

110 - Servants of Christ - Ephesians 6:5-8 - 2016-09-18

Call to Worship: Psalm 135:1

Scripture Reading: Daniel 3:8-28

Sermon: "Servants of Christ" Ephesians 6:5-8

Benediction: Psalm 34:22

## INTRODUCTION

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we have been learning together to obey all things whatsoever He has commanded us. In these past several weeks, we have been considering the beautiful, powerful code of ethics for Christians living together in our various households. This code has been delivered to us by the Lord's apostle Paul as instruction to matched pairs---wives and husbands; children and fathers. In each case, the apostle began by commanding submission on the part of the one under authority, and indicating this submission was immediately to the person in authority, but ultimately to the Lord Himself. Also in each case, the apostle instructed the one in authority to act properly, lovingly, to those whom the Lord has placed him over during this life. The word of God in this place also teaches us the principles upon which these instructions are based, so that we may be helped to obedience by understanding.

We come now to the third and last of these pairs. We begin today to consider the relationship between the servant and the master. The apostle follows the familiar pattern in delivering to us the Holy-Spirit-inspired word of God, the perfect commands of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to govern our behavior in these relationships, as we seek to walk worthy of the calling we have received, filled with the Spirit, learning to obey our Lord.

In studying these words of our Lord on the subject of the servant and the master, we see that the apostle bases his instructions to us on a certain truth: that we Christians, whether servants or masters, are all the servants of the same Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ. Today I intend to look into that truth as stated here, and as stated elsewhere in the bible. Then, in future sessions, I plan to look at the duties of the servant in some detail one week, then the duties of the master in some detail the next week, God willing.

## TEXT

Ephesians 6:5-9 ~~And~~ servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; (6) not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, (7) with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, (8) knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. (9) And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

## BODY

- I. Jesus Christ Humbled Himself to Be a Servant
  - A. Two places this is taught
    1. Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve
    2. Philippians 2:7 [Christ Jesus] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant
  - B. The infinite humbling of Himself that this entailed (reference to Philippians 2)
    1. The Son of God, being in the form of God
    2. made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant
    3. illus
      - a) Before time began, He already was with God, and He was God; He is the second person of the Divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
      - b) He was in heaven, above the earth
      - c) He was above the highest angels: Gabriel does His bidding
      - d) He is above the cherubim: they are the wheels of His throne
      - e) He is above the seraphim: they fly around Him saying, "Holy, Holy Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"
      - f) From that lofty place, above all else, the Son of God humbled Himself
      - g) As He humbled Himself, He made Himself low
      - h) To take the throne of the Roman Empire would have been infinite condescension, but on His way down, the Son of God passed right by the throne of Augustus Caesar--that was not low enough
      - i) To take the petty throne of Herod the Great would have been infinite condescension, but on His way down, the Son of God passed right by the throne of Herod---that was not low enough
      - j) To preside over the Jewish sanhedrin would have been infinite condescension, but on His way down, the Son of God passed right by the council---He was on his way down to the very bottom
      - k) He took the form of a servant---He was paid for with 30 pieces of silver!
      - l) He took the form of a servant sent to die, and to die the most ignominious death---the death of the cross
      - m) when we ponder this humbling of Himself from the throne of heaven to the death of the cross, we marvel at Him, at our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the suffering servant
  - C. When He had humbled Himself to be a servant, what service did He render? He died on the cross to give His life a ransom for many
    1. this is the lowest service
    2. this is the highest service

- D. We, the disciples of Jesus Christ, are to be of the same mind with our Lord as to being a servant - Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
  - 1. Hear how He expressed this mindset through His apostle: Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (4) Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
  - 2. Hear how He expressed this mindset personally: Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve
- E. With the wondrous example of our Lord Jesus Christ before our eyes, we consider His commands for us regarding how to conduct ourselves when we find ourselves in the place of the servant
- II. Having Served, Jesus Christ Is Now King of Kings and Lord of Lords
  - A. Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
  - B. Daniel 7:9-14 "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; (10) A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened. (11) "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. (12) As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. (13) "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. (14) Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.
  - C. However high a master any person might become in this life, the Lord Jesus Christ is higher still, and is master over all masters
- III. Seeing Jesus Christ As Both Servant and Lord Forms the Basis for Our Conduct As Servants and As Masters
  - A. When we find ourselves servants, we may serve
    - 1. as Christ served, with Him as our perfect model and example
    - 2. unto Him as our true Master
  - B. When we find ourselves masters in the flesh, we may

