

Call to Worship: Psalm 113:1-3

Scripture Reading: Genesis 24:1-27

Sermon: "How to Serve Your Masters" Ephesians 6:5-8

Benediction: Psalm 123:1-2

## INTRODUCTION

In this study of the letter to the Ephesians, we first learned to praise the glory of God's grace in saving us sinners through Jesus Christ and by His Holy Spirit from the state of spiritual death into which we had entered by our sin---that was our delight for about a year of Lord's Day sermons from chapters 1,2, and 3. Then we heard the command of Christ to the whole church, that we walk worthy of the high calling we have received. That was about another year's work through chapters 4 and 5. Now, in the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6, we come to the Christian code of conduct for daily living in our household relationships. Wives have learned they are to reverence and submit to their husbands. Husbands have learned they are to love their wives as their own bodies. Children have learned they are to obey their parents. Fathers have learned they are not to provoke their children to wrath, but to nourish them with the training and admonition of the Lord.

And so now we have come to the commands of the Lord regarding servants and masters. This gives us pause, because in our society we do not have servants and masters per se. I put it to you last week that although none of us is a servant exactly, the commands of our Lord for the behavior of His people who are servants ring true also for those who work for pay to do the will of someone else, whether as an employee or a business owner working for a paying customer. The relationship of the employee to the boss or the contractor to the customer is not exactly the same in several details to the relations between slaves and masters, but the essential feature of being expected to work under the orders of someone else, or of ordering the work of someone under you, is often present. So, taking this as instruction that applies to us in our work relationships, last time we considered that the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ to us, whenever any of us finds himself in the role of a servant or of a master, are based on a certain precious truth---that we Christians, whether servants or masters, are all the servants of the same Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ. The scriptures tell us that

1. Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, humbled Himself to be a servant, and rendered service to God the Father and to us poor sinners, giving His life on the cross, a ransom for many, to bring us to God; Therefore, whenever we find ourselves servants, we are to have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, following His example
2. Jesus Christ, having died for our sins, and having been buried, on the third day rose to life again. He appeared to many witnesses, and taught His apostles what they should preach to sinners and what they should teach His disciples in His church. Then He ascended to heaven and took His seat at the right hand of God the Father. There He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords---the Master of every other master. Therefore,

whenever we find ourselves servants in this life, we are to serve not ultimately our earthly masters, but Jesus Christ our Master in heaven. And whenever we find ourselves masters in this life, we are to remember that we also serve our Master in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Having observed in the text the truth upon which the Lord's commands are based, we now look to see what the Lord's commands for us are, to govern our conduct whenever we Christians find ourselves in the role of a servant.

## TEXT

Ephesians 6:5-8 Bondservants, 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.

## BODY

- I. When You Find Yourself in the Role of Servant: Obey
  - A. Greek G5219
    1. the same as commanded of children in verse 1
    2. *hupakouo* under + listen To understand yourself as being the one who is under the master, and listen to the master as one who is over you
    3. stated simply: to do as you are told
  - B. see and explanation of obedience from someone who understood it
    1. remember how helpful the centurion was, as we struggled to understand what it means to submit; he can help us again in what it means to obey
    2. Matthew 8:8-10 The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. (9) For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and **to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.**" (10) When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"
  - C. see an example of obedience from someone who practiced it
    1. Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham **obeyed** when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.
    2. note in this example that Abram did not resist doing what he was told until his Master had explained everything to him completely; no, he went in the direction God told him to go, not even knowing what his destination was

- D. hear an exhortation to obedience based on the example of our Lord Jesus Christ
  - 1. Philippians 2:7-8 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and **became obedient** to the point of death, even the death of the cross.
- E. hear an exhortation to obedience based on the obedience the Holy Spirit has already worked in your heart
  - 1. Romans 6:17-18 But God be thanked that though you were servants of sin, yet you **obeyed** from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (18) And having been set free from sin, you became servants of righteousness.
- F. Let me pause here and address not our main subject, but a neighboring subject of great importance. In referring here to how Christians are those who obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ, we pass very close to the case of you who have NOT obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, as we pass very close by you here, let me not fail to warn you of your danger. Take note, you who are not the servants of Jesus Christ, you who do not trust yourself entirely to the Lord Jesus: you are not those who have obeyed the doctrine. If you persist in disobeying the Lord's gospel, horrible punishment is in store for you
  - 1. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10a in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who **do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (10) when He comes, in that Day. . .
  - 2. It may be in your mind that repenting of your sins, believing in the Lord Jesus, is something that is offered you, and you take it or leave it, and it's just a matter of preference or in some other way a matter that can be taken lightly
  - 3. but see here in this discussion of the obedience of servants that all who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be punished by God in hell forever and ever
  - 4. think of a servant who is rebellious against his master: he may receive a beating or whipping to punish him; the whipping will be with only so many lashes, because the master's purpose is to teach the servant to obey; after so many lashes, the punishment will cease, so the servant can have opportunity to become obedient;
  - 5. but in the case of a human being who will not obey God, he will be sent for his punishment in the lake of fire; he will be lashed with a whip made of the fire of God's wrath; but it will not be for the purpose of making him obedient; it will be for the purpose of executing the vengeance of God upon those who rebelled against Him; in your case, who have heard the gospel and refused to believe, it will be vengeance upon a rebel so ungrateful that you wouldn't repent and be reconciled to the Lord even

when forgiveness of sins was preached to you in the Name of Jesus Christ the Savior, the Son of God; it will be a punishment that does not let up, from which there is no relief, and which does not stop to give you a chance at obedience, since you spurned all such opportunities already, when you had them during this life

