

Christ in Your Workplace, #2

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Ephesians 6:5-8
Preached on: Sunday, March 6, 2016

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

As we talk about Christ in the workplace and we're going to be in Ephesians 6, I'd invite you to turn there which is where we're going to be in Ephesians 6. I'm very mindful as we talk about the workplace that we enter into an area that for some is a source of great satisfaction and your work brings you a lot of joy and happiness and this message will reinforce that and will give you a sense of gratitude to our Lord, I trust, that you're able to do what you do and make your living at something you enjoy. I'm also mindful that as we come that for many work becomes a place of discouragement and frustration either through having a difficult boss to work with or perhaps business isn't going so well or you've been mistreated and you're even feeling a little bit cynical about the whole matter of your job. Wherever you may fit on that spectrum, let me invite you to come to this passage from Ephesians 6 with an expectation that the Lord is going to refresh and encourage your heart. As a believer in Christ, you should not allow yourself to drift into a sense of cynicism about your work or a sense of resentment or bitterness because you feel like you're being treated unfairly. No, Christ calls you to a particular heart attitude in your work that is independent of the circumstances in which you find your employment.

So with that in mind, let me invite you to look at Ephesians 6:5-8 as I read it and set it in our minds. Paul here is turning to another practical relationship as the outworking of Christian salvation. He has talked about how God saved us and he praises God for salvation in the first three chapters of Ephesians and then he calls us to walk in a manner that is worthy of the great grace that has been poured out upon us. Among other things, he says you walk in a worthy manner in your marriage, in your parent/child relationships, and now he has pivoted to another practical realm of life and we see how practical Christianity is and how day-to-day it affects everything that we do and are. So Ephesians 6:5-8 is our text for this morning.

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; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Now, last time we looked at the reality of slavery in the first century and we saw that it's not something that is really directly comparable to what we know from our American experience of slavery in the South prior to and during the Civil War. Slavery in the first century in the Roman empire was something that was common. It was moderate in the way that slaves were treated, and slavery was covering a diverse range of responsibilities from common attendants to those who were doctors and managers of trusts and estates and things of that nature; there was a broad range of slavery and it was not nearly as severe as it is sometimes painted by those who teach on the subject and we looked at a number of things to support that assertion. Paul was speaking into a situation that was common in life, that is a realm where many people lived, they had responsibilities to those for whom they worked and Paul is addressing that and so it's something that is very easily transferable to us here in the 21st century to realize that in our workplace, those of us that work for bosses, for supervisors, for those that have authority over us, we find ourselves stepping into a realm that is directly and immediately applicable to the things that we do. So whether you work for the government in some capacity or whether you're working in private industry, here you can find that which gives direction to your approach to the way that you make your living and what we said last time is this: is that you must realize when you are a Christian, that the presence of Christ in your life changes everything. The fact that you, as we have been singing here today, singing about Christ as King, recognizing that he is the one ultimately who is God and Lord and Ruler and your ultimate and final Master over your life and when you realize that Christ has orchestrated the circumstances of your life to put you in exactly the situation that you find yourself in today, you are as a product of the outworking of the oversight and providence of God in your life, then you are able to give your service, to give your work, with a mindset that looks beyond your earthly master and says, "I'm doing this for Christ because he is my Lord. I'm doing this for Christ because he is the one who has put me here." Let me just remind you from what we looked at last week, verse 5, you see this in each aspect of the passage, he says in verse 5, serve your masters, be obedient to them as to Christ, verse 5. First 6, serve them as slaves of Christ. Verse 7, render your service as to the Lord. Verse 8, realize that you're going to receive back from the Lord.