1. rule over our servants knowing masters here on earth also have their master in heaven

IV. In This Life, You May Find Yourself in the Place of the Servant

- A. In this place and time, when the church of Jesus Christ considers the bible's instructions regarding the behavior of servants, we are faced immediately with the question: How does that apply to me?
  1. we don't have slavery in this country in these days
  2. no one in this society is a servant *per se*
- B. How do we take these verses on servants? It seems to me the Lord's command here applies any time you are faced with working under the orders of someone else.
  1. when you are working under a boss, a supervisor
  2. or even when in business for yourself
    - a) the customer is paying you to do something for him
    - b) so you are, in a sense, working for that paying customer
- C. There are certainly differences between being a servant, and being an employee or business owner
  1. a servant normally is paid only in room and board, whereas an employee or a business owner is paid in money, although room and board as part of the pay is often part of the deal
  2. a servant is required by law, enforced by corporal punishment, to work for his master, whereas an employee or a business owner can choose for himself whether to work for a certain person or to quit working for him and try to find work with someone else
  3. a servant normally is subject to his master's will on the job and as to his family or private life, whereas an employee or business owner is normally subject to the will of the one paying him only on the job
- D. Despite those differences, the situations of the paid worker and the servant are alike in some essential features
  1. although you get some compensation for your labor, the work you are doing is directly for the benefit of someone else, not yourself
  2. there is something you need or want, that you don't have, so you are working at what someone else wants done, so you can receive from that person what he has that you need or want; the reason he is willing to pay you is that paying you will get you to do what he wants done; his relationship with you is essentially this: You are here to do what I want done. So, although you are not forced to do it, and have agreed to it willingly, yet you are working to do the will of someone else

V. In This Life You May Find Yourself in the Place of the Master

- A. Again, we don't have masters and servants *per se* in this society
- B. But as to the workplace, the essence of the master/servant relationship is present much of the time
  1. if you are the boss or supervisor or business owner

2. if you are the paying customer paying the contractor to do what you want done
- VI. When You Find Yourself in the Place of the Servant, Base Your Conduct On Your Being a Servant of Jesus Christ
- A. He was willing to humble Himself and become a servant, and serve, so serve as He served
  - B. He is now your Lord in heaven, so serve your masters in this life as service to Christ
    1. verse 5 as to Christ
    2. verse 6 as bondservants of Christ
    3. verse 7 as to the Lord, and not to men
- VII. When You Find Yourself in the Place of the Master, Base Your Conduct On Your Being a Servant of Jesus Christ
- A. He has made you a master over other people; it is by His pleasure that you hold that position of power and privilege
  - B. Know that you are a master only during this life, and only on earth
  - C. Know that you have a Master in heaven
  - D. Know that in your Master, the Lord Jesus, there is no partiality
    1. in this life, the masters get the rewards
    2. in the life to come, the Lord will reward those who do good, slave or free, not according to position, but according to righteousness

## CONCLUSION

So, whether you find yourself in the position of being like a servant, or whether you find yourself in the position of being like a master, base all of your behavior on the truth that all of us Christians are alike servants of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:1-6 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! (2) For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." (3) Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" (4) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" (5) Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" (6) And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

Jesus Christ as servant

Philippians 2:7

Gill:

he was also a servant to his people, and ministered to men; partly by preaching the Gospel to them, and partly by working miracles, healing their diseases, and going about to do good, both to the bodies and souls of men; and chiefly by obtaining eternal redemption for his chosen ones, by being made sin and a curse for them; which though a very toilsome and laborious piece of service, yet as he cheerfully engaged in it, he diligently attended it, until he had finished it

