

# God's Word to Bosses

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 6:9  
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It's striking to realize that the eternal Son of God, the second person of that blessed Trinity who had all authority, stepped into earth in order to purchase our salvation. Scripture says and our Lord Jesus said that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. It's always striking, it's always humbling, nothing is more calculated to draw you to worship the Lord Jesus Christ than to remember that from his position of authority he stepped down and served humanity, sinful, separated humanity, all the way to the point of giving his life on the cross in order to purchase our salvation. The stark contrast between his great authority and his willingness to serve and the fact that he laid his life down on our behalf, brings us to a point of worship and it brings us to a point to recognize that there are consequences to that. There are implications to that and to the way that we live life and the way we think about authority and the way that we approach everything about our existence, and it has a particular application for those of us that have authority. Maybe you're a boss in a workplace, maybe you're a husband and a father with a family under you, maybe you're a government official or something of that nature, there is something that we must understand about authority from God's perspective if we are going to view it properly and if we are going to hold it properly even in an earthly sense. God gives authority to you in whatever realm you might have, be it small or broader. God gives authority to you for a single purpose and it's that you would mediate the blessing of God to those who are under your authority.

That is so crucial to understand and when you understand the position that Christ holds and that he stepped into the world and exercised his authority by laying his life down in order to be the Redeemer of sinners, you see the pattern that all of us who hold any manner of authority should think about our own. Authority is given to you not to aggregate things to yourself, not for you to be served, but for you to take that authority and turn and exercise it like Christ held his greater authority to the blessing of those that are under you. That is foundational and anyone who aspires after leadership in Christian circles, those who desire perhaps church leadership, a pastoral office, those who desire to be leaders in business or in community must understand God's perspective on authority, that it is given for you to be a channel of blessing, not for you to become a king over servants to you. That's essential and that is absolutely countercultural to the way that the world thinks about authority. When you see how politicians wield their authority in our day and age, when you see the way that leaders in families abuse their authority and use it

in wrong ways, when you see workplace leaders using things to aggrandize great wealth to themselves while misusing and abusing those that are under their authority, you see the great contrast between Christ and the world. And we have to admit, we have to acknowledge that the way Christ handles authority is far more attractive to us as believers in Christ than the way that the world does and he who had every right to command obedience and service says, "I'll come and I'll serve you." That ought to make the Lord Jesus Christ exceedingly sweet in your affections, to realize that he who could have wielded the gavel of the judge over your life gave his life in order to see you saved and reconciled to God, and that informs our perspective as we come to our text today.

Come to Ephesians 6 with me, if you would. Ephesians 6 as we open God's word once more. We're going to look at a single verse this morning because we're kind of in a closing section here before Paul moves into a new section of instruction. Ephesians 6:9 is our text and with a background thinking about our lovely Lord Jesus as we approach this text, you have a perspective on why this verse says what it says. Ephesians 6:9 says,

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.

Paul in this verse is closing a long section about household relationships. Beginning in chapter 5, verse 22, he addressed wives and husbands; he went on in chapter 6 to address children and parents. Last week, in the past two weeks actually, we saw how he addressed slaves, those who are in the workplace under the authority of masters, and now he comes to this final section, this final verse, to wrap up this household code given to the people of God for them to know how they are to behave in daily life. We have been struck, we have marveled at the fact that Christianity plays itself out in the ordinary daily relationships of life. Paul, as he's expounded the great salvation that Christ gave us in Ephesians chapters 1 through 3, and he has expounded on the election of God and the redemption of Christ and the sealing work of the Holy Spirit in the first chapter, and he has prayed that we would appropriate that into our lives, and he has rejoiced in the fact that God raised us from spiritual death with the same resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead and he goes on and he says, "Now in light of that, I call you," chapter 4, verse 1, to live a life that is worthy of that kind of great salvation. He says in chapter 5, verse 15, "You walk wisely." Chapter 5, verse 18, "You walk being filled with the Spirit." Chapter 5, verse 21, "Be subject one another in the fear of Christ." Then he lays it out in exceeding detail, "Wives, you do this. Husbands, children, parents, slaves," then he comes to masters.