So right there you have something that supernaturally transforms your whole perspective on what you do in life and really this would apply even to students as I know we have many young people in the audience, for you to be mindful that this is an attitude for you to adopt toward your instructors as well. Not that you embrace every worldly philosophy that they might try to pour down your throat, but rather that you approach them with a sense of respect and deference and sincerity in your own heart as you receive their instruction. This is something that helps all of us. And here's the thing, beloved, here's the thing that you and I need to keep in mind: the presence of Christ in your life, the presence of Christ in your workplace, changes absolutely everything. All of a sudden your work is no longer simply about the horizontal relationships and alternately getting frustrated or being pleased with what's happening at work or with your boss, whether he's competent or incompetent, the presence of Christ changes everything because here's the way that this passage is instructing you to think about your work: your work is your sphere of service to Christ. It is what God has given to you to be an outworking of your devotion to Christ and so you are serving Christ in your workplace even if your duties are entirely

secular and human in nature. You are serving Christ and here is what that means: our Lord Jesus Christ, your Lord Jesus Christ, has ordained your present master, the one who has authority over you; that present supervisor that you have is someone who represents the authority of Christ in your life. That's why Paul can say you do this, you serve this way as to Christ, as to the Lord, doing the will of God as a slave of Christ.

So you approach this with a sense of reverence therefore, you say, "Wow, all of a sudden I'm thinking vertically. I'm responding to Christ here. Christ calls me to certain attitudes and certain conduct and certain motivations that far transcends the earthly master, that far transcends anything that that earthly master intends." Christ has appointed this for you as the sphere in which you would respond to him in this time in your life. So we let that sink in a little bit. We contemplate that. You know, I think about it in terms of some of the past employment that I have had in the secular workplace and matters of ministry in which I served in the past and realize that there were some successes and failures on my own part. There were times when I spoke quite out of place to my earthly boss, Christian boss. I'm ashamed of it thinking back on it sometimes and the things that I said to him, speaking back and being critical rather than supportive in the way that I approached things as a younger man in the workplace. This was not good. You see, beloved, here's the way that we need to think about it: your compliance in your work responsibilities or your resistance as the case may be, is ultimately compliance or resistance to Christ himself. When God has established this authority over you and says you respond to this as I instruct you in Ephesians 6, the mindset that you bring to that is ultimately when you clear away all of the external human factors in it, ultimately you're responding to Christ in the way that you approach things in the workplace. So here's a question, you know: is your workplace attitude reflective of a love and a devotion and a faithfulness to Christ or is your irritability and your frustration and your resistance and even defiance, as the case may be, reflecting on the fact that you are defying the Lord himself in what you do? These are probing questions, aren't they? As we see the text, we'll see how it is that we are to go about approaching our workplace and being mindful of Christ in the workplace.

What's the general principle that Paul calls slaves, calls servants, calls workers to? Look at verse 5, notice how unqualified it is. Verse 5, he says, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh." He says, "Be obedient." Do you want to see something interesting? That is the exact same word with which he addresses children in chapter 6, verse 1. Look at that with me here just to give you a sense, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Same word being used here in verse 5. Just as children are to obey their parents in a comprehensive way, so also you in the workplace are to obey your master in a comprehensive way. What do you mean by obedience? Let's not make this too complicated: do what they tell you to do. And there is a way, you know, I had an interesting conversation. I had a long conversation about this principle with someone who is in a completely different geographic region, has no connection whatsoever with our church so I'm not talking about anybody in here and so you can kind of say, "Okay, what was said to this man?" without worrying about there being a hook at the end for you. He's in a situation where he dislikes what's happening and he questions the integrity of some of the decisions that are being made but he's not at a level, the decisions are being made at a high level of the organization and yet he's like two, three,

maybe four rows down, rungs down in the food chain, so to speak. And one of the things that we talked about as he's kind of wrestling through this and thinking through it and trying to be a godly man in the midst of it, I appreciate the effort that he's making as he works through these issues, one of the things that this means is this: it means that if you are under the authority of a master, if you're under the authority of supervisors in the workplace, while you might have the opportunity to interact with them about decisions that are being made, that that you have the opportunity to give your input on it, once the decision is made, once the boss says, "This is the way it's going to be," it is not your prerogative as a Christian worker to substitute your judgment for the decision that was made and rebel against it and say, "No, I'm not going to do it that way." That's not obedience. That's not doing what they say.

