

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-2-14 PM NOTES
"SAINTS AT WORK"
EPHESIANS 6:5-9
#25 in Series, "The Wealth, Walk, and Warfare of a Christian"

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'"
—Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (ESV) "11 and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, 12 so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one."

1 Thessalonians 4:12 (NIV) "so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody."

Genesis 2:2-3 (NKJV) "2 And on the seventh day God ended **His work** which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all **His work** which God had created and made."

John 5:17 (ESV) "But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is **working** until now, and I am working.'"

Philippians 2:13 (NKJV) "for it is **God who works** in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure."

Genesis 1:26a (NKJV) "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"

Genesis 2:15 (ESV) "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it** and keep it."

Genesis 1:28 (NKJV) "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Genesis 3:17-19 (NKJV) "17 Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.'"

Revelation 22:3 (NKJV) "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him."

I. God's Word to Those Under Authority in the Workplace (vv. 5-8)

"New Testament teaching does not focus on reforming and restructuring human systems, which are never the root cause of human problems. The issue is always the heart of man—which when wicked will corrupt the best of systems and when righteous will improve the worst. If men's sinful hearts are not changed, they will find ways to oppress others regardless of whether or not there is actual slavery. On the other hand, Spirit filled believers will have just and harmonious relationships with each other, no matter what system they live under. Man's basic problems and needs are not political, social, or economic but spiritual..."
—John MacArthur

Ephesians 5:21 (NKJV) "submitting to one another in the fear of God."

A. Be Obedient (v. 5a)

1 Peter 2:18-20 (NASB) “¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.”

Titus 2:9-10 (ESV) “⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”

B. Be Respectful (v. 5b)

Proverbs 18:9 (ESV) “Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.”

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV) “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

C. Be Focused (vv. 6-7)

Ephesians 6:6a (HCSB) “Don’t [work only] while being watched, in order to please men...”

Ephesians 6:7 (NIV) “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.”

D. Be Expectant (v. 8)

II. God’s Word to Those in Authority in the Workplace (v. 9)

Colossians 4:1 (NKJV) “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

Ephesians 5:21 (NKJV) “submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

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Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch Pastor and theologian who also served as Holland’s Prime Minister. His most famous quote was this: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human

existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” [Quoted in Darrow Miller, “Lifework” Page 28]. That “whole domain of our human existence” certainly includes our work. All of our life (including our work life) is to be lived with the consciousness that we are in the presence of God, under the authority of God and we exist to bring glory and honor to God. When that view is applied to our work, it will revolutionize our life. One text that gives the ideal description of our work life is **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 (ESV)** “¹¹ and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.” We are to do our work with a quiet excellence in a way that doesn’t call attention to ourselves. We are to resist comparing ourselves with others and mind our own lives. Our work should provide a product or a service and we should do it well. The result is that “your daily life may win the respect of outsiders” (NIV). With this approach to work, “you will be dependent on no one”. There will (short of a physical disaster) be no need of long term help from the government, church, or relatives.

Before we delve deeply into this passage, let’s look at a summary of what the Bible teaches about work. Most people who know at least a little about the Bible think that work is a part of the curse that came upon mankind when sin came into the world. As we will see in just a moment, sin changed work, but work is **not** the result of sin entering the world. One study of 250,000 workers for 4,000 companies including all sorts of job types and education levels found that 80% of all workers at all levels were unhappy and frustrated with their jobs [Study by Dr. Herbert M. Greenburg, Princeton NJ]. That’s really sad! Most of us who are not in school or retired spend close to a third of our lives in the workplace. If indeed Jesus is Lord over all of life, He is Lord over your work. I cannot believe that it is His will for 80% of all workers to be miserable with their work. I have a book in my library that says a lot in the title. The title is “Your Work Matters to God”. Since He is Lord over your job, your work does matter to Him.

Many times in the Bible we see the word “works” with God as the subject. **Genesis 2:2-3 (NKJV)** “² And on the seventh day God ended **His work** which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all **His work** which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all **His work** which God had created and made.” God worked in bringing about creation. Admittedly, He spoke it into being and the concept of effort doesn’t apply to God (He rested on the seventh day not because He was tired, but because He was finished). However, God’s work wasn’t finished after the 6 days of creation. Jesus speaks of the Father working in **John 5:17 (ESV)** “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” An interesting study would be to look up in a concordance the word “work” each time it is coupled with God. You will be surprised at how much the Bible says about our God being a worker. One of the main places he is at work is in you! **Philippians 2:13 (NKJV)** says “for it is God who **works** in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.”