And last time we so that when he spoke to slaves, he said, look at it with me there. We need to read these verses just to kind of give us momentum going into verse 9. He says in 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; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will," verse 7, "render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether

slave or free." Those of you that have jobs, you're working under masters, working under supervisors or bosses, whatever word you want to use, Scripture came to you last week and said you work with respect; you work with integrity and honesty and cheerfulness. That's the kind of worker that Christ calls you to be, someone who is reliable, dependable, submissive, obedient and faithful to the task, knowing that you're doing all of these things ultimately not for your earthly master but for your heavenly Lord, the one who gave himself for you.

Well, Paul in his very balanced way spoke to wives and then husbands, children and then parents, spoke to slaves, now in utter balance, he speaks to masters and he gives us God's word to bosses now. And we realize as we are saying this, oh, it's so important for you to understand this so that you don't click your mind off and say, "Well, I'm not a boss and so this doesn't apply to me." No, no, no, no. All of God's word applies to all of God's people in one manner or another and what we're seeing here is how God views authority that he entrusts to human leaders and so this informs the whole way that we should think about authority and you young people who aspire to grow, your future is still ahead of you, your opportunities in the workplace and in church leadership, perhaps in government roles, all of this informs the way that you should think about your future. It informs the way that if you say, "When I become a man, when I become a leader, this is the mindset for me. This is the way that I'm going to handle it. I'm going to embrace what God's word says about this now before I even get the role so that when I have the role, when I have the position, I'll handle it in the way that God wants me to do. Why? Because I love Christ and I want to do what he tells me to do." It's pretty simple, really, and so we look at this in chapter 6, verse 9 and we'll read the verse once more and then we'll get into three aspects of what God says to bosses, chapter 6, verse 9, look at it with me again. What a privilege for us to open God's word together, God's holy, inerrant, infallible word open before us in a language that we can understand. Isn't that wonderful? Don't ever lose sight of the value of what you have on your lap. Don't lose sight of the value of what we are able to do week by week in security and peace and in the land in which we live. We get to come to God's word and hear it and know the mind of God through what he has given to us through his apostle. It's awesome. This is a holy, reverent, joyful, wonderful time for us to spend together and in that perspective, Paul says, "Masters, you 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."

I want to give you three words that God gives to bosses and we'll structure it all from this single verse here, and the first thing that I want you to see is that there is a reciprocal obligation on bosses that applies also to slaves. The reciprocal obligation, the mutual duties that exist in the workplace. Now, as Paul writes this, he's writing to Christian bosses because he's writing to the church. He's writing to those who know what it means to have repented of sin and turned to Christ for forgiveness, and Paul writes to bosses like that, those who have been born again, those who are under the authority of Christ themselves, and he writes to them and he does something that is a striking blow against the existing culture of the time. Remember as we said that while slavery was comparatively moderate in the first century, there was still an aspect in which the masters owned the slaves as property. One man owned another man and the slave was subject to

the will of his master. And what does Paul say to the master in that relationship? Well, he says, "Just as slaves have duties to their master, masters have duties to their slaves." This was revolutionary at the time.

Look at verse 9 with me again and realize what Paul is saying here. It's so easy to sweep through this and miss the whole implication, the whole force of what he's saying. He says, "Masters, do the same things to them." He says, having addressed the slaves and said, "Slaves, you be obedient and you be respectful, full of integrity, cheerful as you do your work," and he pivots and he says, "Masters, you do the same thing." Rather than leaving the slaves in a subjection and the masters high and exalted on a throne that rises above all others, he puts the masters, in one sense, at the same level and says, "You do the same things." He links the duties of the masters to the slaves with that opening word in verse 9. Look at it with me, "and"; there's a collective reference to the workplace going on here. "Slaves, you do this and, masters, you do this." These things are to be viewed together, and what God calls on you if you're a boss, if you're an owner, if you're in leadership, what God calls on you, look at what it says there, he says, "you do the same things to them."