So one of the aspects of this and it's actually liberating if you think through it rightly, one of the liberating aspects of this is to recognize that it is neither your duty nor your prerogative to substitute your judgment once the full decision has been made, the issues have been discussed and they say, "This is the way it's going to be." It is not your prerogative in that subordinate position to think that it's your place to substitute your judgment and say, "That's not right. That's not the way it should be done." That's not Christian obedience. That's not doing what they say to do. So you need to be mindful of the fact that there is a place for you as a Christian worker, and this is so fundamental, to realize that there is a place for you to subordinate your judgment and not try to second-guess every decision that is made because that is not the realm of authority that has been given to you. So you accept that. You receive it. Even if your judgment is different, you realize that your judgment is subordinate to the greater call of Christ on your life to obey your master according to the flesh. And do you know what, when you do that, do you know what it does? You accept that, you respond to it, it eliminates a lot of conflict in your relationship with your superiors because all of a sudden you're not trying to contest their judgment with your own. You line up, this is in part what the whole principle means throughout Ephesians 6, you line up under their authority and you comply and say, "Yes, sir. Yes, ma'am," as the case may be. You're not meant to be a spur in their saddle once the decisions have been made.

And how can you do that? How would Christ call you to that? What does that attitude look like? Paul, having stated the general principle in verse 5, now lays out the details and the implications of it, and what Paul is doing here is he's bringing heavenly principles to bear upon earthly life. The way that you respond to the authority of Christ in your life provides for you, if you are walking in the Spirit, if you are walking in obedience to Christ, it gives you a parallel, it gives you a mindset that is supposed to easily transfer over into these earthly realms in which you walk. So you look beyond your boss to see the authority of Christ who put him over you and when that is clear in your mind, you're left with two things, you're left with two things as we see in this passage: you can embrace the right mindset and you can embrace the right motivation for your work. That's going to be our two-part outline: the right mindset in the workplace and the right motivation in the workplace.

Paul leads us, first of all, to the workplace mindset beginning in verse 5. Let's look at verse 5 with me again. He 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." Now, notice something right from the start that is a big help in this, Paul says, "obey those who are your masters according to the flesh." In other words, he's saying two things, one is to recognize that they are masters but it's only in a human realm. That right there gives you a start to understand that there are transcendent things that can motivate you through this. Their authority over you is only in the human realm. They're not masters of your soul. They're not captains of your conscience. So their authority is limited to that human realm that has been given to them and so you can obey them in that human realm, being mindful of the fact that the more important priorities, the things that hold the greater center of your affections, belong to a spiritual realm that is outside of their control, outside of their influence. You're under the complete Lordship of Christ as a Christian. You belong to a loving Master who is in heaven and your earthly realm is just one aspect of the greater things that inform everything about your life.

So you can say, "Okay, this is just according to the flesh. I can live with some discomfort. I can live with some injustice here. I can live with my opinion not prevailing because this isn't my highest priority anyway in terms of what happens here in the workplace." So Paul says, "Once this is clear in your mind that your service is ultimately to Christ and that your master is only over a human realm that doesn't exhaust everything that's important to you, then you can start to approach this and say, okay, I've got a perspective here that I can respond to. I'm in a position of strength here. Christ died for my sins. Christ rose again. Christ has redeemed me forever to be with him in heaven. So ultimately life is really great for me because it comes out with me being face-to-face with Christ my Savior in heaven forever and ever and ever. Amen. How could anything be bad in life for me? Look at how good I've got it. Do you realize where I'm going to be? I'm going to be in heaven. This is awesome. Okay, now I've got to deal with this earthly issue." At least I've got a mindset to start with. I'm dealing with this from a position of strength. And what is your mindset? Paul details four attitudes that should inform your mindset in the workplace all of which flow from the reality of your Christian salvation; all which flow from a vertical dimension to life that you belong to Christ and that you love him.

