

# Spirit-Filled Masters

Ephesians 6:9

*Halifax: 12 October 2008*

## **Introduction**

For seven or eight weeks now we have been looking at relationships that involve submission—where one person is called to submit to another.

- So far, we have looked at husbands and wives, fathers and children, and servants.
- We have seen in particular how each of these roles are transformed when we are filled with God's Spirit—
  - The Spirit, when He fills us,
    - causes us to continually see the glory of Jesus Christ...
    - He causes us to understand more and more of Christ and of what He has done for us—to grasp it and to appreciate it...
  - And when we do, we yearn to give ourselves completely to Him—we yearn to be like Him and to please Him in all our ways...
    - And this causes us to behave in a very different way toward others—toward our spouse, toward our parents, toward our children, toward those we work for...
  - Love comes into the picture!
    - The love we see in Jesus who gave Himself for us on the cross...
    - We want to give ourselves, for His sake, to serve those who are over us in authority as well as those who are under our authority...
      - Instead of resenting authority over us,
        - we seek to do good to those who are over us.
        - we delight in giving ourselves to others.
      - Instead of using our authority in an abusive way,
        - We use it to bless those who are under our care (as Jesus did).

Oh my brothers and sisters, so much of this is lost on us!

- So few even think about living this way—
  - we just fall naturally into our sinful selfish ways when we are put in charge of others.
- In the world, these relationships are constantly perverted...
  - Those who are called to submit are reluctant to do so—

- and those called to lead are either negligent, irresponsible, and sometimes oppressive.
- We have seen how the Lord changes all that when He begins His gracious work in us as His people.
  - And this week we come to the last role within these three submission relationships—
    - That of the Master.
    - His role is described in verse 9...
      - As in the other submission relationships described in this passage,
        - The role of the one who is called to submit is dealt with first,
          - (the slave—that was our topic last week)
        - and then the role of the one who is called to lead.
          - (the master—our topic for this week).

I showed you last week that when Paul speaks of a bond-servant and master here,

- He is speaking of the most authoritative of servant relationships...
  - In the Greek, there were quite a few words he might have used to refer to a relationship of servitude,
    - but the one he chose is the *doulos*—
      - a word that speaks of one who is what we call a slave in the fullest sense of the word.
      - A person who is purchased in order to serve another.
    - About a third of the population at the time Paul wrote this were slaves.
  - As I pointed out last week,
    - by referring to this strongest kind of servitude in our labour relationships,
      - the Lord draws in very bold and clear lines for us—
        - giving us principles that we can apply to relationships involving lesser degrees of authority and submission...
        - If persons can live in a godly way in this, the most dominant of labour relationships,
          - how much more ought we to live godly in our less dominant forms of labour relationships!

But perhaps you are surprised when you see what the Holy Scripture,

- which are God's pure and holy word...
  - says to masters...

**I. It does not say what you might have expected,**

- **“Masters, release your servants at once!”**

A. Instead the Lord seems to sanction the submission relationship of servant to master...

1. Instead of telling masters to release their slaves...

- The Lord instructs masters how to treat their slaves.
- And he does this right after telling the servants to fully obey their masters and to do their work with earnest sincerity!

TRANS> And this passage is not an anomaly... it does not stand alone...

2. It is consistent with the rest of Scripture...

a. Abraham had a whole house full of slaves,

- and he is never criticised for it.
- In fact, when Hagar runs away, she is told to return to her service.

b. Under the Law of Moses,

- the Lord told the Israelites that they could purchase slaves from the nations around them...
- He also permitted them to have fellow-Israelites for a period of six years...
  - and even allowed them to have them as permanent slaves if the servant did not want to be released in the seventh year.
- You can be sure that if you were a slave in the house of a godly man like Boaz or Abraham who was richly blessed of the Lord,
  - you might very well not want to depart.
  - You would be treated as a part of the family.

c. And so it is with the prophets of the Old Testament who spoke for God...

- But they do not condemn the institution of slavery itself.

d. And then when we come to the New Testament, it is the same...

