

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Servants of Christ
Scripture Text: Eph. 6:5-9 (Ephesians #44)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-24-22

Come with me to Ephesians. We are in Chapter 6, and that's the last chapter. We are only about three paragraphs from the end of this book.

And today we are going to deal with what is the fifth and sixth of six little paragraphs that flow from the command: "Be filled with the Spirit" (5:18; cf. Gal. 5:16), and then what kind of things are manifested in people who are filled with the Spirit. There is a list of them in Verse 19, 20, and 21 of Ephesians Chapter 5. The last one is: submitting to one another, as to the Lord. The word "submit" means "to arrange yourself under"; and the idea of "submitting to one another" is that if you are "filled with the Holy Spirit," by His grace you seek to put yourself under everyone else (Phil. 2:3), and lift up the people around you for the glory of God (Rom. 14:19).

And *that* affects how you function in every human relationship; and so, he goes, "Wives," here is what it means for you to "submit to one another," especially to your husband (5:22-24); "Husbands," here is how you submit to your wives by being the leader in loving (5:25-33); "Children," here is how you submit to your parents (6:1-3); "Parents," here is how you submit to the plan of God to lift up your children (6:4); and now, today, two more: "Slaves" (6:5-8) and "Masters" (6:9)—and we are going to change that to "Employees" and "Employers."

Now, I need to remind you—because it is very easy when you get into these exhortation portions of a book like this—it is easy to think, "Well, that's what I need to do. I want to be a Christian, so therefore this is how I must live." And that is *almost* right! Yes, you must live this way—but *not* so that you can be a Christian! You *cannot* live this way unless you *are* a Christian, unless you *are* "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3; cf. Jn. 15:5).

Chapter 6 of Ephesians is built upon Chapter 5, which flows from Chapter 4, which presumes you have read 1, 2, and 3, and you are now "in Christ." You understand that apart from anything else, you are born "*dead* in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). You need to be "made alive" (vs. 5), and you cannot bring yourself to life; only God can do that—and He *did*, and He sent His Son so He can say: "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; *not* as a result of works"—or any of these relational things with human beings—"so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for* good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (2:8-10).

This is describing some of those things that God wants you to "walk in," and this has to do with your everyday life—your "job," if you will. Most people in our world see a job, see their employment, either as a stepping stone to success; or, maybe they have finally achieved what *they* define as "success," and they are struggling to hang onto it; or, many people see it as "a necessary evil that I have to endure on the way to achieving *my* dreams and *my* self-actualization"; or, just, "I just have to do this because I have to pay the bills so that I can do this and be a good dad, be a good mom, or whatever."

I want to awaken you, if you have never been there before, to the biblical idea—which is quite different: Your employment—and don't sit here and say, "Oh, wow, am I glad I'm retired; I can just chill out today," or, "I'm a stay-at-home whatever, this isn't for me!"

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No, no, this is for you; you *have* a job, whether you get paid for it or not. Your job might be attending Fifth Grade. And I hope you're not in this demographic, most of you, and still in Fifth Grade—some of you are.

Your job is your *primary opportunity* for you to serve Christ—other than in your home. That is the thrust of this passage. After family and very close friends, your job is the most likely place for you to represent Jesus Christ and to share your faith and to be an example of what a transformed life in Christ looks like (cf. Phil. 2:15). Your job is a *unique* opportunity for you, because you are the only one who has *your* job, in *your* place, around the people that *you* work with or that *you* serve. And if you fail to see your job as one of the most crucial venues for displaying Christianity, you are missing out on much of God's will for your life.

Now, sadly, most people—including way too many Christians—get their opinions and their attitudes and their philosophies the same way they get a cold: somebody spreads it in the air, and they catch onto it. But how you conduct yourself with your employees, your employer, your customers, at school—wherever you spend the majority of your waking time that you are away from your home—it is *far* too important to just "go along with the flow"; you *have* to see it as God wants you to see it.

And if Jesus is your Lord—and this passage is presuming that that is the case—then this portion of the Bible has *very* important implications for what you do and how you do it. As I say, it applies appropriately to employees and employers—and I will explain some of that terminology to you as we go along.