6. but knowing about the beautiful grace and mercy of God, shown in forgiveness of sins to those who obey the gospel, and knowing the terrible justice of God, shown in the fiery punishment of the disobedient, why would you go on as you are, to that punishment? Hear the word of the Lord: Ezekiel 33:11 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked **turn** from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'
  - a) turn, sinner, from death to life
  - b) believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved
  - c) you will be among the obedient servants of Christ, who do not dread death or the final judgment, but look forward to their reward

So, to return to the main subject: when you are in the place of a servant during this life, the Lord's command for you is, "Obey."

As with any area of life in which the Lord has given us commands, it is never right to do what He commands in any old way we please, but must always do what He commands in the way He commands us to do it. For example, He tells us to pray, but we may not pray with vain repetition of words, thinking God will hear us because of our many words. We may not pray thinking that we are informing God of something, or that we are trying to get God to change His mind and do our will. Instead we must pray to Him as the loving, all-knowing, all-powerful heavenly Father that He is, and must pray not that He will do our will, but that we will do His will!

I was reminded of this principle by James Ferguson on these verses in Ephesians.

It is not sufficient to do what is commanded by God in any thing, except we do it in that manner wherein it is commanded.

Ferguson is referring to this place in the scriptures, where our Lord tells us to obey our masters, but we must obey them in the way that Christ Jesus tells us to obey them. So the bible teaches you:

## II. When You Are in the Place of a Servant, Obey Your Master As to Christ the Lord

### A. The truth of this

1. verse 5 you obey your earthly master, but with obedience that is to Christ
2. verse 6 you obey your earthly master not ultimately because you are his servant, but as the servant of Christ
3. verse 6 you do the will of your earthly master because this is God's will
4. verse 7 you obey your earthly master with good will toward the Lord
5. verse 8 you obey your master to gain your reward from the Lord

### B. How it is worked out in your actual conduct

1. verse 5: you obey your master with fear and trembling; that is, you reverence your earthly master, trembling in your spirit at the thought of disobeying him, with the reverence you have for Jesus Christ
2. verse 5: you obey your master in sincerity of heart by the sincerity of your heart's love for Jesus Christ
3. verse 6: you obey your master not with eyeservice, that is, only when he is watching you and to please him, but to please Jesus Christ, who is always watching you
  - a) Consider that if you obey your master only enough to get your wages and avoid him getting mad at you, do not congratulate yourself for that; you have essentially accomplished only what an animal does.
4. verse 6: you obey your master, doing his will not superficially, but from your very heart, not because your heart is devoted to the will of that earthly master, but because your heart is devoted to doing the will of God, and obeying your master is the will of God for you
5. verse 7: you obey your master not grudgingly or reluctantly, but with goodwill doing him service, because in gratitude for what Jesus Christ has done for you on the cross, you have good will toward the Lord
  - a) natural: Well, I don't really want to dig his ditch for him, but I won't get paid if I don't, so I guess I have to
  - b) Christian: It is my will to do good in God's service, and so it is my will to do good to this man who is my master by God's providence. He needs his electric conduit buried in this ditch, and I want that good to come to him. I'm going to dig this trench with a good will toward that man as unto the Lord.
6. verse 8 you obey your master not seeking ultimately any reward that might or might not come from him, but knowing that you will receive from your Master in heaven a generous reward for whatever good you have done for your master on earth But how can I receive reward, who am just a poor servant? the work is ordained by God, the work is the work of the Spirit of Christ in you, and the work is pleasing through Christ!

### III. APPLICATION

- A. This can help us when we are tempted to speak ill of the one we serve: "I don't have anything bad to say of my employer, for I am employed by Christ Jesus the Perfect."
- B. This can help us when we are tempted not to serve well because the master is not a good man, or doesn't treat us well. "I serve as best I can, because I am employed by Jesus Christ who is good, and has given His all for me."
- C. This can help us when the work required is hard, especially when it is long and hard. Poole: though it be hard, if they look to man, yet if they serve not man so much as God in man, it will be easy
- D. Meditate on this command and the truth that is wrapped up in it. Re-read the details. Make effort to apply this principle even tomorrow.
- E. Pray that the Lord will help you by His Spirit
- F. Consider this a better way than you have known before of building up Christ's church
- G. Consider this as a superior form of evangelism to what you have known before. Titus 2:9-10 Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, (10) not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

### CONCLUSION

When You Are in the Place of a Servant during this life, Obey Your Earthly Master As to Christ the Lord, and so adore the gospel of Jesus Christ in the sight of sinners, and gain for yourself the rewards Jesus Christ has for His servants in heaven. "Well, done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord!"