- We find what we find in Ephesians—
  - Slavery is not prohibited, but instructions are given about how to live in the master-slave relationship in a godly way.
- In Paul's letter to Philemon, where Philemon's runaway slave has become a Christian who is needed to assist in Paul's ministry,

- The principle of letting a believing servant go when he has another calling is thus encouraged
  - But there is no insistence that it wrong for a Christian master to hold slaves.
3. But do understand that this is not talking about the kind of slavery in which men are kidnapped to be slaves...
- In fact, in the scripture, man-stealing is a capital offense.
    - That kind of slave trade is an extreme wickedness and so are all abuses of slaves.

TRANS> Nevertheless, you see that the Lord does not oppose the institution of slavery itself.

B. This is a hard pill for us to swallow.

1. We live in an age when the general thought is that slavery is intrinsically evil.
- It is a day when the value of freedom is stressed...
  - When we want everyone to be able to do what is right in his own eyes.
  - We do not want anyone to have to answer to anyone else.

TRANS> There have been other times when this has been the prevailing thought.

2. Societies often flip flop back and forth between freedom and order.
- After freedom has brought about a society in which no one works and crime and immorality run completely out of control...
    - people start to cry out for order...
    - That is why dictators are willingly followed...
      - In Judges after a period in which everyone did what was right in their own eyes, the people cried out for a king...
  - But then, after a few centuries of dictatorship,
    - everyone becomes sick of the king...
    - They want to be free to do as they please...
    - Then freedom is emphasised and authority is opposed.
3. And today, we happen to live in a time when most people think the problem is with instituted authority.
- That is why what we call traditional marriage is rejected—
  - That is why parents do not discipline their children—

- That is why the courts are very lenient on those who commit severe crimes—
- That is why there is an aversion to being under another person’s authority.

TRANS> So what is the principle that you need to see in all this?

C. The principle you need to see is that the problem is not that the Lord has designed marriage, parenting, and labour relationships that involve submission...

1. The problem is in the way authority is exercised!

- In a godly labour relationship—
  - the one who is in authority wants the work that is done under his eye to be a blessing,
    - both for those who are doing the work,
    - and for those for whom the work is being done.
- He sees his role as one who is leading others to joyfully serve God by serving their fellow man...
  - He gives Himself to provide leadership and counsel so that those who serve under him can be productive and happy in their labour.
  - He seeks to bring the best out of them to provide what is good for others.

TRANS> The problem is not that he has authority—or even that he has a lot of authority...

- The problem is that he uses his authority in a selfish way instead of a godly way.
  - That is the temptation of a master—
    - and the more authority he has, the greater the temptation will be!
  - God does not call him to relinquish his authority,
    - but to exercise it in a godly way...

2. The Lord in Scriptures calls for **reformation**, not **revolution**...

- In revolution,
  - you simply shift around who is in authority and do nothing about the selfish exercise of authority...
  - Often what comes at the end of revolution is worse than what you started out with...
    - Just look at Communist Russia or China as examples...
- But in reformation,

- you seek gradual reform as people grow into what God has called them to be and to do...
- The emphasis is on dealing with sin instead of on changing the system.
  - You can change the system all day, but until sin is dealt with, the problems in our relationships will not be corrected.

TRANS> And so let us see what we are called to be as masters in labour relationships...

**II. Christian masters, I want you to see first of all that you are to remember that your Master is in heaven!**

- In other words, you are to remember that you have a master!
  - This is not true if you are not a Christian, but if you belong to Jesus Christ, He has purchased you and you belong to Him!

A. Oh what a wonderful Master He is!

1. Consider what He did for you! How He came to be your master.
  - a. He saw you—he saw how useless you were...
    - He saw you fallen in sin so that you could no longer please God.
  - 1) He saw that you were of a race (the whole human race) that had offended God.
    - A people who were created in His image to live for His glory...
      - but a people who rebelled against Him and so were justly condemned and sentenced to eternal punishment.

TRANS> You could not please God because you were His enemy.

- 2) And not only that, but you were incapable of improvement...
  - You were so full of selfishness that you could not treat others the way He wants...
    - You know how difficult it is for us to get along with each other.
    - Don't play games, you know how selfish you are.
      - Even after you are converted and are transformed, you still don't even come close to loving the way Jesus loves.

TRANS> Jesus your saw your condition...

- b. And He gave Himself in order that you might once again do work that is pleasing to God...
  - 1) First, He gave Himself as a sacrifice to atone for your sins...

