

# 1 Timothy 6:1-2

By  
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**"Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine may not be spoken against. And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these *principles*."**

## Introduction

I think it's particularly interesting that Paul writes to Timothy concerning how to conduct the affairs of the church. That's what the epistle of 1 Timothy is. At its heart, these are the things that we ought to do in order to glorify God as a congregation and at the culmination of it, the final two chapters deal with how we are to interact with other people; how we interact with one another in the body of Christ. We say that because if you guys look in chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, we see how Timothy is given this command to be careful how he reproves older men and younger men, older women and younger women. In other words, he is given instruction on how to relate to them. Right after that section, we are given instruction on how we are to honor widows. In other words, how do we relate to the widows of our congregation? From there, we go to how we are to relate to the elders and how we are to encourage them towards righteousness and how to correct them when they are wrong. We are told that teaching elders are worthy of double honor. And it goes on and it finally comes to this point in chapter 6 where we are addressing the issue of slaves—specifically, how should Christian slaves conduct themselves in the course of their lives? This section concludes (after talking about some general summary issues) at the end of chapter 6 with an admonition that directly addresses the rich in verses 17-19.

So, we need to realize what the context is as Paul addresses young Timothy. He is saying in essence, "Timothy, these are the ways you interact with these individuals." The most difficult part of ministry is not the studying of the Word. The most difficult part of ministry is relating to people and making sure that we do what is right in the eyes of God in terms of correcting those things that are sin, apologizing when we have sinned, and making things right. That is the most difficult part and I don't mean as a pastor, but for all of us, one to another. The hardest part of your relationship is always making sure that you are right, and that you are *righteous*, in the eyes of God in your dealings with each other. That is always the case. So, it is not surprising to us that Paul addresses all of these different things.

The common theme that binds all of these issues together (in terms of relationships) is simply respect and honor, or if we want to put it in one word, it would be magnanimity or graciousness. It's about how we treat one another with graciousness that is similar to the character of Christ, Himself. That's the whole point. That's how we are to conduct ourselves in the church in order to bring honor to the living God. And with that in mind, we come to this particular interesting section.

At first, we might be tempted to think, "This doesn't apply to me, today. I'm not a slave." Let me ask this question then, "Is anyone here a slave? And don't give me all that 'ball and chain' stuff." No one here is a slave and yet, there is a very clear admonition to us about what it means to be in submission to those in authority over us. So, let's go to the Lord and ask Him to instruct us in this time around His Word.

*Heavenly Father,*

*As we come to You, we recognize Your authority, something that we sometimes forget Lord.*

*Sometimes we sing praise songs. We sing our hymns and we recognize Your greatness. We are in awe of how great and majestic You are but frequently in our practice and the way that we live, we forget how we ought to live concerning Your authority.*

*Lord, teach us to submit to Your authority and in so doing Lord, teach us the graciousness of submitting to all those who You have placed in authority over us, whether they be Christian or not, so that we might represent You, so that we might represent the Gospel; that we might adorn the truth of*

*salvation to such a degree that our testimony would be certain; that it would be valuable and would be just cherished by You.*

*Father, I pray that we would live to Your glory in the church as we interact with one another, in our work places, in our schools that we would live to Your glory and no matter what we do, no matter what we put our hands to do, that our character, the manner in which we approach it would show that indeed we live for greater purposes, not for ourselves or our own rights but for the glory of our living God.*

*So Lord, we praise You and ask that You would give us strength to see where we fall short and to give us grace that we might indeed be sanctified and grow in Your likeness. We praise You for Your goodness to us and ask that You would bless this time around the Word now.*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen.*

## **Introduction**

Let me give a little bit of introduction to the concept of slavery in Roman times. It was estimated that during the Roman Empire some 50 to 60 million people were slaves. That's a lot of people and I think that covers the span of the entire Roman Empire, so it's a long period of time. As much as 1/3 of the population in the largest cities of the empire was slaves (e.g. Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus; remember that Paul is writing to Timothy in Ephesus).

