situation. He's not, in this passage, talking about policy initiatives in Roman society.

that's not his concern. His concern is, how do these people deal day by day in the situation where God has them? Okay? So you have to know that background. With all of that, what is it that Paul is focused on here?

Well, it's simple. He's focused on the little things. He's focused on, on the way that you honor the person who is in charge of you, the way that you do your job.

Look at this, slaves. He gives two particular things that we are to take from this. Here's the first thing. Slaves, obey your masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart.

[ 17 : 47 ] You should work with a sense of sincerity. You know, not doing it just to cut corners, just to get a paycheck, just to do it, you know, take the easy way out.

In fact, he uses this great phrase, not by way of eye service as people pleasers. Eye service. You know, is there anything more clear about somebody who does a bad job at the place where you work than somebody who's concerned with eye pleasing?

Whenever the boss is looking, they do what they're supposed to do and the rest of the time they're like, you know, checking Facebook and, you know, texting their friends and, you know, not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Eye service. Isn't that an interesting phrase? What Paul is saying is, no, have some integrity, have some sincerity. Do what you are supposed to do. Every moment of your work is to be to the honor and the glory of Jesus above all else.

Here's a question you can ask yourself to kind of determine how it is that you work, whether you work with this kind of sincerity. Ask yourself this question. how is it that you talk about your boss behind his or her back?

[ 19 : 10 ] You know, in the quiet of your own marriage or, you know, maybe at happy hour with your friends or wherever, you know, on a girl's night.

How do you talk about your boss? That'll tell you something about how your attitude is. So that's the first thing, sincerity. The second thing is that everything is done under the master, under the ultimate master, which is King Jesus.

It's funny. He uses this word servant or bond servant twice. The first one, he says, you're a servant to your master. You're working for your master. But then he says, but you're a servant to Christ.

What's he doing? He's giving you a play on words. What he's saying is that you feel most of the time like you are a slave to this job, to this boss that you go see every day.

He says, but in actuality, you're not. You're a servant of a much better master, a servant of Christ. And so you work as though your reward is coming from him, not just your paycheck.

[ 20 : 13 ] And the rationale for how the master is to treat the servant or the boss to treat the worker is the exact same. Don't yell at them. Don't threaten them.

Treat them as somebody who is going to receive the same inheritance as you. See, here's what Paul is getting at. The fact that there may be a difference in power and position right now in your life between you and someone else, whether you are the boss or whether you're the employee, is not important.

That power difference right now is not an ultimate power difference. There will be a day when everyone will be seen as the servant of Christ and you live in light of that day as you work out your responsibilities.

All of our life is to be done that way. Okay. This is especially true because all of us will be a boss and a worker one day and maybe in the same day you are both a boss and an employee.

Hopefully that is, that's what you're like. But that reminds me of, and that's actually the point of the passage that Julie read 75% of earlier.

[ 21 : 30 ] There was this centurion. He was kind of this middle ranking officer. He'd been sent and stationed to Capernaum and his job at Capernaum was to lead this group of troops to keep the peace.

Make sure there was not going to be a revolt. And most of the time when you have these Romans going to these far-flung provinces all over the Roman Empire was to go in and to consider the locals as an inferior race.

Right? They would go in and consider them to be people that were beneath them. But this man doesn't. In fact, he's honored and he's respected by the local Jews.

So much so, he's learned to honor and respect them in such a way that he actually paid for their synagogue and built their synagogue. They have respect for him.

They think Jesus ought to heal his servant. It appears that he's learned how to or what it means to honor God from these Jews.

[ 22 : 36 ] And so, what is it that astonishes Jesus when Jesus gets word of him? Why is he astonished by his faith? What is his, what is this man's faith in exactly?

It's in this. He recognizes in Jesus a person who has been given the authority of God. That the authority and the power of heaven has been entrusted to Jesus of Nazareth.

See, that's the thing that none of the Jews saw. They saw that he had power to do things but they didn't know where it came from. They didn't know what it was about. They thought he had a demon or something. They didn't realize that God was the one who had invested his authority into Jesus, that Jesus was God and possessed that power and was going to then use it in a way that they didn't even expect.

There was a second centurion that we read about in the scriptures. There was a centurion at Jesus' cross. I don't know if you remember this. There's this little detail that in Luke's gospel he says that the centurion was watching over the crowd making sure that there wasn't some sort of revolt at Jesus' crucifixion and as the sky darkened and as Jesus cried out his last breath, the centurion looking at him said, surely this is the Son of God.