First of all, how should you approach your work then? Now we get down to the nitty-gritty. First of all, you work with respect toward your earthly master. You work with respect toward that boss or supervisor. Look at verse 5 with me. Here we are looking at the mindset that informs the way that you think about your work. Verse 5, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh," here it is, "with fear and trembling." With fear and trembling. This is not the cringing fear of, "Don't hit me." That's not the mindset at all. We know that because slavery predominantly was not like that to begin with. This aspect of fear and trembling is referring to an earnest attitude that understands that that master represents to you the authority of Christ. You realize that even when you go into your work realm, that you are entering into a realm that Christ is Lord over, that Christ has commanded you on, that Christ has ordained and orchestrated for you and all of a sudden you're viewing this from a perspective of a Christ-centered

mindset and you say, "This is so much more than about my paycheck and my duties. This is what God has given to me in life. This is where the Lordship of Christ has led me. This is where I find myself under the rule of Christ and Christ is holy. Christ is good. Christ is merciful and I want to please him with this aspect of my life." So all of a sudden the presence of the holiness of God, the holiness of Christ, is influencing the way that you approach your workplace attitudes. So yes, indeed, you approach it with fear and trembling because you say, "I want to please Christ here. Christ sees me and I want to respond rightly to him."

Look over at Colossians 3, a parallel passage. Colossians 3. We'll bounce back to here a couple of times and here in this passage you can see even more clearly how Paul has in mind the idea of fearing the Lord in your workplace. Colossians 3:22, "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart," here it is, "fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men." So Scripture says you approach your workplace with a mindset that, "I am going in here fearing Christ, fearing the Lord, being mindful that I am ultimately accountable to him with how I live in the midst of what he has given me." So all of a sudden it's transformed from whether your boss is smart or ignorant; whether your boss is fair and generous or whether he's unkind and stingy, and you say, "This is what the Lord has given to me and I will respond with respect to my earthly master because I realize that in a greater sense I'm responding to the authority of Christ himself in my workplace." You honor Christ as your Lord by the way that you respond to the master that he has given to you. Stated differently, stated differently, you respect your master not for his intrinsic worth himself, you respect your master for the sake of Christ because this is what Christ calls you to and Christ is Lord over all in a comprehensive sense and so you respond with with respect that is worthy of one who claims to know the fear of God in their lives.

Go back to Ephesians now. You work with respect, secondly, you work with integrity. You work with integrity and I know that this will step on toes. I know that here as we get into this realm, that ultimately we're no doubt getting into matters that are right in your kitchen and that's the way it should be with the word of God. We should welcome the word of God to rebuke us, sometimes to bruise us in life because we realize that we need the correcting, instructive influence of God's word in our life to sanctify us in the direction that Christ would have us to go. And secondly as we address this, as we receive God's word this way, you work with integrity. You work with integrity.

Look at verse 5 with me again, he says, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh." I know I've read this already like six times. I'll probably read it seven or eight times by the time we're done here simply by the force of repetition to let this sink in because do you know what the problem is? And I can speak from personal experience here: the problem is that we try to justify ourselves. You try to justify your perspective, your assessment of the situation and say, "This is the way that things should be done. I am right and they are wrong." Well, maybe in one sense you are right but that's not the issue, the question is not the issue itself, the question is how are you responding to the authority that's in your life. And Paul is calling you to think in terms of

the authority rather than the day-to-day issues and he says, "You deal with your master with respect and you do your work," verse 5 there, "in the sincerity of your heart." In other words, do it with integrity. Here's what that means for you and you can do this. All of this is completely attainable through the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells you. And if there's resistance in your heart to it, realize that the problem is not your work situation, it's an attitude of the heart that God's word needs to come like a scalpel and excise it from you, to change you, to pull out that sinful attitude and replace it with that which is godly.