Look to your left and to your right. Between yourself and the person on your left and the person on your right, one of you guys would have been a slave. That's how common it would have been for you to run across someone who was a slave in Ephesus. In fact, there probably were slave owners sitting in the congregation at the Ephesian church that Timothy was ministering. There were probably also slaves and ex-slaves sitting in the same congregation. There were those who were on the poor side who never had a slave, but were tempted to put themselves into slavery for the sake of economic protection. So, you probably had all sorts of individuals in the congregation and everyone understood the concept of slavery at that time.

By the first century (around the time of Paul wrote 1 Timothy) according to Roman law, it was possible (in fact, it was encouraged) for slaves to eventually be set free. It was called "manumission." It meant that at some point you were supposed to free your slaves. In fact, very few slaves reached old age as slaves. Some historical inscriptions indicate that about 50% of slaves were freed before the age of 30. This is kind of an interesting thing since it is very different from the brand of slavery that we associate with American history. In American history, the type of slavery we normally refer to involved all sorts of sin, including things such as kidnapping. Did you know that Scripture forbids the concept of taking somebody by force and forcing them to do anything? It's called kidnapping and it was based on race or the color of someone's skin.

Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to make you believe that Roman slavery was a godly thing. It wasn't. In fact, we'll point out later that there was nothing good about it. But, it was very different from the kind of slavery that marked early American history. Slavery in ancient times wasn't based on race—it was based on economic situations. If you were of a nation that was recently conquered and your house got pillaged and torn apart and you don't know where your family is and you don't have anything to do, you might be willing to go and sell yourself, in a sense, to become a slave of a wealthy man, a general of an army perhaps, in order to take care of his business. By doing so, you could eventually become a Roman citizen. After some period of time of service, you would eventually be freed and you could become a Roman citizen with some amount of property. In fact, slaves even owned property in the time of Rome. Some slaves even owned other slaves. Isn't that a ridiculous concept? Can you imagine, "I am a slave of a slave?" But that was possible! Slaves were able to be merchants. Some owned businesses and some even became government officials.

Rome is an interesting place. Selling oneself to slavery was often a rescue from poverty and financial insecurity and it provided a means for you to get Roman citizenship. But again, I'm not trying to make an apology or an argument that slavery was good during the Roman era. Slavery is never good. It is not a good thing. Curiously in the New Testament, Paul never addresses slavery as an absolute evil or that we must abolish it; we must hate it. He is not passionately against it.

In the prison epistles (i.e. Ephesians, Colossians), Paul deals with different groups of people and he gives particular instructions for husbands and wives in regard to their responsibilities, children and their parents and their responsibilities, then masters and slaves and their responsibilities. It is curious because whether it is in 1 Corinthians 11 or Ephesians 5, you notice that when he talks about marriage, he makes an appeal to the creation order—that this is God's design from the beginning. When he talks about parents and children, he makes an appeal to the 5<sup>th</sup> commandment in Ephesians 6 because "this is what the Scriptures say." Yet in regard to slavery, George Knight in his excellent commentary says this about Paul's approach:

*"For slavery, no appeal is made to God's will for its existence. In fact, Paul encourages slaves to leave that situation when leaving is possible. In 1 Corinthians 7:21, it encourages us to be free. Masters are to free slaves like in Philemon 10-21."*

Paul is saying, "Philemon, take Onesimus back. He used to be a former slave. You guys have both been converted to Christ. He is like a beloved brother to you now. He is useful to you. He is useful to me and if he owes you anything for breaking his bond to you, then I will repay." Paul, nevertheless, gives counsel to slaves because he is persuaded that one can live as a Christian and bring glory to God even in that difficult situation.

Technically speaking, he is probably talking about those who are slaves who are able to buy themselves out (which a lot of slaves were able to do). They ought to pursue that end in order to free themselves for ministry and other things. It was a subtle encouragement for him to treat him as a brother and to let things go. Perhaps, the most important part we need to understand about George Night's commentary is that Paul is not condoning slavery. Neither does the New Testament or the Old Testament condone and encourage slavery and the reason as to why it is not addressed is because no matter what status of life you find yourself in, they (apostles) are persuaded that we can still live to the glory of God in whatever bonds and difficult situations we find ourselves.