What did the centurion see that made him know that he was the Son of God? One, he saw the same thing as the other centurion that he had power invested in him but he saw something more.

[ 24 : 20 ] He saw the goodness and the sacrifice of God. He saw that though he was in the form of God he did not consider a quality a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing.

That he, that Jesus, the one who had authority was willing to sacrifice himself in such a profound way that his only response is this has to be something outside of this world.

This must be the Son of God. See, what Paul is trying to get us to see is that in Jesus something has, there is, something is, is, is born that because of the grace of Jesus that, that comes into all of the little details of our life, all of Jesus' life, every person he talked to, everything he did, every word out of his mouth was focused on this reality of being the servant of his father and coming to sacrifice himself.

And in doing so, he has made it possible for you to live every part of your life under his lordship and his grace.

God's glory is displayed in all of those moments because of what Jesus has done. The question for us is, what would it look like for us to be a community of people who saw that every person and every word and every detail of our life was under God's authority and under his grace?

[ 26 : 02 ] You know, that the big spheres of life, money, sex, and family, that all of that was seen under this kind of authority and grace that God has given. What would happen to us if we really saw that?

Here's what would happen. We'd become a new community. Well, we are already becoming a new community that didn't exist, you know, even 18 months ago.

But we'd become a community that had a gospel culture. What do I mean when I say gospel culture? Well, it's a place where the little things of our life would reveal God's presence among us.

Can you imagine what it would be like if every time somebody bumped into a person in this body, they felt like they bumped into Christ himself?

Can you imagine what it would be like if every person that you met in this room lived with the confidence that God really would meet the needs, that he would meet my needs and your needs, that they prayed as though they were confident that God was going to meet all of their needs?

[ 27 : 13 ] Can you imagine what it would be like if people sought and regularly gave forgiveness? Can you imagine what it would be like if people, instead of saying, well, this is the way that I always do this, if they regularly began to change the things that felt natural for them in deference to other people?

What would it be like to be a part of a people like that? That would be a new kind of community, a kind of community that people in this area desperately need to see.

They need to see Christians who are actually living out of the authority and the power of God. I heard a story this week.

I don't know if it's true. I couldn't verify it. Google could not tell me if this was true. But it was about Jimmy Carter, former president Jimmy Carter. And, you know, he has the Carter Center.

He started after he left office in Atlanta, and it's a big philanthropic organization. They do stuff with Habitat for Humanity. They do things all over the world. And every year or so, he gives a press conference, and he just kind of lets people ask questions.

[ 28 : 27 ] And apparently at this most recent one, he was asked this question by someone, by a journalist, and the journalist said, you know, you've been very public about your evangelical faith over the years, and this has been a hard season for evangelicals in our country.

And the journalist said, I wonder, what about being a Christian has been difficult for you recently? And he said, oh, that's easy.

That's really easy. The most difficult thing I face being a Christian is that I fail every day. I fail every day to deny myself for the benefit of other people.

Isn't that amazing? that this guy who has been the president thinks that whether you're a president or whether you're just a parent, that every day, every moment, every little thing that you do is an opportunity to display the glory of Christ.

And he doesn't even think he lives up to it. He's 91 years old and he is still attempting to live as though Christ is alive and present in every part of his life.

[ 29 : 51 ] You know, it's fascinating to hear him talk. I read a bunch of his interviews as I was looking for this quote. And one of the things that he says over and over is people ask him what his most impressive accomplishment is.

And he said, well, you know, I reached the pinnacle of my political career when I was the president, but it's not the most important thing I've done. He says, the most important thing I've done is the Carter Center.

It's that every day, house by house, family by family, community by community, people's lives are changed, their hearts are touched, and the gospel of Jesus is shown to them.

What would it be like to be a church that is full of people who are watching the details, who are concerned with the little things?

The way we speak, the way we love, the way we parent, the way we work. How might that change a community? The apostle Paul wants you to imagine it.

[ 31 : 01 ] And he says it can happen because of Christ. Because of the mystery that Christ is in and with you.

Amen. Let's stop. Let me pray. Our God, we pray that you would give us that vision. A vision that is beyond what we can imagine.

We pray that you would do it. In Christ's name, amen. Amen. Amen.