- That is, He took all the punishment that rightly belonged to you as a member of a race that had rebelled against God...
  - He took that sin of rebellion and all the sins that you have personally committed upon Himself and suffered the penalty of them...
    - What master would ever do that!
    - He took the whole loss upon Himself and it was such a great loss!
- 2) Then, Secondly, He gave you His Spirit to teach you and enable you to do the will of God...
- The Spirit works in you to change your attitude, your understanding, your whole life to conform to God's ways...
  - The Spirit gives you the scriptures and then He enables you to understand them and apply them so that you look to Jesus Christ and follow Him... in a growing way...
    - Your Master comes to you to work with you and bring you from where you are to where you need to be in your service to God.
- 3) That work is not completed yet—
- we only have the Spirit as a downpayment...
  - but the promise is that we will be brought to perfection in heaven...
    - and then we will serve God and each other perfectly!

TRANS> Christian master, that is YOUR Master!

2. This is a Master everyone should want to serve—
- a. You should want to be the fullest kind of slave you possibly can to Him!
- Not a temporary servant, but a full-fledged slave with no ambition but to please Him forever and ever!
  - This is not a service that takes away life...
    - It is a service this fills you with the very fullness of life and usefulness.
    - You can actually please God...
      - You who were once cut off from God can now,
        - under the employment of Jesus Christ,
        - please Him as one who is completely forgiven of all your sin!
- b. It is marvellous to realise that you have a Master like this who has spared nothing in order that you may serve God and man in an acceptable way.
- Christian masters, this is *your* Master!

- How great His love, how great His mercy, how great His justice, how great His power, how great His wisdom!

B. You, Christian masters, are called to serve Him even as you lead others.

1. You are to look to this marvellous Master of yours to give you everything you need to serve God in your calling as a master...

- to look to Him for reconciliation and forgiveness through His blood...
- to look to Him for guidance and direction...
- to look to Him for grace to fulfill your calling...
  - for grace to take away that selfishness that wants to abuse your position!

2. And then you are to seek to please Him...

a. By treating those under your authority in labour the way He treats you...

- You represent your Master in heaven.
  - The way you treat those under your care is a reflection on Him...
- You always represent Him, and you either do it well or you do it poorly...
  - Either you are gracious to them as He is gracious to you,
    - or you are harsh and overbearing...
  - Either you are diligent for them as He is diligent for you,
    - or you are slack...
  - Either you are helpful to them as He is helpful,
    - or you are not...

b. It is for you to lead them in doing good for others...

- You are to teach them and train them so that they can serve to greater and greater usefulness...
- You are to organise them and motivate them so that they can be blessing to the neighbours you serve in your business...
- You are to inspire them with your own example and faithfulness...
- You are responsible for the sacrifice of service that you and those who serve under you offer to God...
  - You are to see that they treat the persons you serve right—that they are blessing to them in every way possible.
  - That is what your management is aim for.

c. You are to know that at last, it is Christ you are serving...

- You are an under-master...



- 1) Last week we saw in verse 8 that the servant is to look to the Lord for His reward,
  - “knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord...”
  - You as a master are to do the same
  - You are to know that from Christ you will receive a reward,
    - both for the service to others that you lead...
    - as well as for the proper gracious treatment of those who serve under you.
  
- 2) This reminds masters of a very important truth that they too often forget.
  - That is, that they must answer to their Master in heaven...
  - a. Those who serve masters on earth see their masters almost every day,
    - Their masters are very visible to them...
    - But those who are masters will not meet their master in heaven face to face until the last day when they will give an account for all they have done.
  - b. How helpful it is for them to be reminded about Him...
    - What a dreadful thing it is for the master who continually abuses His servants...
      - If he only knew that the Lord is watching his every move!
    - Ah, but what an encouragement it is to the master who is sincere.
      - What an encouragement for him to know that his Lord sees him when he is dealing kindly with his servants...
      - The Lord does not forget every kindness that is shown, every sacrifice that is made.
  - c. The Lord is very generous with His rewards to His servants...
    - To those whose heart is toward Him,
      - who trust in Him for their pardon,
      - He pardons and continually helps—
        - giving them grace to serve as masters...
        - and then rewarding the very same service He gave them grace to perform.

TRANS> Knowing that you have a Master like this in heaven will radically transform the way you conduct yourself as a master!