So instead of encouraging us to change our situations, they encourage us instead to be the best Christian we can be in that particular situation. Well, that's pretty interesting. It becomes more interesting when we start to take a look at these particular 2 verses which encourage us to live in submission to those who are placed in authority over us. It does not always qualify that command by saying to be only in submission to those who are good people or to those people that are fair. It reminds us that in the time of writing of 1 Timothy (i.e. the first/second century), there were Christians, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, individuals who we will see in heaven one day and that lived out their days as slaves on earth, but they did it to God's glory.

If we think rightly about that, it'll shame us for our insubordination, for our bad attitudes, for our conceited arrogance, for the natural way we present ourselves as such prideful individuals bringing shame to God and the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. It'll shame us to know that they endured so much, yet they did it for the glory of His sake. That's what is most important about understanding some of the background of some of these slaves. In those other prison epistles, there were always that encouragement of the intrinsic value of work and working hard unto the glory of the Lord. Here though, the particular emphasis in 1 Timothy 6 to slaves is that they represent the Lord in all His glory. In other words, we should protect His reputation and the reputation of the Gospel. With this background information, let's get into the text.

#### **Submissive Service for the Sake of the Gospel (v.1)**

**"Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine may not be spoken against."**

Sometimes as Christians we don't always serve our human masters and authorities in a manner that is appropriate. The great British New Testament scholar Phillip Towner tells this story about when he was converted. I think he was in the military. He says,

"There were several of us who had just set out on this Christian adventure. In our enthusiasm to serve Christ, we somehow concluded that we didn't need to concern ourselves with mundane rules about shiny boots or clean pressed uniforms. Our superiors quickly made the connection between our new faith and our sloppy appearance. In that small corner of the world Christianity was in danger of being linked to with insubordination."

He called it right. It is possible for us to live our lives as if it is so compartmentalized that we think that this is church stuff and in church, I am submissive. I sit under the authority of the teaching of the Word. I worship the living God. I would submit to Him. But then at work, it's all about, "Well, I don't need to do that. That's not eternal. I don't really care what they say. They can fire me and I don't really care because I am going to find another job and eventually, I will go to heaven and they are not." And we think that that attitude is appropriate. That is totally arrogant and inappropriate for us as believers. That's what this portion of Scripture is trying to address.

Let us appreciate the difficulties of slavery of that time. In fact, the way that Paul puts it, he says, "**Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor.**" The term "**yoke**" comes frequently in Scripture. In fact, in the Old Testament it is most commonly used for the idea of slavery (e.g. Leviticus 26, Isaiah 9, Ezekiel 34). The idea of the "**yoke**" or *zugos* (ζυγός) is about slavery and how we are enslaved because of it. It becomes a metaphor for slavery. If you don't know what a yoke is (I realized that we're not exactly talking to a lot of agrarian people here and you may not understand what a "yoke" is; you may even think it's the middle yellow part of an egg), it is basically a huge harness that you would fit between two beasts of burden. Usually you would strap it on oxen and they would pull your plow to till the ground or to do other difficult and heavy labor. It becomes a metaphor (when it is not used literally) for this idea of slavery or sometimes for political tyranny; that they (government) had placed a heavy yoke upon us. And it has even been used for alien nations coming to oppressively rule over us. In the same way, Jesus when He talks about Himself, He says, "Come to Me you if you are weary and weak because my yoke is light. The burden I place on you is not a burden at all." That's the concept.

The point is that Paul uses this phrase "**under the yoke**" to suggest the severity and oppression of slavery. These guys have it hard. In fact, they are under the yoke in the sense that they are treated like mere oxen. Those would be the natural and literal use of the term "**under the yoke.**" You could be sold. You could be purchased. You could be treated as mere oxen.

It is pretty clear by its context that we are talking about those Christian slaves whose masters were not Christians and who treated them with some sense of severity. Why do I say that? Because verse 2 (if you compare and contrast) makes this clear, “*And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.*” Verse 2 addresses believers being your masters. Verse 1 addresses those slaves who were enslaved to non-believing masters who apparently had put them “under a yoke.”