What same things? The things that he had just been talking about. Not in giving obedience to the slaves, that would create chaos. Having established authority and saying, "Slaves, you obey your masters according to the flesh," he didn't suddenly turn that upside down and destroy everything that he had just said. No, he's talking at a greater level of attitude and relationship, that you as a boss, you as a leader in your home or in the workplace, understand this, that just as God has called on those under your authority to give you honesty, integrity, and those qualities of respect, he says, "You are to treat the people under you just in the same way." He says, "You give them the same things. You give to your slaves, you give to your employees, those qualities of respect, of integrity, of a sense of service and honor that is fitting with the fact that they too are created in the image of God and if they are Christians, they have been redeemed in the same way that you have been." There is no intrinsic earthly superiority that belongs to a boss that allows him to dispense with the basic aspects of Christian character as he interacts with those that are under him. The 19th century commentator, Charles Hodge, says this, he says, "Masters are to act toward their slaves with the same regard to the will of God and with the same recognition of the authority of Christ and with the same sincerity and good feeling which has been enjoined on the slaves themselves."

You see, Paul is addressing the workplace in particular but, again, this just applies across all realms of authority. Those of you that have authority, those of you that are bosses, owners, supervisors in the workplace, understand this, you're employing a contractor maybe, understand this: that your attitude toward that one under you by way of earthly authority, your attitude and your action toward that person is ruled by, is commanded by, is governed by a greater Master who is over you. You call Christ Lord and it's well and good that you do, well, understand that as you hold that position of authority, you're not a sovereign. There is one sovereign in the universe and it is the Lord Jesus Christ and he is over you and he says, "This is how I command you to handle your authority over those

that are under you on earth." It's striking. It's humbling. As we are going to see, there's even an attitude of fearfulness about it.

You see, and I've been in both places. I've been under people, I've been over people in a supervisory capacity and so I've lived both sides over the course of the life the Lord has given to me, and what you have to understand is whether you're under or over, that the same Christian character is required of you vertically toward Christ and horizontally toward others. You act with integrity. You act with respect irrespective of the lines of authority that are there in the workplace. That's what God commands because, you see, ultimately it's a vertical matter. We've said this so many times, haven't we? Ultimately it's a vertical matter. We're talking about the kind of character that you are, the kind of man that you are, the kind of woman that you are, and you frame your understanding of your earthly authority by understanding that, first of all, you're a man or a woman under the authority of Christ himself and that you are to reflect the Lord Jesus in the way that you live and exist and move and breathe and have your being, and you understand that if Christ was loving and gracious toward you when you were a sinner toward him, you say, "Ah, what can I do but be loving and gracious toward those that are around me irrespective of authority because, do you know what? Christ didn't exercise his authority against me, he used it to serve me. Now that I have authority, I use it to serve." So God, to the extent that you have authority, God has given it to you so that you could have a realm in which you could more effectively serve, not to be served.

Now, this relational dynamic doesn't change the lines of authority. Slaves still have to obey their masters but masters receive this and hold their position realizing, "I'm under a greater authority. I'm under the authority of Christ." So let's sum it up here, this first point, these reciprocal obligations: employers rightly expect and require performance, respect and good service from their employees; that is their rightful due and those of us that are employees, we recognize that, we don't resent it, we honor it, we realize that this is the structure that God has established himself and we obey our bosses out of a sense of obedience to Christ. Well, those of you that have authority, understand that God holds bosses to the same standard of character and you don't suspend, oh, this is so very important, you don't suspend your Christian character when the clock starts at work. It carries on. It's a 24/7, 365 day a year rule of Christ over your heart and it should be your desire to say, "I want to be godly. I want to be a Spirit-filled Christian throughout all of my life and I want that to permeate in the workplace that I have responsibility for."