So what does this integrity mean? What does this sincerity of heart mean? It means that you embrace your position that God has given you and you give your best effort to what the master assigns to you, what your boss gives to you. Not saying, "I don't like this and therefore I'm not even going to try. I'm going to sit and pout." How could that possibly honor Christ? Remove, excise the earthly master from it and realize that this is what Christ has given to you to do. Mundane, meager, whatever the case may be whether it's glorious or ordinary is irrelevant. Do you see that? It's irrelevant. Rather you receive it and say, "This responsibility in front of me today is what Christ himself has for me to do and therefore I'm going to respond to Christ with this." As soon as you see that, you realize how utterly unthinkable it is to say, "I don't like this. I'm not going to do this. This is unfair. This is not right." Oh, here's one, "I'm better than this." You're better than that which Christ would have you to do? No, we can't think that way, can we? That doesn't make any sense. That doesn't make any sense and I realize that for some of you perhaps the world has completely missed your genius and excellence. I realize that and what an uncomfortable position that is to be in, but do you realize that's not the point? Do you realize that we can narrow all of this down and simplify things when we remember that this is as to the Lord as a slave to Christ, that is for the Lord? All of a sudden these mundane things that you don't like are elevated to a realm of, "Wow, this is what I get to do for Christ? This is within my capabilities? I get paid for serving Christ? What a wonderful position for me to be in." So you embrace it and whatever it is, even in the most meager of circumstances, you do it to the honor of Christ whatever the master assigns you.

Look at verse 5, "in the sincerity of your heart," and notice that Paul is addressing the core of your being. Not external compliance. He's asking, Scripture is examining what is your heart like in the workplace? In the inner center of your being, is there a sincerity? Is there an earnestness? Is there an absence of cynicism and a glad enthusiasm to embrace what is here before you? That's exactly the standard that Christ calls you to. You see, all of a sudden it's not about your boss, is it? It's not about the duties that you have to do. It's God's word coming to you. It's Christ coming to you through his word and saying, "My beloved child, this is what I want in your heart. This is what I want you to bring forth out of the fruit of your life." "But Lord, my boss..." No. No, let's not go there. We don't go there. "But Lord, this...." No, we don't go there either. Just stop and realize the influence and the authority of Christ in your life, let the authority of Christ, the direction of Christ, the authority of God's word be that which conforms your heart to what you're being called to here. This is the word of God over your heart and the circumstances at work are incidental to it. That's so vital for you to see.

So you embrace it with integrity. You embrace it with respect. For some of you, and I know this has been true of me in the past as well, I'm speaking as one who has been bruised and rebuked by this passage even as I share it with you from here: some of you probably need to stop talking badly about your boss to others. To speak of him with respect, without delving into critiques of his bad attitude or his character or something like that. Realize even in his human failings and even in his human sinfulness, even being an unbeliever, he still has that place of authority over you that Christ has given to him therefore the restraint of your heart should be one of respect, of integrity, of a sense of deference that reflects that Christ is ultimately the one who has established your position there. Respect and integrity marking that which will be the wealth of a Christian worker bringing forth what's in his heart.

There's one other thing I would say about this. I've thought about this often. As you look at the continued decay of our culture, of our society, of our workplace, realizing that we're talking about an attitude and a work ethic that is completely contrary to what seems to be getting embraced in the workplace today, people are lazy, people are protected by many labor laws that make it unlikely for them to feel any real discipline for their misconduct in the workplace, do you know what I'm certain is going to manifest over the coming decades, over the coming years, those of you who are young people? I promise you, I promise you based on the authority of God's word that those who are Christians in the workplace are going to stand out with their excellence. These kinds of attitudes are going to stand out because they will be an increasingly diminishing aspect of the workforce in general and when a godly Christian shows up in a secular workplace with this kind of attitude, beloved, as a practical matter, there is a lot of opportunity available for somebody like that. Having been in a supervisory position as well as in an underling position, supervisors, bosses notice when people do their work well with a good attitude. It's amazing that that stands out. Well, you young people, realize that what God is laying out for you here as you set your heart attitudes for your workplace, some of you have a new job to look forward to, you say, "Do you know what? I'm going to start right here and I'm going to embrace this here in my first job. I'm going to embrace it and I'm going to be like this and let God take it wherever it goes," rather than being a smart alec, a critic, a cynic; rather than melding into the cynical mindset of those workers that are around you. Don't take your cues from the people, the critics, the disaffected, disillusioned people that you work with. Take your cues from God's word and let him bless you accordingly. Absolutely. And those of you that know people in our church that have oversight, supervisory functions, ask them if you have any question about this, ask them if what I just said wasn't completely true. They'll tell you. They'll affirm, "Yes, we notice when workers have good attitudes and there are doors that open to those with good attitudes just because we appreciate the fact that we've got somebody that we can work with rather than somebody we are having to drag or someone we are having to fight with with what goes on." Young people, here's your opportunity. Set your character according to this now.