I think what Paul is trying to emphasize is that they lived under oppression. They were living a harsh existence. These Christian slaves were striving to be excellent Christians. They were new believers and they still lived under some oppression, under severe circumstances. If you look at the rest of verse 1, it says “**Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor...**” If we understand the concept of the “yoke” it emphasizes the severity of their situation. We need to understand that they were enslaved to human masters that were not believers. The term that is used there is **despotēs** (δεσπότης). It sounds like “despots” and that’s where we get our English word. A. T. Robertson in his *Robertson’s Word Pictures* says, “That is always where the shoes pinch.” Our “despot” is this very Greek word, the strict correlative of slaves or **doulos** while **kurios** has a wider outlook. Scriptures often talk about our Lord as the **kurios** and that’s the general concept of the “Lord” or a human “lord” and it talks about his authority. **Despotēs** is the direct corollary to **doulos**.

So what we are talking about here is that these guys are non-believers and these Christian slaves, these brothers of ours, they have it incredibly difficult. This situation intensifies the command here because the command is “You slaves, you Christian slaves who have unbelieving masters, who are under the severity of a yoke, who are treated as oxen, regard your masters as worthy of honor.” It intensifies that command and our ability to accomplish that. He’s not saying “You guys who have it easy, your masters are believers with you, who are planning to set you free, you guys need to care for your masters and consider them with honor, the masters that are generous.” Paul is talking about all masters, even if they are severe; regard those masters as worthy of honor. That’s the command. Not a suggestion. We get the sense that it might be something of a suggestion, we ought to generally honor them, but it’s a command. You are to regard them as worthy of honor. In other words, volitionally and consciously you are to consider them worthy of your honor.

We have looked at “**honor**” or **timē** (τιμή) at the beginning of chapter 5. We looked at the concept of honoring true widows and it didn’t just mean to give them respect, but that you need to take care of them and make sure that they have enough sustenance to live on and you need to materially care for them. Then, when it says that teachers are worthy of double honor, we said that it involved respect, but doubly so. You also ought to pay them so that they would be able to live and be able to preach the gospel and to instruct from the Word. Carrying over that same notion of honor, we see that Paul uses that term specifically and purposefully here.

These slaves, even though their masters were severe, were to consider them worthy of the same type of honor that they would have in caring for the widows of the church, in caring for the pastors of the church. They were supposed to take care of the masters in that same way. In the midst of severity and difficulty as slaves to non-Christian masters, these Christian slaves were commanded to regard such masters as “**worthy of all honor.**”

How difficult is that! It is not based on whether that individual, that master’s character was good. It’s not an issue of whether or not that individual was worthy of being honored. God placed you in that situation. He would not place you in a situation that would be impossible for you, that would be so difficult for you that you would always and absolutely and forever fail in sin. He placed you in that situation because He believed that He in His grace can provide you enough strength to see yourself through to be sanctified and to bring Him glory.

It is kind of an interesting thing if you look at the concept of authorities and earthly authorities in **Romans 13:1-2**: “*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.*” God makes it pretty clear that we are to be in subordination. We are to be in submission to those who he has placed in authority, not because they are excellent Christians and wonderful, but because that’s where God has placed us. We got to bear that in mind a bit.

I am telling that to you guys if you have a problem with your boss and it is absolutely legitimate and I don’t think it’s against the Lord’s will if you say, “You know what? This boss is really difficult and I am going to resign here and get another position somewhere else.” It is absolutely free for you to do that. The slaves who Paul is addressing in this text can they just get up and walk out from their slavery? Of course not!

We need to learn from this instruction that is given to those brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone before us in much more severe circumstances and instead of overly babying ourselves, maybe we need to at least consider that the difficulties of our circumstances are not nearly as heavily as those of these particular slaves who Paul was instructing to consciously think of their masters as worthy of more honor; in fact, worthy of all honor. That is a very difficult command and it comes with responsibility.

“Why Paul would we do such a thing?” would be the natural inclination of our hearts. It says, “**Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor...**” and it gives us an explanation why: it’s for the reputation of our God and of the Gospel of the Jesus Christ. The second part of the verse 6 says, “... **so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against.**”

We go back to George Knight and he says this:

“Paul appeals to slaves to conduct themselves appropriately under their difficult situations in order that God and His Gospel may not be ill spoken of by non-Christian masters who would do so if they thought that God and Gospel made slaves less respectful and poorer workers.”