Henry:

He was not only God's servant whom he had chosen, but he came to minister to men, and was among them as one who serveth in a mean and servile state

**bondservants** KJV servants ESV, NIV slaves

Greek: G1401 *doulos*

Strong: a slave, bondman, servant

Thayer:

1. a slave, bondman, man of servile condition
2. a servant, attendant

Vaughan:

The "servants" mentioned in this passage were bond servants, or slaves, not servants in the modern sense of the word. Slavery, with all its attendant evils, was universally accepted in ancient times. In fact, it was considered a fundamental institution, indispensable to civilized society.

Hodge:

[on Romans 1:1] all Christians are servants (slaves) of Christ

JFB:

[on Romans 1:1] applied to the disciples of Christ at large (1Co\_7:21-23)

Poole:

[on 1 Cor 7:22] if he be a Christian, he is still a servant of Christ

Gill:

[on 1 Cor 7:22] he becomes a voluntary servant to him, through the power of his grace upon him

Calvin:

all who sustain the office of teaching are to be deemed Christ's servants

1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

JRY:

note that Paul's doctrine is anti-slavery to a degree, in certain respects

1 Corinthians 7:21 Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.

1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

So, Paul's opposition to the institution of slavery is from the conduct of the individual Christian:

Do not become a slave [if you have a choice, of course]

Get out of slavery if you can

In one sense, not servants but sons of God

Galatians 4:4-7 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (6) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" (7) Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In another sense, not servants but friends of Jesus Christ

Gill:

The apostle enlarges on the duty of servants, as well as frequently inculcates it in his epistles; because, generally speaking, they were more rude and ignorant, and less pains were taken with them to instruct them; they were apt to be impatient and weary of the yoke; and scandal was like to arise from servants in the first ages of Christianity through some libertines, and the licentiousness of the false teachers, who insinuated, that servitude was inconsistent with Christian freedom: the persons exhorted are "servants", bond servants, and hired servants; who are to be subject to, and obey their "masters", of each sex, whether male or female, of every condition, whether poor or rich, believers or unbelievers, good or bad humoured, gentle or froward: such as are their masters

Hodge:

The five following verses treat of the relative duties of masters and servants. Δούλος and κύριος are here relative terms, although in Greek the antithetical term to δούλος is commonly δεσπότης, as in 1Ti\_6:1; Tit\_2:9; compare also 1Pe\_2:18. Δούλος, from δέω, to bind, means a bondman, or slave, as distinguished from a hired servant, who was called μίσθιος or μισθωτός. That such is its meaning here is plain not only from the common usage of the word, but also from the antithesis between δούλος and ἐλεύθερος, bond and free, in Eph\_6:8. Κύριος means possessor, owner, master. It implies the

relation which a man may bear both to persons and things. The nature of that relation, or the kind and degree of authority involved in it, however, is not determined by the word, but in each case by the context. It is evident both from the meaning of the terms here used, and from the known historical fact that slavery prevailed throughout the Roman empire during the apostolic age, that this and other passages of the New Testament refer to that institution. It is dealt with precisely as despotism in the State is dealt with. It is neither enjoined nor forbidden. It is simply assumed to be lawful, so that a Christian may consistently be an autocrat in the State, or a master of slaves. In this view the scriptural doctrine on this subject, differs on the one hand, from the doctrine that slave-holding is in itself sinful, on the ground that one man cannot lawfully possess or exercise the rights and authority over his fellowmen, which are involved in the relation of a master to his slaves. This is of necessity leads to setting up a rule of faith and practice higher than the Scriptures, and thus tends to destroy their authority. It leads to uncharitable feelings and to unrighteous judgments, as well as to unwarrantable measures for abating the evil. On the other hand, the scriptural doctrine is opposed to the opinion that slavery is in itself a desirable institution, and as such to be cherished and perpetuated. This leads to results no less deplorable than the other error. As slavery is founded on the inferiority of one class of society to another, the opinion that it ought to be cherished naturally leads to the adoption of means to increase or to perpetuate that inferiority, by preventing the improvement of the subject class. It presents also a strong temptation to deny the common brotherhood of men, and to regard the enslaved as belonging to an inferior race. The great mistake of those who adopt the former error, is