Thirdly, we said respect and integrity, these things kind of overlap; thirdly, you should work with honesty. Look at Ephesians 6:6. You should work with honesty. It says, "not

by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ." This word for eyeservice, it has the idea of working only when the boss is watching and every one of us who has ever worked in a workplace know exactly what this is talking about. You all know either from personal experience or from seeing other people do it what it's like and how the work effort multiplies when suddenly the boss walks into the room. They say, "Oh, the boss is here. I've got to get to it." You know, and you start doing what it was you were supposed to be doing all along. And now the internet enables eyeservice, just being mindful of the fact, I'm only mentioning sports to illustrate a spiritual point. The college basketball tournament is coming up soon and you can go to the website where the games are broadcast online and they actually, last year anyway, they actually had a boss button that you could click on instantly that would shut down the broadcast and show the work that you were supposed to be doing on the computer screen, an easy way to implement eyeservice. Watch the game, if you happen to hear the boss coming, click this button and everything will look good. It's incredible. A whole industry has been given over to enabling eyeservice with the NCAA basketball tournament.

Well, whatever we think about that, understand, Christian, that that's not your way of life; that you're not just doing the work when the boss is present, brothers and sisters in Christ, that discrepancy in your character and conduct should not exist. There should be a continued constant effort that gives the best of your honesty, the best of your integrity to the task at hand. And here's how you think about that, here's how you motivate this, again, it's vertical in dimension, you're mindful that Christ is watching you all the time even if the boss isn't. Look at verse 6 with me again, "not by way of eyeservice," just serving externally to what men can see and pleasing men with what you do, not that, "but," by way of contrast instead you say, "I'm a slave of Christ here and I'm going to do the will of God from my heart." In other words, you give yourself freely, you give yourself wholeheartedly, you engage the whole inner man to the task at hand. Why? Because it's God's will for you. Because Christ is a gracious Master. Because you love Christ with all of your heart and you're responding to Christ in the workplace and you say, "I'll do this wholeheartedly for the Lord just as if he had called me to preach to a million people at one time and I would do that enthusiastically." Well, if Christ gave you that, great, but if Christ gives you a mundane task, do you realize, do you see that your love and devotion and affection for Christ, the supremacy, the honor of Christ require the same wholehearted response in the mundane as it does to the magnificent? This is all about responding to Christ, transcending the workplace with a sense of integrity that reflects your understanding that Christ is present and sees your effort even when men do not.

Paul gives one more point for setting the proper mindset in the workplace that is found in verse 7 when he says, "With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Good will being a sense of cheerfulness, a sense of glad heartedness, a recognition that, "I'm going to be earnest here. I'm going to be sincere here. I'm going to do everything I can to bring a godly, constructive, positive attitude, good will toward the service that I'm giving to my earthly master."