Some, many actually, commentators have noticed that really this verse here, Ephesians 6:9, it's simply an application of the golden rule that we find in Matthew 7:12, "you do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Well, if you want your employees to treat you with respect and kindness and integrity, what can you do except extend integrity, respect and kindness back to them? It's mutual. It goes both ways because the aspects of character are independent of the authority in the workplace. So you treat them the way you want to be treated. Their status under your authority doesn't diminish the ultimate fundamental position that Christian employees are brothers and sisters in Christ, and even if they are not Christians, it doesn't abolish the fact that they are men and women created in the image of God and therefore have an intrinsic dignity by their status

as human beings themselves. So we honor our employees as those made in the image of God and we honor the image of God in them. We honor those who are believers under our authority and say, "You're a brother and sister in Christ. How can I serve you with the authority that God has given to me?"

I've often told the story, I hadn't planned on it but I'm going to tell it here today. Going back, I learned this principle 30 years ago in the law firm that I worked at and I know that for some of you, first of all, the idea of a Christian attorney is an oxymoron. I get that and I also understand that the idea that an attorney would treat their employees well is probably a pretty stunning thought to you as well, but that's exactly the privilege that I had to see played out. I worked for two Christian attorneys named John and Tom back in my earlier days, they owned the firm at which I worked, and as happens in any business, the firm had its times of prosperity and times where things went down a bit, and John and Tom probably had, I don't know at the time 15, 20, 25 people that were working for them. Well, it was an extended down period of time and revenue wasn't coming in like we wanted and there was, you know, the belt had already been tightened and now jobs are on the line with what's there. That's the way it works in business, you know, the place where you can save the most money and a lot of places it's salaries. So John and Tom, as the full owners of the firm, having full of authority over everybody there and in a time of fiscal crisis, Christian men, do you know what they did? I love them to death for this to this very day, they taught me some things about leadership that I learned nowhere else: those Christian attorneys, those godly men, do you know what they did? They cut their own salaries in order to spare the jobs of those that were under their authority. That's the picture of it. To have the authority and say, "I'm going to exercise the authority to the benefit of those that are under me even at the cost of personal sacrifice." And in time, the firm recovers, people still had their jobs and everybody enjoyed the prosperity that followed.

That's the way a Christian boss does it. Not through hiding things with hidden agendas; not through just commanding people because you can; not to gather it all to yourself. God gives you that authority in the workplace so that you can secure the blessing of those who are under your authority. That's why you have it. That's what Christ did, isn't it? With all of his authority, with all of his spiritual authority, with his perfection of holiness in heaven with the worship of angels his right and entitlement, he, as it were, laid aside the cloak, the mantle that was his in heaven and said, "I'll come to earth. Do you know why? Because there are lost sinners everywhere that I need to save and I'm the only one who can do it." And with that servant mindset, holding all authority, he marches the road to Calvary and lays his life down and spills his blood for sinners like you and me. This is revolutionary. This is completely countercultural. This is not the way the world thinks. This is what marks those who are in Christ.

Look over at James 5, in a negative way you can see this. You can see, James 5, you can see that the way God views this and the accountability that goes to those. Before going to James 5, just stop over at James 3 on your way. You know, this is like stopping at the rest areas as you're going down the interstate. "Well, we'll just stop here at this rest area for just a moment and see the scenic view"; that those who have authority are those who are

going to face a stricter judgment. Those of you that are under authority, don't be too quick to be jealous of the position that you see someone else holding because God is going to hold them to a greater level of accountability than he will to you. James 3:1 in the realm of church leadership says, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren." Why? Why wouldn't everyone want to teach? Why wouldn't everyone want to be upfront and be explaining things for others? Why wouldn't you want that? Well, I'll tell you, it's right here in Scripture, don't let many of you become that way, my brethren, "knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment." Greater responsibility brings greater accountability and a stricter judgment at the hand of God. That's how God views it. When he positions you with wealth or authority, he's positioning you with responsibility that he expects you to discharge faithfully and you'll give an account in the end. Wow, if you're thinking about it rightly, this just strikes fear in your heart to realize those things are true.

Now look over at chapter 5, verse 4 in James as James rebukes those who abuse their authority and says God isn't pleased. God is not amused. James 5:4, "Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." He says, "God has heard their cries as they suffer under the injustice of being under your authority and you have taken advantage of them and you have not done what you should have done; you have not done what you said you would do. Their pay is still in your pockets. God is not pleased."