When God created us, He wired us to work, to accomplish things. How do I know that? **Genesis 1:26a (NKJV)** “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’” To be made in God’s image means more than being in some way like God, but it does mean that. God is a worker; He created us in His image to also work. Listen to what He says about the first man and woman before sin ever came into the world. **Genesis 2:15 (ESV)** “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it** and keep it.” There was work when everything was perfect before sin ruined creation. God gave man a command in **Genesis 1:28 (NKJV)** “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” The word “subdue” implies that Adam and Eve were to make the resources of the earth useful for their own benefit. That involves work. You were made to work. There is no age limit on that statement either. That’s why I believe that the American concept of retirement is totally unbiblical! Your work may change, but 80 & 90 year olds need to work. A part of being created in the image of God is the need to work.

When sin came into the world as recorded in Genesis 3, the image of God in us was marred and distorted though it is still there. A part of the curse of sin had to do with work. **Genesis 3:17-19 (NKJV)** “¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree

of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.'" The work that was totally fulfilling and enjoyable now has an element of "toil" in it. Toil is translated "painful labor" in the HCSB. No matter how much you enjoy your job; there are parts of it that are "toil", "painful labor". Sometimes the job is mostly toil and painful labor. That's a result of sin. Even with the "toil" element, you are wired up to work.

I believe that the Bible teaches that we will work in heaven. Don't ever get the idea that in heaven we will sit on a cloud and strum a harp for eternity. We will work. In Revelation 22, we are given a description of heaven and we are told in **Revelation 22:3 (NKJV)** "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." With the curse removed, there will be no more toil, but fulfilling, productive work. I think we will design things and build things and accomplish things. I think it is reasonable to assume (though it is not specifically stated in the Bible) that in hell there will be no work. It is described as being outer darkness and a part of the torment is likely that those there will never accomplish anything or produce anything.

With that rather long introduction, let's look at the text.

I. God's Word to Those under Authority in the Workplace (V5-8)

There is a sense that everyone is under authority. All are under God's **ultimate authority**, and we are also under the government's authority. As I am using the phrase here, I am speaking of those who have "bosses" over them in the place they work.

Before we go further, we need to deal with the fact that the text doesn't say "employers and employees"; it doesn't say "assembly line workers and foremen". It says "bondservants and masters" or as most translations say, "slaves and masters". I believe that it is hermeneutically sound to apply this passage to employees and employers or workers and their supervisors, but we need to make sure that we understand some things about slavery in the first century. We also need to understand why the Bible didn't command Christians in the first century to openly oppose slavery. Let me hasten to say that the Bible in no way ever commends or speaks positively of slavery. But why doesn't the Bible set Christians on a crusade to have slavery abolished?

To begin with, we need to understand that slavery in the first century was not the same as slavery in the early days of our nation and in many countries in Europe. I am not saying that any kind of slavery is good; I am simply saying that it was not the same. The horrible scourge of our nation's history was racial slavery. The slaves in America were most all violently kidnapped from Africa with the intent to sell them in a market and make a huge profit. People bought them to use as laborers in their business or on their farm. This is a horrible mark on our past. Slavery in the first century was not racial. Where did the millions of (some say that there were as many as 12 million) slaves in the Roman Empire come from? Primarily the slaves were people conquered by the Roman armies in their conquest of much of the developed world. In addition to doing physical labor, many of the slaves were much more highly educated than their owners. Many physicians and teachers were slaves. If you had passed a slave on the street, it is doubtful that you would have known that they were a slave. The vast majority of businesses in the first century were family operated. If the family business was agriculture, the slaves worked in the fields; if the master had a shop of some kind, the slaves were likely the craftsmen who made the product that was being sold. I don't want to make slavery sound like no big deal. Slavery was a horrible thing. Slaves were often mistreated and they had no rights. Many evil owners treated them like animals. By the first century, many if not most Romans had come to look upon work as beneath their dignity, and much of the daily work in the empire was carried on by slaves.

Why was the early church not told to fight slavery? Allow me to share a quote with you that I think does a good job of explaining why inspired New Testament writers did not demand that first century Christians go on a campaign to eradicate slavery. "New Testament teaching does not focus on reforming and

restructuring human systems, which are never the root cause of human problems. The issue is always the heart of man – which when wicked will corrupt the best of systems and when righteous will improve the worst. If men’s sinful hearts are not changed, they will find ways to oppress others regardless of whether or not there is actual slavery. On the other hand, Spirit filled believers will have just and harmonious relationships with each other, no matter what system they live under. Man’s basic problems and needs are not political, social, or economic but spiritual...” [John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians*, page 324]. It is interesting to note that when New Testament truths begin to spread in a culture where there is slavery, it is Christians applying the principles of Scripture that lead the way in having slavery abolished. The prime examples would be men like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and William Wilberforce.

Paul’s instructions about mutual submission in (Ephesians 5:21) applies to not just the family, but also the workplace. His words apply to every situation Christians find themselves in where there is authority and submission. The instructions to slaves and masters certainly apply to employees and employers also. What does Paul have to say to employees who are under the authority of another?