It answers the same question for both: Who Is The Boss? After we answer that question—Who Is Your Boss?—we will look at some Spiritual Labor Laws, if you will, for employees and employers.

So, let's start with Employees. We will start at Verse 5 of Chapter 6. You can substitute the word "employee" for the word "slave" in this passage. Now, I will explain that more. It *is* the word "slave," and what it means is: "slave"; but I will explain to you why I am adjusting the terminology for us.

Ephesians 6:5—"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" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

Now, if you do not catch *anything else* that I say all morning long, if you don't pay attention to *anything else* in this passage all morning long, catch those last three words in that verse: "as to Christ." That is the *crucial* phrase in this passage. You *ae* to do your job *as if* Jesus Himself is your boss.

Why are "wives" to submit to "husbands"? Because they submit "to the Lord" (5:22). Why are husbands to submit to the need of their wives by being leaders in loving? "As unto the Lord." Why do "children obey" the parents? "As unto the Lord." Why do parents parent their children? "As unto the Lord." (cf. Col. 3:17)

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This is *all* about *you* belonging to Jesus Christ! Here is your *great* opportunity to broadcast what it means, what it looks like, to be a Christian.

And the next verse elaborates: "not by way of eyeservice..." I don't know anyplace else that I have ever seen or heard that word, but I *love it*; and it is a good translation of the Greek word that is here. "Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers." In other words: It doesn't matter who is watching; I don't care about that.

"Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but *as slaves of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart." There is the same message again. "As to Christ" in the previous verse, "slaves of Christ" here. You belong to Jesus Christ! You are *His* slave, and so *that* affects how you do anything else. You are "in Christ"—that's the theme-phrase in Ephesians, 27 times.

He says, so therefore you are "doing the will of God." Now, think about that: If God is sovereign (He is), He is in control of everything (Ps. 103:19; Eph. 1:11)—as they say, there is not one rogue molecule in the universe, He is holding it all together (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3); He knows "the end from the beginning" (Is. 46:10); He knows *all* of your circumstances (Matt. 6:8; 10:30); He is in *absolute* control (Lam. 3:37; Dan. 4:35); *therefore*: For you to have the job you have *is God's will*; and if you are employed in that place, for you to go to work and to do that thing "as unto the Lord"—that is for you to do "the will of God"!

That makes life a lot simpler, doesn't it? "Oh, Lord, *show me Your will!* Am I supposed to go to Zanzibar, or should I go to New Zealand as a missionary?" Or, how about going to work tomorrow? This is God's will for you now. Might He lead you some other way? Yes, He might. But *this* is for you to do His will.

And look at Verse 7—"With good will render service"—why, would you look at those next four words—"as to the Lord, and not to men." "As to the Lord"—imagine Jesus is the One who is going to do your next job performance evaluation; or, if you make things, imagine that *He* is the One who is going to come and inspect your work; or, *He* is the One who is going to be doing the audit on those numbers that you have been crunching.

And don't skip over the attitude part of this: "with good will." Do I need to explain that? It means: not with grumbling or complaining, not gossiping about the boss or other workers. "With good will."

And Verse 8—"knowing..." Now, there's a key there: "knowing" something, "knowing all of this that I have told you about what it means to be walking in the 'good works which God prepared beforehand' for you (Eph. 2:10)—"knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back"—here it is again—"from the Lord, whether slave or free." That is what you are going to be rewarded by.

If you haven't caught on to the concept, here it is again: You are serving because the Lord is going to evaluate (cf. Rev. 2:23b), and you are going to receive from Him His "reward" (Rev. 22:12; cf. Matt. 24:45-47; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Jn. 8).

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Now, it is nice to get a raise. It is *usually* nice to get a promotion—but sometimes that's a two-edged sword. It's nice to get a Christmas bonus, nice to get a commendation; that's all good and well. But that's not the best of all. The best of all is to hear from the lips of your Savior: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21, NKJV).

And you know where that comes from: in the Parable of the Talents; and that was the Master evaluating what those people had done with the earthly resources that the Master had entrusted to them!