So we realize that God views this matter very seriously, that there will be an account that is given and that what God calls those who have authority to is the same standard that he calls slaves to: respect, integrity, cheerfulness, godly interactions, and to use that authority for their benefit just like Christ used his authority to save your soul. There is no escaping this, is there? There's no getting around this. There is no arguing against this. If Christ has gone this way first, then what can we do except follow in his footsteps? By what principle of righteousness would a boss say, "That doesn't apply to me"? There's nowhere to go with that. So there are reciprocal obligations: the employees serve you, you in a slightly different way, serve your employees with your authority.

Now, secondly, Paul goes on. He has laid out the reciprocal obligations, now secondly, he gives a restraint on the oversight. The restraint on the oversight we see here in verse 9 as well. Look at verse 9 with me again, he says, "And masters, do the same things to them," there is a reciprocity that goes on in master/servant relationships and then he adds to his instructions to the boss, God's word to the boss has a second element here and he says, "and give up threatening." And give up threatening. The present tense of this verb, "give it up," indicates that, oh, watch this, this is to be a defining aspect of the way that the boss operates. This is an ongoing responsibility that Paul lays on bosses and says, "This is to be the character, the tenor, the mark of the way that you lead in the workplace," if you're a master and he says, "give up threatening." In other words, the Christian boss understands something really basic, he understands that he does not operate, he does not oversee those under his authority by intimidating them, by instilling craven fear in them; he doesn't seek to control them through manipulation and threats that,

"You're going to lose your job if you don't do this right," maybe back in the day, "I'll beat you if you don't do this right. There is punishment just ahead if you don't get this straightened out." Paul says, "Stop that. That's not the way that a Christian boss operates is to intimidate through fear."

Now, in today's climate where labor relations have perhaps swung in an opposite direction of the pendulum, it's very much worth saying that Scripture certainly doesn't forbid a boss from exercising his authority. It is perfectly appropriate for a boss to discipline and correct a wayward employee and if necessary, to dismiss them from their employment because of their dishonesty or their incompetence. That's not what he's saying is to forbid an appropriate exercise of bad employees. What he's saying here is that the Christian boss cultivates an atmosphere of fairness free from arbitrary control and suspicion. He can require performance but he elicits that performance through his own character in leadership, not through fear and intimidation. Paul says, "Give up the threatening. Set it aside. Don't do it that way because that's not how a Christian boss operates."

Look over at Colossians 4:1, a parallel passage, directly parallel. It says, "Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven." So taken together we see that the Christian boss understands, "Okay, I establish a culture in the realm of my authority, one that is fair, one that is just and one where I'm not inflicting fear on people simply because I can." You see, here's the thing, if you're a boss, if you're an owner, you've got to understand something: you do not have absolutely unlimited, unfettered discretion to do absolutely whatever you want with what you have. Why? Not because there's an earthly authority that can restrain you, it's because as a Christian boss, you are under the authority of Christ and Christ says, "This is how you shall do it: justice, fairness, fair payment, prompt payment. Not fear. Not intimidation. Not a grouch. But rather operating with the same spirit of integrity, honesty and cheerfulness that were enjoined on your employees four verses earlier." It's wonderful. It's a great way to be.

Now, why is it that a Christian boss would respond to this teaching? If there's no higher human accountability in your realm, why would you do this? What would motivate you to do this if it might be in your financial interest and to control things a little more tightly, to operate the other way in an ungodly way? Well, you remember the reciprocal obligations and you say, "Okay, I've got that." You see the restraint on your oversight. You're not a free agent in your position of authority. You have to do it the way Christ tells you to do and then Paul gives a concluding reason for obedience, the reason for obedience.