## **servants**

Ferguson:

some did serve for hire, or as apprentices; others were bond-slaves to their masters; the apostle speaketh to both

neither birth, breeding, nor their near relation of kindred unto their masters, do exempt them from it, providing they be servants

## **be obedient**

Ferguson:

the great and main lesson which servants ought to learn and practice is to be obedient to their masters

## **with fear and trembling**

Poole:

reverent

Ferguson:

which property consisteth in a solicitous and earnest care, and indefatigable dilligence in following their master's affairs to his greatest advantage, joined with **reverence** flowing from love to their master's person, and with fear of his displeasure, and is contrary to pride and laziness

It is not sufficient to do what is commanded by God in any thing, except we do it in that manner wherein it is commanded

## **in sincerity of heart**

Ferguson:

which is opposed to a double heart, hpocrisy, and deceit

it implieth that faithfulness which ought to be in servatns towards their masters, as minding and intending from their very heart the thriving and success of their affairs in all things and at all times

always constant in good, and the same in secret which it is before the view of others

JRY:

Consider that if you obey your master only enough to get your wages and avoid him getting mad at you, do not congratulate yourself for that; you have essentially accomplished only what an animal does.

### **as to Christ**

Ferguson:

He will accept of their lawful obedience unto their masters, as service done to Him

### **not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers**

Poole:

further than his master can see him, he will do nothing

### **but as servants of Christ**

Poole:

This doth change the nature of things, so that which is intolerable and odious in man becometh easy and lovely, as from God

JRY:

This can help us when we are tempted to speak ill of the one we serve: "I don't have anything bad to say of my employer, for I am employed by Christ Jesus the Perfect."

### **doing the will of God from the heart**

Poole:

that is, yielding obedience of faith inwardly, as well as doing that their msters bid outwardly

when they speak, God commands likewise

Ferguson:

looking upon the lawful commands of their masters, as the will of God unto them

### **with goodwill doing service**

Poole:

seeking the good of them every way

it must be cheerful and diligent, not discontentedly and drowsly

voluntary, ready, diligent, and quick

who can esteem that which is done perforce, altogether unwillingly?

### **as to the Lord, and not to men**

Poole:

though it be hard, if they look to man, yet if they serve not man so much as God in man, it will be easy



**knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord**

Poole:

assure yourselves that God will pay you good wages

Ferguson:

the meanest and basest of services, being done rightly, is service done to Christ, and will be accepted of by Him

of His own free grace (rom 11:35), and not for any merit in man's service (Luke 17:10), He doth largely recompense

sometimes here (Mark 10:30), and always hereafter

The Lord, in dispensing rewards, looketh not to the external beauty, splendour, or greatness of the work, but to the honesty and sincerity of it, how mean or inconsiderable soever it be otherwise

Steele:

p. 38

p. 242

You must moreover make industry a part of your character as early as possible Be officiously serviceable to your master on all occasions if possible prevent his commands understand a nod a look and do rather more than is required of you than less than your duty He merits little that performs but just what would be exacted but we learn to love him who takes a pleasure in his business and seems obliged by your commands If you should even be enjoined to do those offices which are called mean, or which you may think beneath your station undertake them cheerfully nor betray the least disgust at the imposition To dispute a master's will is both undutiful and unmannerly and to obey him with reluctance or resentment argues you obey only through fear whereby you have both the pain of the service and lose the merit of it too

Poole:

we must conceive all sorts of servants here schooled by the Holy Ghost.

three things are here to be conceived in which they must obey

1. They must suffer themselves to be directed in their businesses Matthew 8, the centurion and his servants
2. They must obey them in correction, whether by word or blow; if rebuked, they must not mumble and answer again (2 Tim)
3. We must stand to their allowance in diet, apparel, for liberty; for the mster is to measure these things to us, we are not to be our own carvers (Pr 3:13)

he that is a servant must not do his own will, but his master's whom he serveth

we must count it our glory to be ruled in all things

those who are over us have no power but over the bodies and outward man

1 cor 7:23

James 4:12

it is not enough to obey, if we do it not reverently. Be subject with fear and trembling; for when God will have a wife fear her husband, how much more meet is it that servants should walk in fear and trembling toward their masters, in a loving care lest they should offend them

Ferguson:

a cheerful executing of all their lawful commands

JRY:

if the master does not treat you well, you are being afforded a precious opportunity in evangelism

I kept seeing "reverent" in the old books