We think, “Lord you should rescue them out of that!” We have come to a point in our society, in our day and age, where we equate moral evil with the reduction of rights. We consider that the greatest evil of all. I think Al Mohler wrote an interesting article on that a few months back where he is talking about liberalism today which believes that the worst moral evil you can commit is to impinge on someone else’s rights.

I read this particularly funny article in the week about Google. Google is trying to get into mainland China, but in their agreement with the Chinese government, they agreed that certain things cannot be searched. Now, Google has this internal motto “Don’t be evil.” Do you know what they mean by that? They mean that they would never restrict access to information. Now, people are saying that they are being inconsistent with themselves; that they are going in and restricting certain searches; that they are letting the Chinese government censor what their people can and cannot search for. Thus, they are being evil.

Whether that is important or not, I thought what was interesting was that the concept of what was evil was the restriction of information. “You are impinging my rights! That’s evil!” What *is* evil is that we think lightly of whatever situation we are placed in, not realizing that our purpose is to please our living God our Savior and to display the gospel of Jesus Christ in the best fashion possible in all situations. We might actually reduce the reputation of God and Christianity by our conduct in the world. *That* is evil. Restriction of your rights is not evil. I think Daniel and his friends understood it best. You know—when in Babylon, be Babylonians, but still glorify the living God and make a name for Him. Let people look upon you, upon your character, upon the person that you are with the convictions that you have and let them see that there are things greater than your rights. There are things in fact that are greater than living, itself. There’s the reputation of God and our doctrine.

He says that it is “**the name of God**” that is at stake. In [Romans 2:24](#), it talks about that same thing in the context of the Jews breaking the Law. It says, “*For the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you just as it is written.*” It’s a quote from [Isaiah 52:5](#) and there, Isaiah had just lambasted the people of Israel, particularly Judah. And he is saying, “You guys are adulterers. You guys are stealers. You guys are thieves. You are breaking the law and the nations look upon you and God’s name is dragged through the mud! God’s name is being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” That’s a significant concept in the Scriptures—that when God selects a people for Himself, the idea is not just that He is glad doling out salvation; no, He is selecting people to represent Him, so that His reputation would be respected whenever we share the gospel; that people would respond, “Well, being Christian makes you a good worker that’s for sure. I know that you are straight-laced. You would never lie or cheat or steal. You are not insubordinate. You always work within the group.” They know that there is something right about that kind of example even if they do not honor or bow their knee to the Lordship of Christ, Himself.

Let me read to you a portion of [Ezekiel 36:17-20](#):

*“Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore, I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. Also I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.’”*

You know what God is saying there? “I had to judge you because there is bud in the land for your blood guiltiness. But when I scattered you amongst the nations (Gentiles) what did the nations say about you? Did they say, ‘Oh these are the great people of the Lord? Great and marvelous is the Lord God Almighty?’ No, it says that they profaned God’s Holy Name.” God’s reputation was dragged through the mud because the people that were supposed to represent Him represented Him so poorly. God’s reputation was sullied by those who claimed allegiance to Him and yet, did not honor His character in every area of their life.

If we start to grasp that, we will grasp the very important concept of what the Scriptures always talks about: the fear of the Lord. That’s where the fear of the Lord comes from. It is not just, “Oh, the Lord is going to judge me. He is going to kill me.” No, there are actually unbelievers who believe that at some point they are going to pay a price for their crimes. They know that there is judgment to be paid at some point. Satan, himself, acknowledges that. The fear of the Lord is not just the fear of judgment, but fear of dragging God’s reputation through the mud. It is guarding God’s reputation, the name of God, so that the name of God may not be spoken against.

When it says “**spoken against**” it’s that Greek word *blasphēmeō* (βλασφημέω) from which we get our English word “blasphemed.” God is blasphemed by the conduct of some. We think that now that they are Christians they can exert their independence, their freedom; that they have a church they can go to and rely on if they need some financial assistance. “So, I am going to break my bonds with my master. I am going to escape. I am going to treat him poorly. I am going to get

revenge on all those years that he was severe and oppressive to me.” What’s the net result? The master connects that with Christianity and the name of the living God, Jesus Christ. Paul said, “Don’t let that happen.”