Turn back to Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6:9 again. Why would you do this? A more important question is why would you not? How could you not in light of what Paul says here in verse 9 as he gives the reason for obedience? Do you know what motivates you to be an exemplary Christian boss? Theology. That's right, biblical theology drives you to be like this. Theology motivates the Christian boss to be exemplary. Look at verse 9, he says, "Masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that," here's the basis upon which you operate; here is the heart understanding from which everything



else flows; this is where you set aside the horizontal aspect of things and you see yourself alone in the presence of God. You're mindful of the vertical dimension of a Savior who redeemed you, a Savior whom you will one day see face-to-face, knowing that vertical dimension, all of a sudden there is a spiritual force in your heart to conform your character to what Scripture has called you to here. Knowing what? Verse 9, "knowing that," look at it with me, verse 9, "knowing that both there Master and yours it is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

Whoa, all of a sudden you realize, do you know what? My earthly position is actually pretty insignificant in the big picture. Rather than seeing my employees separated from me by a vertical separation, I realized that it's really a lot closer than what it might otherwise seem if I just looked at it horizontally. "I belong to Christ," you say to yourself. "I have a Master, in other words. I am under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of my life." Someone who doesn't submit to the authority of Christ is not a Christian. So you have your own Master telling you what to do and then you look over at your employee, you look at your Christian employee in particular, and you say, "Wow, do you know what? She/he, has the exact same Master I do. Christ is Lord over me and do you know what? Christ is Lord over them as well. I'm in the same position that they are ultimately. I'm under the authority of Christ. They're under the authority of Christ. By what means would I carry myself in the workplace with an egotistical air of superiority?" Bosses have an authority over them; a higher, heavenly rule abides over them.

But it goes further and this is so humbling to those of us that hold measures of authority. Verse 9, look at it with me again. This is so humbling because it's so unearthly. Paul says, "there is no partiality with Him." Follow what he's saying here. He says, "Okay, on a human level, boss, underneath them, employees. Master/slave. Lines of authority. Slaves, obey your masters." You're feeling pretty good about yourself if you're the boss in that role. You get a little bit of swagger going. "I am king here." Well, not really. Not really. Not at all because over you is another Master and the commonality that you hold with your employees is not a distinction of authority, the commonality is there is one Lord over you both and that Lord Jesus does not distinguish in his mind so as to give favoritism to the boss vis-à-vis the employee. There is no partiality like that. There is no receiving of face. There is nothing that says, "Oh, he was a CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Whoa, get back!" Christ doesn't deal with anyone that way.

No, you see, the way Christ looks at it is this way: boss and employee alike will one day stand before him. Christ will evaluate employees for their obedience to what was revealed to them in Scripture, and in like manner, bosses will stand before Christ and give an account to him for their obedience to what Christ commanded to them. The judgment will not be based, the judgment that comes when believers stand before Christ on that final day to received their reward, the judgement will not be based on, "You were the boss and therefore you get a bit more lenient curve." Just the opposite as we saw, employee and boss alike will stand before Christ and Christ will say, "And how did you obey me in the course of your Christian life?" And he will have no regard for the fact that some were bosses and some were only servants, the question will be, "What did you do with my word to you?"

And those of you that have authority, bosses, Christian business owners, understand that you will answer to God for your privileged position here on earth and that should motivate you and humble you to conduct yourself with fear and trembling during your time on earth. If you've been given privileged status here in this life, how much more so should you work out your salvation with fear and trembling? You say, "There is a higher accountability here. I've been given privileges that I'm going to answer for to Christ." Then how much more with that mindset would you come back and search your heart and say to yourself, "Am I doing the same things? Am I extending the integrity and the cheerfulness and the honesty in my dealings with those under my authority that Christ calls them to give to me?" And all of a sudden you're walking in humility before Christ because you realize the weight and force of the theology that's behind the position that you hold.

So what does that do for all of us? It puts our earthly distinctions into perspective, doesn't it? God holds us all accountable. The Christian boss looks at his employees and he cares for his employees because he understands that their well-being to the extent that it's within his sphere of opportunity, the well-being of those under your authority is a stewardship from God to you. Period. That's the way we are to think about it.

