

## Walking with God at Work

### *Spirit-filled Employers and Employees*

**Text:** Ephesians 6:5-9

#### **Introduction:**

1. In Eph. 5:18, we have the command to “be filled with the Spirit”. The Apostle then proceeds to demonstrate the fruit that flows out of a Spirit-filled, Word-filled life.
2. The Spirit-filled life produces:
  - Harmony in God’s House (Eph. 5:19-21)
  - Harmony at My House (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
  - Harmony at the Work House (Eph. 6:5-9)
3. In our previous messages we saw how the Spirit’s filling affects church and family life. In this section we consider how walking wisely under the Spirit’s control affects work life.
4. We will consider our text under two divisions. You will notice that we have 2 central commands with a motivation attached to each of them.

#### **I. THE EXHORTATION TO SERVANTS (VS. 5-8)**

##### **A. The Servant’s Assignment (Vs. 5a)**

1. ‘servants’ = lit. “slaves”. Slavery not endorsed by the Bible but was a sad fact of life in the ancient Roman world. Some cities had more slaves than freemen. For the saved slave, the solution was not revolution but to live a sanctified life in his situation. The Christian principles found in the Word of God would eventually bring about the abolition of slavery. Living for Christ applies, no matter what our station in life may be.
2. These verses have powerful application to the Employee-Employer relationship in our day and we will seek to apply the text in that light.
3. “be obedient” = same word as the one used in Vs. 1 in relation to children and parents. So long as you choose to sell your labor to a particular boss, you are duty bound to obey that boss, so long as your conscience isn’t violated or you are required to do something contrary to God’s Word. The parallel verse in Col. 3:22 adds “in all things”.
4. “masters according to the flesh” = human masters as opposed to our Heavenly Master.

##### **B. The Servant’s Attitude (Vs. 5b)**

1. One of Loyalty – “fear and trembling”
  - a. ‘fear’ = speaks of a reverential awe. The Christian worker is not to be in terror of his earthly boss but he is to be in godly fear of His Heavenly Father. The fear of God is what is in view not the fear of man (See Col. 3:22).
  - b. ‘trembling’ = the outward manifestation of the inward attitude of fear. It describes fear that is so great it cannot be concealed. Sadly, we don’t see this sort of awe of God virtually at all in our day.

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- c. Every responsibility in the Christian life is to be carried out with an eye towards the honor and glory of God.
2. One of Sincerity – “singleness of your heart”
  - a. The word has the idea of simplicity, an undivided heart. It points “to the spirit in which the obedience is to be rendered.” (Wuest)
  - b. It means that the service is rendered without hypocrisy. They were to obey wholeheartedly and completely.

### C. The Servants Aim (Vs. 5c-7)

1. To **NOT** be a Men Pleaser (Vs. 6a)
  - a. “not with eyeservice” = service done only when one is under the master’s eye. Some people work great when the boss is around but when he is not around it is a different story! For example, the man who ambles along at his work until somebody says, “The boss is coming,” and all of a sudden, he flies into gear. Or the young woman who wastes her employers time until somebody says, “Look out, there is the manager coming through the office”, and she immediately gets busy. Someone wisely observed that we tend to do what is inspected, not what is expected.
  - b. “menpleasers” = service done that is superficial and with the aim to give the boss an impression which on the surface seems good but lacks true substance and reality. It refers to “those who have no real interest in their work, but only aim at making a favorable impression on their owners by fits of ostentatious zeal, doing the minimum of work.” (Hoehner)
  - c. Note: Your employer’s presence or absence on the work site should have zero effect on your work ethic. If your attitude is that you are working for Jesus Christ then you will work the same whether the boss is there or not.
  - d. John Phillips “The Christian employee is to be diligent. He is not to call in sick when he is healthy. He is not to waste his boss’s time in idle conversation or conduct personal business when he should be working. He is not to drag his feet, pad his break times, arrive late, leave early, or demand that two people do a job he could do alone. Those are the world’s ways, not the Christian’s.”
2. To **BE** a Christ Pleaser (Vs. 6b-7)

We please Christ when we:

  - a. Approach our service as being done for Him.
    - i. “as unto Christ” (Vs. 5c)
    - ii. “as the servants of Christ” (Vs. 6b)
    - iii. “as to the Lord” (Vs. 7b)
    - iv. Christ is the servant’s ultimate Master. We are to obey as if the commands were coming directly from Christ Himself. Our aim is to obey the perfect Heavenly Master not the faulty earthly master.
    - v. Note: This applies to any area of service whether it be in the home, at church or at work.
    - vi. Illustration: When William Carey applied for foreign missionary service, somebody said to him, “What is your

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business?” They intended it as a slur, for he was not a minister. He said, “My business is serving the Lord, and I make shoes to pay expenses.” We should all have the attitude that our business is serving the Lord and whatever occupation we have it is to pay our expenses but we are there to serve the Lord. (Ironsides)

- b. Embrace our service as being the will of God.
  - i. “from the heart” = lit. “out of the soul”. The heart is the center of a person, the seat of the affections and the emotions.
  - ii. This implies more than just having a sense of duty. It involves a sense of devotion. It is service from one’s innermost being.
  - iii. A.W. Tozer on the Sacred & Secular:

1 Corinthians 10:31 “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” One of the greatest hindrances to internal peace which the Christian encounters is the common habit of dividing our lives into two areas – **the sacred and the secular**. As these areas are conceived to exist apart from each other and to be morally and spiritually incompatible, and as we are compelled by the necessities of living to be always crossing back and forth from the one to the other, our inner lives tend to break up so that we live a divided instead of a unified life.

