



## Serving With A Sincere Heart

For a good portion of human history slavery was very common, and in some areas where the early Christians lived there were more slaves than free. Thankfully, in America we are so blessed that it is hard to truly visualize slavery, which can make certain biblical passages difficult to understand or relate to. So as we look at Scripture, we always need to consider the cultural and historical context and *original audience* of the text, and only then ruminate on how we can apply it to our lives now.

We've been looking at a portion of Ephesians where the apostle Paul is addressing proper behavior of Christians among other Christians. He's dealt with husbands, wives, and children, and now turns to what we in our first-world nation may more easily relate to as *workers and leaders*.

***Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.***

***And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. [Eph 6:5-9](#)***

As mentioned above, slavery was very common in Paul's time, so his letter to the believers in Ephesus would have been read and heard by both the free and slave. But instead of tackling the issue of slavery, he simply instructs those who are under bondage to be "***obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh.***" He makes an important distinction here by noting masters ***according to the flesh.*** Each believer is subject to and in many ways 'owned' by Christ, our Redeemer. But we also have earthly masters, and today that is most commonly a boss, leader, or manager at the place we work.

While certainly a very different relationship than what Paul was speaking into, the command is still as valid today as it was then. We are to be obedient to our employer "***in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.***" This echoes Paul's command to the Colossian believers when he said, "***Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather***



***than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.*** (Col 3:23-24). Paul plainly states that no matter who we are serving in an earthly role, we are to work as though we are serving Christ directly.

Paul goes further, really knocking down any self-serving attitude we might come with as he writes, ***“not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”*** In this is the directive not to be two-faced and not to do good only to be seen and rewarded or promoted. All service we render in any capacity should be done with the same vigor and good attitude we would have as if the Lord Himself were asking us to do it, and it should not be done only to gain favor with others, but sincerely from within our heart. In this we exhibit a changed heart and the genuine love of Christ in everything we do.

It's worth noting that Paul used the same Greek word for 'slave' (doulos) to describe Christians in verse 6. Indeed, we are ***slaves of Christ***, but as we looked at some time ago in Ephesians 1:7-8, this is where our true freedom exists. Every human is born a slave of sin, but when Christ purchased us with His blood He redeemed us, which then made us His own. We are freed from the dreadful and brutal master of sin, and upon redemption, are now subject to the wonderful, merciful, and loving Savior as ***slaves of righteousness***. For more on this, see Romans 6:17-18.

Paul then addresses masters, or in our case bosses and leaders, with the command to ***“do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”*** Just because someone is in a position of authority does not give them the right to deal unkindly, harshly, or unjustly with others. Managers, leaders, and employers are under even more scrutiny from the Lord, and need to be compassionate, loving, fair, and gentle with those the Lord has placed in their ranks. Paul affirms this in Colossians 4:1: ***“Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”*** And in Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus told a sobering parable about the importance of extending the same forgiveness and grace to others that God has given us.

In closing, each of us is both a leader and a servant, and Paul is addressing both with the reminder that everything we do, no matter how big or small, it must be done with a good attitude and as though we are doing it for the Lord Himself. The Lord sees all things, and it benefits us greatly to remember that the ***“Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”*** (Matt 6:4b). May the words of the apostle give us a renewed boost in spirit to serve with a glad and sincere heart as we do His work on earth.



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