So let's review it here. Paul says in verse 5 as he's talking about this mindset, "Slaves, be obedient." That's the overarching attitude. That's the overarching command. And then he gives you a mindset that informs the nature of the obedience you are to remember, "with fear and trembling," in other words, with respect, "in the sincerity of your heart," with an integrity, a whole heartedness about it, "not by way of eyeservice," a negative that says this isn't merely external but it's the game that you bring to the task every single time. Then verse 7, "With good will render service," with a cheerfulness, with a glad heartedness that is an overflow of the wonder that you have, the blessing that you sense from belonging to Christ and being able to live for him in this life. That's the mindset. That's the right mindset. The Christian worker is ultimately marked by his good attitude in the workplace and Paul has just given us different ways to look at it.

Now, Paul doesn't leave us there. He doesn't simply lay out this mindset and say, "Now go do it," he gives you a motivation to encourage you as well. We've seen the workplace mindset, the attitude that characterizes it, now we look at the workplace motivation. What is it that motivates you? Watch this, what is it that motivates you through perhaps a low paying job but it's what you've got to do right now? What is it that motivates you to carry on when your boss or your supervisor is harsh and unbending and unkind to you and you're still called to respond in this way because it's independent of your boss, what do you do with that? Even if you have a good opportunity and you like what you do and you like the people that you work with and you're very encouraged, what is it that motivates you even further than a human circumstance? Look at the workplace motivation in verse 8. Paul says in verse 8, "knowing that." He says, "You be settled and convinced in your convictions about what I'm about to say because as you know what I'm about to say, you find that it will fuel those motivations that I have just expressed, the motivations that are the outworking of obeying your master. So obey your master with this kind of attitude," and that's verses 5 to 7, why? God graciously gives us a promise, gives us an indication, gives us information to inform the whole way that we think about not only our workplace but all of life, verse 8, "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." What is the workplace motivation? Here it is, here's what you keep in mind to keep yourself stepping forward, walking forward, living this way in the midst of your workplace situation: you are mindful that God has promised to reward you in a way that goes far beyond your present situation. If you are serving Christ in your workplace in the way that we've been talking about, then your ultimate reward itself comes from Christ. Do you know what that means? It's going to be good because how does Christ reward us? How has Christ dealt with us? He has dealt with us graciously, mercifully, abundantly, beyond all that we could ask or think. Well, you realize that Christ deals with you that way and say, "Do you know what? He sees. He has commanded this, he has promised to reward me, then I can throw myself into this oblivious to the external circumstances because I realize that Christ is faithful and will keep his promise to bless me for honoring him in the way that he said to do it."

Look at verse 8 again, "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." Now, beloved, mark this: the Lord has appointed a final day of judgment in which even us as believers, you and I as believers in Christ, will stand before him to receive a reward for the way that we have

lived our lives. He will reward, notice what it says in verse 8, "knowing that," notice this carefully, "knowing that whatever good thing each one does." Individually by name, Christ sees it, Christ keeps his own books, as it were. And it says that he will reward you for your service at that time and if you pour yourself into this kind of workplace mindset, serving Christ in your workplace, at the end of the day, using day in the great big sense of the word, at the end of time, at the end of life when you stand before Christ, Christ says, "I will honor you. I will reward you." It will be abundant and gracious so with the way that you're approaching work in this life today, this week, this month, as you're approaching it this way, understand that you're making deposits, as it were, on that future day of reward from Christ. And ask yourself, what kind of reward do you want then? What do you want, how do you want Christ to respond to you? And it's wrapped up in this promise that if you serve with this kind of attitude and you serve with this wholehearted delight despite the comparative worth of your earthly master, Christ is waiting at the end to pour blessing upon you and he won't lose track. You don't have to worry about whether you're getting the proper reward, the proper notice, the proper opportunities here in this life. Just be faithful to the duty that's given and trust Christ to honor you in the end is what this says.