**“Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and *our* doctrine may not be spoken against.”**

Not only is the reputation of God affected, but “**doctrine**” of God or rather, the gospel. It says here, “... **so that the name of God and *our* doctrine may not be spoken against.**” And when it says “**doctrine**” or *didaskalia* (διδασκαλία), it meant “those things that are the teachings or the body of instruction, message of our preaching, the Gospel, itself.” If you want to short circuit any chance to share the Gospel with somebody that is an unbeliever that you care about, just be insubordinate, act arrogantly, be conceited, and treat them with disdain and tell them, “Hey, don’t tell me what to do. In fact, let’s establish some ground rules. I am a Christian so you don’t tell me what to do because I am a Christian.” Just act arrogant and throw it out there and make sure that they know that your Christianity means that you are superior to them in every way and that you don’t have to be in subordination to them even if they are in authority over you. Do that and when you share the gospel and say, “Can I tell you what the gospel of Jesus Christ says?” I guarantee that they will turn a deaf ear to you. Paul is saying, “Listen, it is the reputation of God and the living Gospel itself.”

*Colossians 3:22* says, “*Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.*” If you are a slave, work heartily. Not for that human master, but for your true Master who cares about it. *Ephesians 6:5-6* says, “*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 eye service, 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.*”

These are strong passages and they ought to instruct us. It is the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel whose reputation we sully when our service is not in submission. Take a moment and consider that in your workplace, in your schools, in your families, in all of the areas of your life where we are supposed to be subordinate to somebody. In any and every one of those areas you represent God and you represent the Gospel and those people will have an idea of what it means that you are a Christian. When they see your excellence, then they have an idea how great our God is. His reputation will be based on whether or not you can live in submission under them, submission for the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of the reputation of our God.

Verse 2 talks about submission for the sake of our brothers.

#### **Submissive Service for the Sake of our Brothers (v.2)**

**“And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these *principles*.”**

It is an interesting change of commands here. We went from those who were slaves with unbelieving masters, who lived under severity, to those who were slaves but whose masters have also been converted to Christ. They were brothers in the Lord. So how exactly is that supposed to work out? In the first principle that Paul lays out for us, fellowship is not reason for insubordination or disrespect. Fellowship or the commonness in Christ, our *κοινωνεῖ* (that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord) is not reason for disrespect or insubordination. Instead he says, “Let us not those be disrespectful because they are our brethren.” Some were actually disrespectful of their Christian masters.

The term for “**disrespectful**” that is used here is *kataphroneō* (καταφρονέω) which is that same term of “looking down upon” in *1 Timothy 4:12* “*Let no one look down on your youthfulness, rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, purity, show yourself an example to those that believe.*” In that passage, some were looking down on Timothy because they were saying, “What does he know? He is only 30-something. He doesn’t know anything. He didn’t even live half of his life yet.” They looked down him because of his youthfulness.

In the same way, some Christian slaves who were owned by Christian masters were starting to look down upon their Christian masters and were saying, “You know what? If I were the master, I would let me go because this isn’t right. I’m just telling you. I’m not just saying it. I’m just telling you that it seems weird that we’re both one in Christ now, but you still own me; kind of weird right?” And there was this insubordination that was arising from their hearts that I can understand, but it is difficult to fully understand. In fact, William Mounce in his commentary addresses it exactly as that: “It is difficult for someone in a society in which there is no slavery to understand the tension that must have existed between two believers when one owned the other and how the internal contradiction must have chafed against the slaves’ conscience and faith.”

I can understand that but not until I actually think about it because when we are talking about the concept of slavery, we just think of American slavery and say, “You ain’t going to shackle me! I don’t know what you are talking about!” We think that we could fight against shackles until we die. “Fight the power,” right? But, if we lived in a society where we were actually slaves and as slaves we then became Christians, we would look at our masters and think, “Hey master, you gave your life to the Lord, too? Yeah, I was at your baptism. God bless you. So, what does that mean now? What does that mean for us? I mean, I am your slave. Isn’t that kind of weird? We are both slaves to Christ, right? Remember the Galatian letter ‘there is not a slave, there is no free man?’ What do you think we ought to do?” And I would be almost

implying that you ought to let me go; to set me free. That would be the natural tension. And how difficult and how odd, day after day, year after year, to be owned by someone who in the church is your absolute equal.