Now, yes, there are great deep theological and personal applications to that, but the Lord is the One who ultimately will determine if you are a success or a failure in your daily toils (2 Cor. 5:10); and He is the One who said: "To whom much is given, from him much will be required" (Lk. 12:48); and if you are "faithful" in "a little thing," you will be "faithful also in much" (Lk. 16:10).

Now, let's switch: Employers, Who Is *Your* Boss? And you can substitute the word "employer" for the word "master," just as I said you can substitute "employee" for "slave"; and I will tell you why in a moment.

Verse 9—"And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

Here it is again. Who is your boss? Well, there *are* those who are your "masters according to the *flesh*" (vs. 5), but *there is your Boss*, there is your *Master*, there is the One who redeemed you from your slavery to sin so that you could be set free to joyfully enslave yourself to Him (Rom. 6:18)—to voluntarily put yourself under Him (Jas. 4:7a).

Even if you own the company, even if you are the president and CEO, there is someone to whom *you* are accountable; and God has entrusted to each person—*whoever* would work for you—and He holds you accountable *for how you treat them*. And what is the standard for how to treat people who are under you in the chain of command and responsibility? Do it "as unto the Lord"!

Notice, he said: "*do the same things* to them." What does he mean by "same things"? Well, let me be radical and say: it's the same things you just heard: Verse 5—"as to Christ"; Verse 6—"not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but...doing the will of God *from the heart*"; Verse 7—he even cares about the attitude: "With *good will* render service, as to the Lord"; and Verse 8—You "will receive back *from the Lord*, whether slave or free..."

And there is, equally, an attitude-check for employers—"masters"—"give up threatening." Don't *threaten*—teach, lead, explain, instruct. Yeah, you have to hold people *accountable* to what the standard is for whatever they do, but you need to do that with patience and with fairness.

Now, it didn't take very long to get through those five verses, did it? So you know I'm not quitting now, just because it's early.

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Let me explain, first of all: Why did we make the jump from "slaves" and "masters" to "employees" and "employers"?

The word does not mean something different than what it says; it *does* mean "slaves." But the reference here, in that culture, was primarily to domestic servants; and it is referring to people who live in a system that does involve slavery that was very common in the Roman Empire.

In some cases, it was rather dignified, and slaves could be considered like extended family members (Prov. 29:21). In some situations, it *was* bad. In some situations, it was as bad or worse than anything that our country has ever seen. But just because you see the word "slave," do not assume that *that* means exactly what *you* think of when you see something about the very worst of selling and buying and beating and raping human beings. We are not necessarily *at all* talking about that—that has *never* been God's plan.

But it is said that up to a third of the population in the Roman world—and where was Paul when he wrote this? *Rome*; and he was writing to that culture—a third of the population was enslaved in some way. It was a different system than our free-market sort of thing, in which you can sell your services. And there really was a lot of control over a person.

It is natural, then, to expect Paul to address this issue *in the context of families*. What did he just talk about? Wives, husbands, children, parents—and in most homes, especially in those with any wealth whatsoever, there were probably domestic servants who would be part of that family context.

So, God is not *defending* slavery—especially as we think of the *worst* manifestation of that—but He is showing His care about *every* person, *regardless* of his social status.

Paul also wrote Galatians; and he said in Galatians Chapter 3, Verse 28—"There is neither Jew nor Greek"—and you say, "Wait a minute! Paul, what were you smoking last night? *Of course* there are such things as 'Jew' and 'Greek'! You are one or the other, and you can't be both!" Here is what he means: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man"—well, there *are* "slaves" and there are "free" people. What do you mean, Paul? "There is neither male nor female"—no, Paul that's not coming until the 21st Century! What does he mean? "For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

No matter *who* you otherwise are, there is one *and only one* way to be saved (Acts 4:12), there is one *and only one* way for your sins to be forgiven (Heb. 9:22; 10:14; 1 Jn. 2:2), there is only *one way* to get to Heaven (Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5), there is only "one body" of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:13); and you are in or you are out (1 Jn. 3:10; Rev. 20:15), you are saved or you are lost (Jn. 8:24)—*it does not matter what your background is!* "You are *all* one in Christ Jesus"—social status *does not matter!*

And God cares *equally* for "Jew" and "Gentile" (Acts 26:23; Rom. 3:29; 9:24; Rev. 5:9; cf. Is. 49:6), "male and female" (Gen. 1:27; cf. Matt. 27:55; Mk. 15:41; Acts 2:18; 5:14; 8:12), "slave" and "free" (1 Cor. 7:22; 12:13; cf. Col. 3:11).