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1. That they assume the right of property in the master to extend to more than the services of the slave. The only right of property possible in the case is a right to use the slave as a man possessing the same nature with his master, and may, by the law of God and the constitution of things, be properly used. And

2. The confounding slave laws with slavery, which is as unreasonable as to confound despotism as a form of civil government, with the laws of any particular despotic state. Those laws may be good or bad. Their being bad, as they too often are, does not prove either in the case of despotism or slavery that the institution itself is contrary to divine law. The mistake of those who hold the other extreme opinion on this subject, so far as the Bible is concerned, is that what the Scriptures tolerate as lawful under given circumstances, may be cherished and rendered perpetual This is as unreasonable, as to maintain that children should, if possible, always remain minors.

The Bible method of dealing with this and similar institutions is to enforce, on all concerned, the great principles of moral obligation — assured that those principles, if allowed free scope, will put an end to all evils both in the political and social relations of men. The apostle, therefore, without either denouncing or commending slavery, simply inculcates on master and slave their appropriate duty. On the slave he enjoins the duty of obedience. In the expression, masters, according to the flesh, there is evidently an implied reference to a higher authority. It omits the authority of the master to what is external; the soul being left free. The slave has two masters; the one κατὰ σάρκα, the



other κατὰ πνεῦμα. The one, man; the other, Christ. The directions here given relate to their duty to the former. As to the nature of the obedience required, the apostle teaches —

1. That it should be rendered μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου, with fear and trembling, with conscientious solicitude. That nothing servile is intended by these terms is plain from the context, and from a comparison with other passages in which the same expression is used. It is not the fear of man, but the reverential fear of God of which the apostle speaks, as what follows clearly proves. In 1Co\_2:3, Paul tells the Corinthians that he came among them “with fear and trembling”; and in 2Co\_7:15, he speaks of their having received Titus “with fear and trembling”; and in Phi\_2:12, he exhorts believers to work out their salvation “with fear and trembling.” In all of these cases solicitude to do what is right is all the terms imply.

2. This obedience is to be rendered ἐν ἀπλότητι τῆς καρδίας, with simplicity of heart, i.e. with singleness of mind — meaning just what we appear to mean. It is opposed to hypocrisy, false pretense, deceit and cunning. Compare Rom\_12:8; 2Co\_8:2; 2Co\_9:1-15, 11. The word ἀπλότης signifies singleness, from ἀπλός, one-fold, as opposed to διπλός, two-fold, or, double. The thing enjoined is, therefore, the opposite of double-mindedness.

3. This obedience is to be rendered ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ, as to Christ. Slaves were to regard their obedience to their masters as part of their obedience to Christ. This would give it the character of a religious service, because the motive is regard to divine authority, and its object is a divine person. It thus ceases to be servile, and becomes consistent with the highest mental elevation and spiritual freedom.

#### VIII. We, His Disciples, Now Have the Great Privilege of Being Servants of Christ

- A. Now, it is true that in a sense our Lord Jesus does not call us servants, but calls us friends—in the sense that He tells all about His business, explains to us not just the specific task each is to do, but the whole enterprise in which He is engaged: He is making disciples all over the world, and we, His church, are His messengers. So, in that sense we are not mere servants, but friends of Christ
- B. It is also true that in a sense we are no longer servants, but fellow heirs with Christ, as adopted sons of God
- C. Yet, our Lord has told us that preachers of the gospel specifically, as to office, and all Christians generally, are servants of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

#### IX. One of the Ways in Which We Get to Serve Jesus Christ Our Lord Is By Serving the Masters Set Over Us in this Life