In fact, one particular New Testament scholar believes that this particular section is tied into the previous section which talked about elders. He believes that it may be addressing those slaves who were actually elders in the church. They are slaves outside in society, but elders in the church. Imagine how the tension is even more heightened in this case. These would be slaves who served as leaders in the church and some of the people that they served, who they had authority in the church over, owned them! How odd is that? And what does Paul say about that? Beat up the Christians that own other Christians? No, that's ridiculous. Should we all join together to rally and "fight the power?"

Paul says, "You know what? Do not use fellowship, your commonness in Christ, as a reason for disrespect. If you have the privilege of working for a fellow believer, don't treat them with disdain because they are one with you in Christ. Don't say, 'Hey listen, just lay off of me Christian! Brother!'" Fellowship is not a reason to disrespect or to look down on our masters, desiring to manipulate them to good purposes or rather for our own selfish purposes.

**"... but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles."**

The second part says, "... let them serve them all the more." Fellowship is instead a reason for greater service. If we are to put off this attitude of disrespect for those who are our brothers because they have authority over us in the world, we are to put on then this attitude of "let me serve them all the more." It's a command. It almost seems like a suggestion because our term is "let them serve" or *douleuo* (δουλεύω), but as I pointed out before, the third person imperative (the third person command) does not occur in our English. Every command we make is in the second person (e.g. you go to the store for me; you shine my shoes; you do whatever).

The third person command comes off in the Scriptures like a wimpy suggestion like, "Oh, let us serve them all the more." But don't mistake it for a mere suggestion. It is a command. "Let the slaves that are being addressed, make them or tell them that this is the command of the Lord: Serve your human masters who are also fellow brothers in the Lord all the more." He says for them to serve them adding that qualifier "all the more" or *mallon* (μᾶλλον), meaning "greater." Let them serve them with greater service. "What? How about just regular service? Why should I treat the Christian brother with *more* service?" He goes on to tell us why that would be the case.

Instead of disrespect, we are to serve them all the more "because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved." He gives us two participles there to describe these Christian masters: 1) they are believing ones and 2) they are beloved ones. He is saying that these guys are believers; they are fellow saints with you. God has chosen them for Himself and furthermore, God loves them and you love them; and if you love them, you need to show them not more disrespect, but you need to serve them more gladly. You need to outdo them in your graciousness because they are fellow believers. He whom God loves, you should also love. Fellow Christians are beloved of God, beloved of one another and we are to give them our acts of kindness. We are to benefit them.

"Because those partake of the benefit..." is kind of an odd way to express this weird word *euergeria* (εὐεργεσία) which has this idea of benefit or good deed. It comes from the prefix *eu* (εὖ) which means "good" and *ergon* (ἔργον) for "a work or a creation, a handiwork of yours." *Euergeria* (εὐεργεσία) comes to mean "an act of service," "an act of kindness" or "good deed." Curiously though, a lot of the scholars would point out that it is used exclusively of superiors doling out acts of kindness to their underlings; of a ruler becoming a benefactor for those who have less authority than them. Why is that curious? Because the command here is for slaves of Christian masters to serve them all the more so that they would be able to give to them this benefit or this act of kindness.

Paul basically inverts their relationship and says, "You know why you ought to give better and greater service to your Christian masters (if you work under Christian masters)? Because you are *giving* to them, *you* are the benefactors to them." That's crazy! Paul is saying, "You're a slave, but the way God sees it, your service makes you in a position of greater grace! You're the one doing something for them. You're the one benefiting them an act of kindness, as a superior to them." It essentially tells us that our natural sense of who is in charge is mistaken because of our captivity of what is temporal.

If we can go back to the introduction, I think we buy into this idea that the greatest human evil is to deny someone their rights. If someone said, "Hey, you are my slave" we would probably want to die. We would think that that is crazy. Does Paul say, "Hey, if you are a slave just kill yourself and go to heaven?" No! He says to live in subordination because his anticipation is that none of this (i.e. our circumstances) is eternal.