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Now, you can go along and read in your Old Testament—Exodus 21, Deuteronomy 15, Deuteronomy 21—and you'll see that God gave very specific instructions for *regulating* slavery. A lot of people *stumble* over that because, as I said, they think of the *worst perversion* as the definition of slavery, and that was *not* usually the case.

And do you notice, under *God's* system, He required that slaves had to be freed every seventh year (Ex. 21:2) *and* every fiftieth year (Lev. 25:10—so Year 48 was a *lousy* time to get a slave! You have to set them free in 49 because it's a multiple of 7; you have to set them free *again* in 50!

Don't think that way. The point is: God *cares* about *all* people in *all* strata of *every* society, no matter *what* their role or background (cf. Ezek. 33:11; Is. 56:3-8; Acts 10:35; 1 Tim. 2:4; Titus 3:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

So, rather than ruling out different levels of status according to wealth or social customs when it comes to spiritual things, God make it clear: All people are equal, *regardless* of their status in life. Every man, every woman, *must* come to faith in Christ *personally*; there is no inside track to Heaven (Prov. 9:12; Lk. 13:3, 5; Jn. 1:12; 6:40). As a matter of fact, *Jesus* pointed out: It is much *harder* for those with much wealth to enter Heaven (Matt. 19:23-24; cf. Prov. 18:11). That's another subject, for another day.

But understand: God's Word meets us where we live, and He has given us instructions how to operate in *any* circumstances (cf. Ps. 119:128, 160; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3)—including slavery (1 Tim. 6:1-2; Col. 3:22), persecution (Matt. 5:11-12; 1 Cor. 4:12), poverty (1 Tim. 6:6-8; Jas. 1:9), wealth (1 Tim. 6:17-18; Jas. 1:10), position of power (Ps. 72:11; Col. 4:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). God *cares much more* about your *character* than your social or economic status (Deut. 1:17; Job 34:19; Gal. 2:6; Jas. 2:1-9).

So this passage is *not* about slavery, or the morality of it (cf. 1 Cor. 7:23; 1 Tim. 6:1). The *point* is: how to live your life under the control of the Holy Spirit, *regardless* of your situation. And *everyone* is included in the application of these principles. Whatever is asked of the lowest slave can be asked of *anyone*, when it comes to being faithful to God.

You are not excused from obedience to God because you have it harder than someone else does (cf. Num. 11:1). So even though none of us in the room are slaves or slave owners (to my knowledge, anyway), the fact that we live in this especially-blessed culture—that doesn't remove us from applying this. These principles apply to *everyone*. That is why I say, it is legitimate to substitute the word "employees" for "slaves," and the word "employers" for "masters"—*because* those are the same *functions* in our world, whether you have a "master according to the flesh" or not.

So, this isn't about slavery; this is about the dignity of man. This is about God's will for His children to display to the world what a transformed life looks like (Matt. 5:45; Phil. 2:15). This is how people have *every right* to evaluate whether you are Spirit-led or not—including how you do your job, and what your attitude is toward doing your job. That is a barometer on your spiritual health. Now, that feels a little ouchy...Don't worry, it will get worse—if you need to change something.

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Now, having said that, let me kind of roll back through this a little bit, and talk about some Spiritual Labor Laws.

We live in a world where we *have* laws that govern labor, like child labor laws; you can't just turn children into slaves. We have laws about what can be bought and sold, and there is a whole bunch of corporate law, and it gets really complicated in a prosperous and complicated world like ours.

We even think in terms of labor rights, and you can go on strike. I don't think a Christian can intentionally, willfully, led by the Spirit of God, go out of his or her way to do harm to an employer. You have to figure out how to apply this passage, and especially if you live in a system where you have to belong to a Union, and the Union says: "You *have* to refuse to do your job!" You have to figure out what to do in doing your job in that situation. I'll let you sort some of that stuff out. If we need to talk about it, we can talk about it.