- Knowing what your Master is like will cause to have the same attitude toward your servants that your servants are commanded to have toward you...
- That is what is called for in verse 9 when it says,
  - “And you masters do the same things to them, giving up threatening...”
    - “The same things” refers back to the whole attitude that the servant is called to have toward his master—
      - He is to be sincere toward him, to have goodwill toward him, wanting what is best for him...
      - He is to have his master’s best interests at heart...
        - And here we see that the master is likewise to have his servant’s best interests at heart...
          - It is to work both ways.
- He is to be a master to him even in the way that he would be a master to the Lord if the Lord came to work for him...
  - I realise that may seem like a very strange concept—to have the Lord come to work for you,
    - but you are to realise that whatever you do to your servant—however you treat Him—
      - the Lord receives as done to Himself.
      - With this in mind,

### **III. Now let’s look at some of the specific ways a spirit filled master will behave...**

#### **A. The Spirit-filled master will diligently train his servants in their calling...**

1. That is the master’s task—
  - He is either to train his servant himself
    - or provide the training necessary for his servant to live joyfully in his calling and to do it well to the glory of God.
  - There is nothing more frustrating than to be a servant who is not given proper guidance and training.
2. A master who does not provide such training does not have much regard for his servant...
  - Such a master is not only responsible for provoking his servant,
    - he is also responsible for the substandard work of the untrained servant...
      - for the inferior products and services that are provided to the public.

- When the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon,
    - She comments on how blessed his servants are—on how beautiful their order and their service...
      - Solomon had taken the trouble to train them...
      - They were taught to live courteously and beautifully toward others.
        - It was a blessing for them as well as for those they served.
3. How blessed Boaz's servants were!
- a. He trained them to be generous with his things to the poor and needy...
    - He instructed them to deliberately leave some of the grain they were harvesting behind for the poor...
    - And to draw water and give it to those poor who came to glean in the field, and even to provide lunch for them!
  - b. How happy such servants...
    - A servant does not have the authority to be generous with his master's things...
      - But what a blessing it is to a servant when his master instructs him to be generous with his things...
      - That is the way of the Christian master...
        - He teaches those under his authority to be kind and generous to those they serve.
        - That is part of the training he gives them!

TRANS> The Spirit-filled master will not only train his servant adequately,

B. Secondly, the Spirit-filled master will pay his servants well...

- He will pay Him well!
1. The Lord has said that the oxen who tread out the grain are not to be muzzled...
- a. In other words, they are supposed to be permitted to eat a portion out of the work they perform for their masters!
    - If this is true for oxen, how much more is it true for servants!
      - Indeed, the labourer is worthy of his hire!
  - b. That means that whenever you hire someone to serve you...
    - Whether it is a carpenter to install a window...

- a waitress to bring your lunch at a restaurant...
  - or if you own a business and are hiring people to work for you...
  - The principle of scripture is that you are to pay them out of their work.
    - They are bringing you a benefit and you are to benefit them as you have been benefited...
      - The Christian servant and the Christian master will both desire to give more to the other than they receive.
      - They will be so grateful to the Lord who has given them so much more than they deserve.
2. There are so many violations of this in practice!
- a. How many carpenters there are whose pay is not given to them on time!
  - b. How many waitresses there are who receive a tip based upon what was paid on a two for one instead of as if the full price had been paid.
  - c. How many employees who prove themselves by faithful service are never given a raise.
3. But there are also excellent examples...
- a. I remember when I worked for a godly man in a cabinet shop...
    - I was in seminary and did not work as regular employ—only occasional work because I was not able to do normal hours...
    - And one time when I had been working for him, he ran out of work—
      - and he did not tell me to stay home but found things for me to do—cleaning up around the shop...
      - After a day and half of this, I inquired and found out that he didn't have any work...
        - He was giving me work out of kindness...
          - a man with eight children to care for!
          - He had regard for me as a servant!
  - b. There are those who will pay their employ more than they are worth because they know they have a sick relative they are caring for or a large family...
    - Sadly, when this is done,
      - selfish fellow-employees will say,
        - “It's not fair! We are doing the same work and we should have the same pay.”
      - But the Lord is pleased with masters who truly care enough to give a

little extra to an employ in need.