In the worst scenario, you may be killed by your master, but listen, you can also be killed by Roman soldiers, right? You can also be killed by a car passing by in the street that you did not see. There are so many things that can go wrong and instead of being captive to this life and to the things of this world, Paul urges us to hang on, even if you are a POW, hang on. Why? Because this life is not forever, but the presence of God and His rewards *are* forever.

So, Paul says let's invert this relationship and make sure that we understand it the way God sees it. You become the benefactor. Yes, you are serving this Christian master. He owns you in this world, but your acts of service that you give because he is a beloved Christian turns into future rewards to such a degree that in actuality, you will be the one in

authority and you will be the benefactor of him; he will live according to your acts of kindness and God knows. God is not fooled about that.

George Knight says in his commentary:

"With the use of this word, Paul turns a service of a slave into an act of bestowing good on another, even as masters. Paul has thereby made a difficult role of a slave the means by which the slave can benefit his master. The slave has been reminded thereby that in the spiritual realm he is an equal as one who can also give. The brotherhood among slave and master should not lead to disrespect but rather to generosity and to graciousness. He is able to endure himself and to bless this fellow believer that way. In Christ, whether slave or free we all bear the responsibility of living for the glory of the Lord and to His reputation but as slaves of other Christian masters we have the double benefit that we can ingratiate ourselves, we can graciously minister and serve to them, to such a degree as if we are bestowing upon them an act of kindness that God applauds and He is glad to see."

We always need to be reminded of Jesus' great word. In Mark 10:43-45, "*But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*"

### **Conclusion**

None of us are slaves. We are to teach and preach these principles, but none of us are slaves. But there's an application to all of us; whether it is with our employers, whether it's in our families, whether it's in any of those things. Let me close with this fairly long quote but a good one.

R. Kent Hughes in his commentary says this:

"Marriage is servitude. Being a husband is servant-hood. A Christian man who commits to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, commits his whole being into elevated servitude for 50 or 60 years. He is never as elevated as when he serves his wife. Being a wife is servant-hood also. By loving the imperfect man that she is married to and a thousand day in, day out ways she is serving God. Family life is servitude, parenting is servitude; it means giving all you have in order to see your children grow into spiritual maturity. It is giving, and giving, and giving just like God our Father. Growing up is servitude. Obeying one's parent is servitude and lovingly trying to please them. The work place is servitude. Being an employee is a servant-hood. Giving your best hours of the day to an educational or corporate enterprise or government or business, being an employer, rightly understood is also servitude. You serve those under you with a heart for their success. True servitude is Christ centered, leads to Christ, and makes us like Christ."

When we start to understand that, we will start to see that our Christianity is supposed to be worn on our sleeves. It is supposed to be so genuine that the world could see the difference. Where we fail in that we sully the reputation of our God and we sully the reputation of His gospel. Does the gospel really make a difference in people's lives? You can't say it does unless you actually live like it does. Then, you have a place of being able to make an argument for the life changing salvation that Jesus Christ gives to us: servant-hood, and service, submission to God's glory. Let's close our time in prayer.

*Father,*

*We thank You for the Word of God and how it instructs us in such practical ways to be very careful and considerate about our relationships with other people whether they be believers or unbelievers themselves.*

*Lord any that have authority over us, help us to be careful of our own pride Lord, of the arrogance with which we live in our lives. As our world and our culture instructs us constantly Lord, to take our situation into our own hands, to demand our rights, to demand that we have a right to everything under the sun.*

*Instead Lord, help us to listen to what the Scriptures say, to the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, to be reminded Lord that our rights in this world are nothing; that the manner or the lifestyle we live in this world, Lord, those do not measure to the standard of living that is to come.*

*So Father, help us to not to measure out our happiness, our contentment in what is a singular point in history, but instead to measure it out in light of what is to come; the line, the unending line, that is eternity, in Your presence.*

*I pray that You give us courage. We trust in Your Word that You have never given us temptation beyond which we are able to handle so we trust in Your grace that You would sustain us for all good things whether they be in the process of difficulties, in the midst of trials, or all the way through them.*

*We know that You are always there and Your grace always goes before us. So, we give You praise and ask that You would watch after us now.*

*In Jesus' name,  
Amen. Amen.*