But understand: *God* has—if you want to call them that—"Labor Laws."

Labor Laws? Well, let's start with Employees.

Number 1: Be Obedient. That wasn't ambiguous. "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh." "Obedient" is the same word that was used for "children," back in Verse 1; it means "to listen under."

But then, would you notice, there is a qualifying phrase there: "Be obedient to those who are your *masters according to the flesh*." In other words: In that role where you are the "slave" and that person is your "master"—or, you are the employee and that person is the employer—that is "according to the flesh": that's in the earthly realm; that's in the physical, everyday realm We are not talking about spiritual things here.

There *can be* a situation, and I have known a number of them; for example: A person gets a job in a certain company, works like the kind of person that is described in this passage, and is highly respected and promoted, and God opens up an opportunity to share the Gospel with the owner, or the boss—and that person becomes a Christian, and comes to church; and Monday through Friday, you are the "slave"; and on Sunday, you are the Elder, and that person is in your Sunday School class. You see, there are limitations on the realm to which this applies.

Now, if you happen to be in the kind of employment where you *live* in the home of the "master" of the house, there is *a whole lot* more control—but you still have to be obedient.

This Spiritual Labor Law is obedience. Unless your boss asks you to do something in direct conflict with Scripture, and you know those guardrails—if they tell you to do something that God says you *can't* do, or they tell you that you *can't* do something God says you *must* do, you have a higher calling: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29; cf. Eph. 1:20-21; 1 Tim. 6:15). But otherwise: Be obedient to your employer.

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Now, you might be thinking: "Well, this guy doesn't know *my* boss!" Oh, yeah, I do..... I think I *do*! I used to work for him. In God's wonderful providence, outside of my allowance for taking out the trash and cleaning up after the dog and stuff like that, I happened to get my first real job that had a paycheck—for \$1.65 an hour (I'm old, okay?)—and I had *that* boss.

He wasn't a Christian, and neither was I—this was the year before I got saved, and I think God wanted me to have this little bit of training before I came to know Him. He did not know the Lord, profess to know the Lord—he certainly did not know this passage because he *never* "gave up threatening"! The *only* way he knew how to give instructions was with a threat attached. He wasn't nice. He wasn't compassionate. He wasn't kind. I think he enjoyed firing people more than he enjoyed hiring them. He was a *nasty* man, and I worked for him. I didn't get fired. I had a lot of under-the-breath sort of stuff going on there.

Interestingly, my older brother was in the same industry; it was a grocery store, and I was a box boy. I'll have to tell some of you what that actually meant: Somebody used to bag your groceries for you—it was pretty cool—and take them out to the car, if you wanted him to. Anyway, my brother was in the same industry, and he worked at a different store; and he had a *wonderful* boss! And I had this terrible one. And my brother would give me some advice about how to not get fired in the midst of all that.

And interestingly: My brother moved on, finished college, got his dream job, and his other boss came to me and said, "Would you come to work for me?" And I prayed about that for a millisecond—I actually didn't pray then, but I thought, "Yeah, I'll go; I'll do that for you." And I did, and worked for this wonderful guy on the other end of the spectrum. And you have to learn: Serving the Lord requires that you *obey* in situations where there is someone over you.

There is a similar passage in First Peter. You probably know this one: First Peter 2:18 through 20—"Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect"—you would think Peter had read Paul; well, he actually had (e.g., 2 Pet. 3:15-16)—"not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable"—the ones who *don't* "give up threatening." "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 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."

The principle is: You do what is right, trust God to take care of you; He will be faithful to watch out for you. Oh, and by the way: You are not even allowed to mouth off along the way. I wasn't a Christian yet under Boss #1; I didn't know this part coming up here, the next three verses in First Peter 2—"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you"—the implication is: Sometimes, working under that "master" can be *suffering*—"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously."

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If you work in a lousy situation, it may frustrate you. And let's be realistic: There *are* such situations. It may be painful. It can be a real robber of your joy. Do you want to know how to handle it? Start with the first Spiritual Labor Law: Obey, and don't complain. Your example is Christ. And remember this: Your *audience* is Christ. *He* is the One to whom you will ultimately answer (2 Cor. 5:10).