A. Be Obedient (V5a)

Let me be clear. You are to submit to the authority of those over you in the workplace unless to do so would mean violating a direct command of God. This applies whether the person over you is a believer or non-believer, whether they are nice or mean, whether they are competent or incompetent. When you think you know a better way to accomplish the tasks related to your job, it may be appropriate to make suggestions, but it is always to be done in an attitude of submission. This obedience is present tense and it means to obey uninterruptedly. Peter gives us more detail in **1 Peter 2:18-20 (NASB)** “¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹ For this *finds* favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.” Don’t criticize those in authority over you. Allow God to teach you some things that you would never learn when things are going smooth. Don’t join in with the negative naysayers at work. This brings dishonor on the Lord and it also makes your job more miserable. As we said when looking at submission in the marriage relationship, the submission to authority is not tied in to the worthiness of the one in authority; it is tied in to the commandments of God. Paul told Titus in **Titus 2:9-10 (ESV)** “⁹ Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, ¹⁰ not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.”

B. Be Respectful (V5b)

The phrase “fear and trembling” is not speaking of dread or fear and trembling in the sense of being uncertain of what they might do to you. It primarily means to honor and respect those in authority over you. The NIV says, “...obey your earthly masters with respect and fear...” The emphasis here of the phrase “in sincerity of heart” is that it is not just outward acts, especially outward submissive acts but with a heart full of disrespect and animosity. You represent your Lord in the workplace and if you do not respect the person or persons in authority over you, you are reflecting badly on your Lord. You represent Christ in your workplace! Your work is to be seen first as an offering to Him. John Newton, the 18th century pastor who wrote the hymn “Amazing Grace” said that if he were the village “shoeblack” (the lowliest job imaginable that required the cleaning of mud from boots and then shining them), he would be the best shiner of boots in the village because he would be cleaning them for Jesus. When you see your job as primarily being for and to the Lord, it changes your whole attitude toward whatever job you have. I have observed this attitude exhibited by very poor Christians in third world countries much more than here in the USA in all of our affluence. **Proverbs 18:9 (ESV)** “Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.” Your work, even if it is not held in high esteem in the world becomes a means of giving glory to God. **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)** “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do [change diapers, clean floors, dig in the mud, work in a warehouse, see patients, teach college students,

enforce the law, clean up messes in the hospital, run a large business, paint walls, or work on an assembly line], do all to the glory of God.” While earthly bosses may never truly appreciate your work, when you do it unto the Lord, He always sees and rewards.

C. Be Focused (V6-7)

The word “eyeservice” means working only when the one in authority over you is watching. The HCSB says in **Ephesians 6:6a (HCSB)** “Don’t [work only] while being watched, in order to please men...” If you name the name of Christ and you are lazy and have a bad attitude at your work, please don’t tell anyone you claim to be a Christian. If there is a disconnect between what you do at work and what you do at church, there is a word for you: “hypocrite”! Repent and ask Christ to empower you to change your attitude and actions at work – whether it is serving fast food or running a corporation. I heard that in a factory suggestion box one of the workers put in a suggestion that the supervisors be required to wear hard heels on their shoes instead of rubber so the workers could hear them coming.

Verse 7 simply reinforces what has been said in verses 5-6. **Ephesians 6:7 (NIV)** “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men”

D. Be Expectant (V8)

When we see Christ as the One we work for, and we work diligently offering our labor to Him with excellence for His glory, we can expect His reward. It may not be a promotion or a raise, but it will be His “well done good and faithful servant” which is better than monetary benefits. When you look to the Lord in expectancy for your reward, it delivers you from becoming bitter when you are treated unjustly by an earthly authority.

II. God’s Word to Those in Authority in the Workplace (V9)

Here is a word to those who are in authority in the workplace. Just as the husband who is in a place of authority over his wife is to love her and put her needs above his own, and just as parents who are in authority over their children always put the well being of their children over their own convenience, even so the boss, the supervisor, the manager, the owner is to put the well being of their employees, those under their supervision over their own greed and self-centeredness. **Colossians 4:1 (NKJV)** “Masters [those in authority], give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Those in authority are to be aware that God is in authority over them. What if God treated you like you treat those under your authority in the workplace? Just as you want to be treated with kindness, love, mercy and grace, show the same qualities to those under your authority. Stop harsh threatening and all looking down on those you supervise, and see them as equals in worth and value even though there is a different role. Care for their need and be concerned for their well being.

CONCLUSION

That last statement in verse nine should be applied all the way back to Ephesians 5:22-6:9. God does not see those in authority (husbands, parents, and supervisors) as being in any way better than those they are in authority over. This section of Ephesians begins with **Ephesians 5:21 (NKJV)** “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” It ends with **Ephesians 6:9b (NKJV)** “...there is no partiality [“favoritism” NIV] with Him.” If those in authority [husbands, parents, and work supervisors] abuse their authority, they will one day answer to God. If those under authority [wives, children, and those who work under the supervision of another in the workplace] rebel against their God ordained persons of authority, they will one day answer to God.