Go back to Colossians 3. This just takes everything into a whole different realm. Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men." I nearly jumped ahead here. Verse 24, "knowing that," you see, it's the exact same parallel, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive," future tense, "you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." So in the context of slave/master relationships, Paul says, "You are serving the Lord Christ," and how does that motivate you? Christ reward his servants. He honors his slaves. He honors his disciples. He blesses them. So Christ has laid a task before you in your workplace. He said, "Here's how I want you to do it with these kinds of attitudes," and he says, "just follow me, walk with me, honor me, do what I tell you to do as I tell you to obey your master, and in the end I'm going to provide reward and blessing upon you." And all of a sudden the day-to-day injustices don't matter. They're really inconsequential. All of a sudden the pay scale differences are irrelevant, inconsequential, because you're mindful of the fact that Christ is the ultimate one whom you are serving.

So here's the thing, beloved, and we're wrapping this up now, that future perspective, "I will stand before Christ and he will reward me for living my life the way that he wants me to do as a believer. He'll reward me." You take that future certainty and you pull it into the present and let it inform and motivate everything that you do in your job now and suddenly, remember in another context Christ was talking about, "He who gives a little, when a cup of water in my name, will not lose his reward," well, all of a sudden, giving cups of water to little ones, cleaning up after messy animals if that's your job, all of a sudden you realize that there is a greater eternal significance attached to this and that, "This is what Christ has given me. I do this under Christ and Christ will pay me back in the end."

Colossians 3:25, I think I turned back a little too soon. There is a little bit of a warning embedded in it also, "For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong

which he has done, and that without partiality." Just being mindful that Christ is faithful but he's also no man's sucker. A Christian who neglects this in the workplace does so to his own detriment in the end.

Now, wrapping this up at Ephesians 6:8. I love the way that Paul ends this. This is such a great encouragement but we're just going to touch on it. He says, verse 8, "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord," whoa, look at that last clause, "whether slave or free." Whether slave or free. Paul says, "The question is not who was the boss here." That's not going to be the question that Christ is asking at the end of time. That question isn't going to matter. The question is going to be who did the will of God in his life? You were a slave, okay, that was at an earthly level. Now the question is as you're before Christ in judgment, the question is what did you do as a slave? Did you do as a slave what I commanded you to do? And the slave that is obedient to Christ, the worker that honors Christ even in a menial position, is going to be far better situated on that day before Christ than the one who had earthly authority but neglected Christ in the process or disobeyed Christ in the process. Better to be on the final day before Christ, better to have been a slave with menial tasks faithfully done than to have been the CEO who neglected Christ and now stands before him naked, as it were, and Christ saying, "You did not do what I had for you in your life." The question is for you as you sit here today, where are you going to fall on the side of that coin? Is the work difficult? Is the work menial? Does it get discouraging? I've been there and it gets kind of, it can be a drag. I get that. That's not the point. If your work is difficult, beloved, take the long view and take the vertical view. You're doing your work as to Christ with an expectation of future reward from him. He will bless you perhaps in this life, most certainly in the life to come. So how do you respond? Where do we walk out from today? Simply with this: give yourself to your duty with the right mindset and the right motivation and then commit the outcome to Christ.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we trust you to keep your promise to us. We thank you that there is a coming day when earthly distinctions will no longer matter and it will simply be us in the presence of Christ receiving our reward from him for our lives as Christians. Having said that, Lord, we realize that we have made an assumption all the way through this message, we have assumed that we have been talking to Christians and in large part, Lord, I thank you that that's exactly what we've been doing. But, Father, we are mindful that there are those here who do not know Christ. Their heart convicts them but they don't know this Christ as Lord. They have not confessed sin. They have not repented and received Christ and trusted in him alone for their eternal salvation. Father, would you help them see the great transcendent issue of the Gospel call of Christ on their lives? "Come out of sin and come to me for salvation," Christ would say to them. Father, work that saving grace in their hearts. For the rest of us, Father, we ask for the sanctifying grace that whatever scope of duties you have given to us in the way in which we make our living or for our young people, in the way that they one day will make their living, O God, let this be that which informs us and motivates us to a proper service of Christ in the earthly realm that you have given to us. We thank you for the practicality of your word and how it

addresses every area of our heart in every area of life. Let us be faithful to respond in a way that brings glory to Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.