Second Spiritual Labor Law for employees: Give Respect to Your Employer. Doing it "with fear and trembling" is not talking about cowering in terror; it's talking about giving respect and honor. Treat your employer as worthy of respect and honor.

And notice: It does not ask you to evaluate whether you think he or she *is* worthy of honor; *treat* them as if they are just like those "governing authorities" over you (Rom. 13:1), with whom you share *absolutely nothing* in common by way of moral convictions. Still: *honor them*. Kind of like: "*Honor your father and mother*," which is a command from God that has a "promise" attached to it (Eph. 6:2).

If you never thought of this, let me suggest to you: Most of the time, treating your boss like that leads to blessing. If you are faithful to treat bosses and employers this way, you are *almost always* going to wind up being treated better than employees who grouse, complain, gossip, cut corners.

Now, here's a question—a legitimate question: What if your employer asks you to do something wrong? Well, I'm happy to say that hasn't happened to me lately in my job. It's been a long time, but *I've been there*. After I *did* come to the Lord and I worked for the next guy—and, hey, I got a raise! The Union negotiated a new wage, and I went from \$1.65 to \$1.67 *and a half* cents an hour; and I worked on the Fourth of July one time, and I got paid triple-time—I made *five dollars* in an hour! *Woah!* That was *awesome* back then!

And then I got offered a job where my *pre*-overtime rate was about eight dollars an hour, and there was overtime every day; and I just thought, "Okay, I'll go do that!" And in *that* job, I now had come to know the Lord; I had now read Ephesians, and I tried to apply it as diligently as I could: I worked *really hard*. And this was a pretty kind man. The results were very pleasing; I became his favorite. It resulted in, if there was a choice between two things to do, I usually got the better one. He played favorites—but that was okay, because I was his favorite; that's how I thought about it.

But one day, he sent me on a very specific errand, and he told me to lie to a customer. I'll never forget her name: it was Mrs. Honoroff—and we all thought she was "off," never "on." She had dealt with nearly everybody in this company. She was, to be as kind as I can: *totally* abrasive, systematically irritating; she just could not say *anything* without an edge on it, and she was usually angry, and she was upset with something that had been done or not done the way she wanted, and she had made *everybody* miserable. And it came to me that day: "Okay, take this thing back to her, and here is what you're to say," and he told me to lie. Wow! All of a sudden, the very same Scriptures that I had obeyed to become this guy's favorite required me to say: "I can't obey you." That was interesting!

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Now, I'm glad to say: We worked it out, and I was still his favorite. As I drove to where I was [going], I figured out what I was going to say to Mrs. Honoroff that would be honest, and I was going to go tell my boss what happened. And is God good or what—*she wasn't home!* And I worked it out. And I said, "Gene, I really appreciate working for you. I love this job! College is expensive, and you are taking a big edge off of that, and I thank you. But, Jesus Christ is my Lord, and I can't lie. I'm not lying when I tell you I like working here, but I can't lie for you."

On a moral issue like honesty, it is not disrespectful to explain why you can't obey, and to seek another course of action. And if you do it in a loving and respectful way (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-25), you are almost certainly going to create an opportunity to *share your faith!* And, if you have to stand up and refuse to do something wrong, that might be God's way to suggest you need a new job—by making you unemployed! Who do you answer to? If somebody says, "Lie for me to keep your job," *you don't need that job!* You don't *want* that job! You *can't* stay in that job, and do it "as unto the Lord"!

Spiritual Labor Law Number 3: Be Conscientious: With "sincerity of heart," *work hard* for what you get paid to do. Give your employer 60 minutes of diligent work for what you get paid to do.