C. Thirdly, the Spirit-filled master will provide for his servant even when his servant is not able to work...

1. For example, when he is sick.

a. An ungodly master has no use for his servant when he is sick...

- but the more permanent the relationship is, the more care ought to be expended for the sick...
- If servant is a slave, then it is master's responsibility to provide for his servant's medical needs as much as he is able.

b. A beautiful example of this is that of the centurion in Matthew who comes to Jesus and pleads with Him to heal his servant...

- This man shows a genuine care and concern for his servant...
- He was prepared to seek medical attention for him—
  - to do whatever he could to bring him to health.

c. We learn in this the rightness of an employer providing health benefits for those whom he employs...

- This is all rooted in Biblical principle.

d. I worked for another godly man who came by with a check in hand when I was injured and could not work...

- even though he had no contractual obligation, he came by to help me in my time of need out of Christian care and concern.

2. Likewise, there should be provision in old age...

- Once again, this was one of the advantages of slavery—that there was provision for retirement...

- Of course you were not always allowed to retire when you turned 65,

- but you were given work that was appropriate to your age and were provided a full living.

- In our day, those who serve in a longer term relationship,

- ought to be provided for by their employer when they are too old to work.

D. Fourthly, the Spirit-filled master will defend his servant...

1. He should defend him from his fellow servants if they are abusive...

- Those who are in charge are to see to it that their servants who are in higher positions of authority do not abuse those under them...
    - You will remember what happened to the servant in the parable of the forgiven debts when he would not forgive his fellowservant for his debt...
    - He was forced to pay every last penny of his own debt which was much greater.
      - The master in that parable was looking out for his servants.
2. Likewise, if servants are abused by clients or customers,
- a good manager is to back them up—
  - He will stand behind them if they have done no wrong...
    - to support them and come to their assistance.
- E. Fifthly, the Spirit-filled master will provide rest for his servants—
1. The Lord commands especially in the fourth commandment that servants and even animals be granted a rest on the Sabbath Day...
- A godly employer will insist upon this, even if his servants do not care for it.
  - He will at least give them the opportunity to worship the Lord and to rest their bodies,
    - and if they are servants in his house, he will insist on it.
2. There are many who run their servants to death.
- Their goal is to squeeze as much work out of them as they possibly can.
    - Such masters will answer for this.
    - The Lord calls masters who fear him not to rule their servants with rigour the way Egypt ruled of Israel before the Lord judged them.
- F. Finally, the Spirit-filled master will “give up threatening”...
- Not that he will never issue a warning or a reprimand...
    - but the idea is that he will give this up as a way of doing business...
1. This really addresses a whole style of leadership that is very common...
- a. It is a leading by intimidation...
- It is a master who is not really interested in leading those under his care, but prefers to drive them along instead...
  - He is always ready to pull out the whip,
    - always ready to scold,
    - always ready to find fault,

- never ready to forgive
- always ready to blame
- but never ready to accept his own failings.

b. It is a style that is very ungodly...

- A master needs to remember that he is nothing more than a fellow servant when the Lord of heaven is brought into the picture...
  - The Lord does not threaten His servants!
- You will say, "But He does!"
  - Well yes, the Lord gives warnings to his people,
    - but He only threatens those who are His enemies.
    - He does not threaten His own servants but rather comforts them and gently leads them back into His ways.

2. So masters, you who lead others in work relationships,

- It is for you to lead those who serve under you into gracious service...
- You are to show them the delightfulness of being a blessing to others.
  - You are to lead them in doing good for those you serve in your work...
  - You are to show them the joy that comes from serving the Lord by serving others...
    - And if they are not Christians, you are to live in such a way and conduct yourself in such a way that they will see how much they are missing.

**Conclusion—**

This is the kind of heart you are to have for those under you...

- no matter how much authority you have been given!

But how can you live this way?

- You can only live this way by looking to Jesus Christ...
  - Looking at the kind of master He is—
    - at how He has given Himself for you so that you might serve God forever and ever—
    - at how He has sacrificed everything for you...
    - You are to admire Him and delight in Him and lay down all for Him and for your servants as He has laid down all for you...
  - And you are to look to Him for His ongoing leadership and grace to help you in your service...
    - For guidance from His word and wisdom to implement it...
    - For grace and strength to enable you to do what He has commanded and to overcome all your selfish ways.