Our trouble springs from the fact that we who follow Christ inhabit at once two worlds – the spiritual and the natural. As children of Adam, we live our lives on earth subject to the limitations of the flesh and the weaknesses and ills to which human nature is heir. Merely to live among men requires of us years of hard toil and much care and attention to the things of this world. In sharp contrast to this is our life in the Spirit. There we enjoy another and higher kind of life – we are children of God; we possess heavenly status and enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ.

This tends to divide our total life into **two departments**. **We come unconsciously to recognise two sets of actions**. The first are performed with a feeling of satisfaction and a firm assurance that they are pleasing to God. These are the **sacred** acts and they are usually thought to be prayer, Bible reading, hymn singing, church attendance and such other acts as spring directly from faith... Over against these sacred acts are the **secular** ones. They include all of the ordinary activities of life which we share with the sons and daughters of Adam: eating, sleeping, working, looking after the needs of the body and performing our dull and prosaic (routine) duties here on earth. These we often do reluctantly and with many misgivings, often apologising to God for what we consider a waste of time and strength... We go about our common tasks with a feeling of deep frustration, telling ourselves pensively that there’s a better day coming when we shall slough off this earthly shell and be bothered no more with the affairs of this world.

This is the old **sacred-secular antithesis**... The sacred-secular antithesis has no foundation in the New Testament. Without a doubt, a more perfect understanding of Christian truth will deliver us from it. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our perfect example, and He knew no divided life. In the presence of His Father, He lived on earth without strain from babyhood to His death on the cross. God accepted the offering of His total life, and made no distinction between act and act... Paul’s exhortation to “do all to the glory of God” is more than pious idealism. It is an integral part of the sacred revelation and is to be accepted as the very word of truth. **It opens before us the possibility of making every act of our lives contribute to the glory of God**. Lest we should be too timid to include everything, Paul mentions specifically eating and drinking. This humble privilege we share with the beasts that perish. If these lowly animal acts can be so performed as to honour God, then it becomes difficult to conceive of one that cannot.” Pg. 109-111 (The Pursuit of God)

- c. Perform our service from the heart.

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3. **REMEMBER! You are the only Bible some people will ever read.**
4. We could summarize it by saying the servant is to be submissive, single minded and Saviour-centered.

### D. The Servant's Award (Vs. 8)

1. The Certainty of the Reward – “knowing”
  - a. ‘knowing’ = the knowledge of future rewards in heaven is part of what motivates us to serve in the way we are commanded to.
  - b. Sometimes recognition and reward are lacking in this life. You may have worked diligently as a believer for an employer for years and yet receive no promotion or very little recognition. Remember that your Heavenly Master is not unjust like that and will reward your faithful service with eternal rewards if you did your work as unto Him.
  - c. Col 3:24 “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive **the reward** of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”
  - d. “The Lord’s payday is not at the end of the week; it is at the end of our lives.” (Phillips)
2. The Candidates for the Reward – “bond or free”

## II. THE EXHORTATION TO MASTERS (VS. 9)

### A. The Master's Mandate (Vs. 9a)

They are to treat their workers with:

1. Equality – “do the same things unto them”
  - a. They are to treat those under their authority with the same Christian spirit. They are to “exhibit the same spirit of integrity, dedication and goodwill towards their servants”. (Hoehner)
  - b. This does not mean they are subservient to those under their command but that they are to approach their role with the same overarching Christian principles.
2. Civility – “forbearing threatening”
  - a. To threaten someone is “to declare that one will cause harm to someone, particularly if certain conditions are not met.” (Hoehner) Threats are a common method used to try and motivate workers. This is the world’s approach. Some bosses seem to only every use negative pressure to try and motivate their staff. In the long run, it creates a toxic atmosphere in the workplace and generates resentment.
  - b. Illustration: Personal experience at previous workplace.

### B. The Master's Motivation (Vs. 9b)

1. Their Accountability to the Heavenly Master – “your Master also is in heaven”
  - a. If you are in a position of authority, you always need to keep in focus the fact of God’s supreme authority. No man has absolute power in this life. It doesn’t matter how far you may climb up the social or corporate ladder in life, there is always someone high above you – God.
  - b. The Christian employer or manager is to always remember that he will give an account to God for his actions in relation to those under his authority.

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- c. Col. 4:1 “Masters, give unto *your* servants that which is **just and equal**; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”
2. The Impartiality of Almighty God – no “respect of persons”
  - a. “respect of persons” = lit. means “to receive a face” and is a reference to judgment on the basis of externals. In human life, the status of an individual often has an effect on how they are treated but not with God. He is not impressed by someone’s credentials or social standing. We all stand on equal ground before the bar of God and all human distinctions are erased.
  - b. This attitude of impartiality is to be embraced by the Christian. See James 2:1-4.
  - c. Illustration: Robert A. Laidlaw (1885-1971) & the Gospel booklet “The Reason Why”: Robert A Laidlaw, CBE, founder of the Farmer’s Trading Company is widely known as one of New Zealand’s most successful and respected businessmen. Born in Scotland in 1885, he was one year old when his parents migrated to New Zealand. At the age of twenty-three he commenced a mail order business in Auckland, which grew into a retail organization with a staff of 2,700. It was Robert Laidlaw’s concern for his staff which originally prompted the writing of The Reason Why as a testimony to his Christian faith. It was a business man’s explanation of the Gospel to his employees. The booklet went on to be published in 30 different languages and there are somewhere in the order of 50 million copies in print. A dynamic speaker and inspiring leader amongst the Open Brethren, Robert Laidlaw has been described as “one of the world’s great Christian laymen.” Only God knows how many souls have been brought to Christ through that booklet but it all started with an Employer who had a burden for the souls of his employees.

**Conclusion:** Remember, you are the only Bible some people will ever read. How is your testimony at work? Do your work colleagues see any difference in your life? Are you seeking to be a lighthouse for Christ and the Gospel where God has placed you?