Now, since this is all about me, and I've told you my last job as a non-Christian and my first two jobs as a Christian; by then, I had gotten a pretty good handle on this, and I got a new summer job between college and graduate school, before I went to seminary. And I decided to apply them. When I began that job—different state, different company, same industry—I determined that I was going to work as hard as I could, all the time that I was being paid; and it didn't take very long: I quickly won the respect of the owner, over and above the others who began to work at the same time as me. And this was a case where, if there wasn't work, the summer hires didn't get called in; so if there is just a little bit of work, one gets called in; and if he had to call somebody else, he would call once—if they didn't answer on the first ring, he would hang up and call me. It is okay if you are the favorite, as long as you're not *playing* favorites, alright? That's meant to be funny...

He called me in to his office on Friday afternoon of the fourth week that I had been there. How many of you in the corporate world have been called in on Friday afternoon—it is almost *never* good. And I thought, "Uh-oh, this is the end, and I hope he makes it painless." And he said, "You know, I have some needs in our company, and I have my eye on you." And what he did was, he promoted me to a position that, in that company, usually it came in 12 increments: If you were faithful, you got a raise once a month every month for 12 months; and then at the end of the year, you got a bigger raise and you got to a new status in the company. He jumped me 11 steps forward! He even let me take trucks that belonged to him and drive them all over the Midwest, across state lines and doing all of these things.

Sometimes applying these principles pays dividends other than strictly spiritual blessings. But understand: It's *not* about whether you get the raise, it's "as unto the Lord"! And the fringe benefit of the way I had approached that job was: I got to tell some of my fellow employees about Christ. "Why did *you* get that deal?" And I would say, "Well, you'll have

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Scripture Text: Eph. 6:5-9 (Ephesians #44)

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to ask the boss why *he* did it; but I can tell you: I'm just doing this 'as unto the Lord,' and God is in control of my life. And you can have that same joy, if you want to." And, by the way: That also opened the opportunity to be *deeply resented* and *ridiculed* by some people who felt that my motive was to show *them* up! And I could say, "No, it's about God." God meant all along: This should be how His people work (cf. Ecc. 9:10).

So: Obey, Respect Your Employer, Work Hard—but none of that actually falls together until you get the Fourth one: Have the Right Motivation. It goes back to: "as to Christ."

Who are you working for? There is *no difference* between your job and your spiritual life; your job just happens to be a place in which you can *illustrate* what your spiritual life actually is (cf. 1 Thess. 4:11-12). And I don't know exactly how this is going to work itself out in practice for you; you'll have to make your own applications. But understand, I can say for you today: I am doing my "job," if you want to be earthly about it; and I really like you, and I really enjoy the fellowship, and I enjoy being liked...And that doesn't matter. Ultimately, what matters is that I can go home today and I can say: "Christ I did my best to explain what Your Word means, and to call Your people and encourage Your people to rally around it. I have been faithful to You."

Obedience, Respect, Conscientiousness, and the Right Motivation. And Verses 6 through 8 just repeat everything that is in Verse 5. And then, let's skip ahead: Spiritual Labor Laws for Employers. Do you know what they are? They are exactly the same as the Spiritual Labor Laws for Employees. "Masters, do *the same things* to them, and give up threatening"—you're serving the Lord.

Wherever you work—or go to school or volunteer or arrange a community picnic—whatever you are doing, you should be the most faithful person in the organization. The only caveat on that is if there is another Christian in the organization who has been there longer than you, and has had more time to develop a reputation for doing this. If you are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2), *everything* you do is "as unto Him"—for His "glory" (1 Cor. 10:31; cf. Col. 3:17), whether you are a wife, a husband, a child, a parent, an employee—a "slave"; or an employer—a "master"; your duty is to be a Spirit-led servant of Christ. That's why I chose the title for all these paragraphs: "Spirit-Led (fill in the blank)"—because that is what this is all about.

And let's pray:

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your Spirit, who inspired—guided—the writing of Your Word. And Father, I know that some of my brothers and sisters here today are going to get up tomorrow and go into a situation where it is not a friendly environment for serving "as unto You." Keep their eyes on You, encourage them, create Gospel opportunities for them. Some of my brothers and sisters have sought to do this, and they have been persecuted in their job situation—even sometimes, the job being taken away. You know all of that, Father. Guide them, direct them, provide for them, and above all: Make it be that wherever we are, in whatever roles we find ourselves, we are illustrations of what a Spirit-led child of God is all about. Have Your way with each of us to that end, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.