So what Paul has done here is he has closed a long discourse on human relationships that began back in chapter 5, verse 22. He walked through marriage. He walked through parenting. He walked through the workplace. Beloved, once you exhaust those areas, there's not too much left on the margins that isn't covered by what he has already said. And what can we all take away from this? What should you take away from this? Something really fundamental, basic, simple. I like simple things. I like basic things because I think the basic things define the details for us. Speaking corporately now, body of Christ, local church, Truth Community, those of us that were either spouses or parents or children, I mean, that pretty much covers everything and most of us have worked with one kind or another even if it's just in the school ground, do you see what God's word is claiming over you? God's word is claiming, the Lord Jesus Christ through his word is asserting comprehensive authority over every detail of your life; that God is calling you to submission to whatever realm and role he has given you in life to submit to his word and to recognize that it covers the totality of your existence. In family, in the workplace, in the realm of the church, there is a fundamental view of life that's in play here that says, "Christ is over all," and that there is not an aspect of your life that you should think about that is separated, divorced and unaffected by the Lordship of Christ over you. And when you recognize that basic principle and then you step into the realm of the church and it says live in harmony, be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, you say, "There's a fundamental principle under God's word that applies to me because I'm a Christian when I enter the realm of the believers." You go into your marriage, "I've got responsibilities here. Parenting, here. Workplace, here." There is this comprehensive assertion of authority of Christ over all of your life and then you realize that in God's word he has given you the provision for you to know what that is. He has given you that which equips you to do it, and then he has gone further in his gracious provision for you as a Christian, he has put his Holy Spirit inside you to empower you to live this way. So

he saves you out of sin and separates you unto God, he secures your salvation forever through his shed blood. He says, "In the short time of earth, I assert my Lordship and here's how I want you to live. I have given you a completely sufficient word to define it all for you." Then he goes further and he has given his Spirit in order for you to have the power to live that out.

So on the one hand, we're really, really grateful, aren't we, to be in Christ? And on the other hand, we're really, really humbled to realize that God has called us to a particular kind of life and expects us to follow. Is that the life that you're on? Have you taken up your cross? Have you laid down your life, taken up your cross to follow after Christ? That's the call. Do you realize, beloved, I say this a lot, I don't say it nearly enough, if I were to do it right, I would say it every single time we're it together to remind you because you're prone to forget: do you realize that you're all moving inexorably toward a time when you will stand before Christ and give an account to him? Those of you who are not saved, you're not ready for that day at all. It would be, for you it would be a day of judgment and, oh, how I plead with you to turn to Christ, to repent from your sin, to repent toward God and to put your faith in Christ for salvation because I don't want your soul to be destroyed in hell forever. That would be bad.

For those of you who are Christians, do you understand that Scripture says that we'll all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for the deeds in our body whether good or bad? Not that he's going to review our sins, he paid for our sins, he has covered those, they're never going to be held against us again. God is going to call you before the judgment seat of Christ and hold you to account to the life that you lived that he gave to you in Christ during your short walk here on earth. You're moving toward that day whether you see it or not, and beloved, don't you want that day to go well? Don't you want Christ to approve of you and say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master." That you would enter into his heavenly kingdom with a wondrous resounding trumpet announcing your arrival, "Another faithful one has come into glory." Don't you want that? Well, you see, it doesn't happen by haphazard approach to life. You have to be intentional about seeking it. Oh, beloved, remember the wonderful face of Christ that you will soon see face-to-face and let it motivate you to come back to his word afresh and say, "What was it you wanted from me again, Lord? Speak, your servant listens."

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Father, we commit all of these things to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask that you would help us recognize and understand the respected roles that you have given us in life and to discharge our duty with a proper sense of fear and trembling as well as gratitude for the privilege that you have given us to be in Christ. Father, I pray that you would take each man and woman, each boy and girl that is here in the audience or that will hear these things later over different media, I pray that you would take them and apply this with power by your Spirit to their hearts that their lives would reflect Christ here on earth and that they could stand before you on that coming day of judgment where*

*there is no partiality, to stand before you without shame, to receive a full reward and enter into the joy of Christ for all of eternity to come. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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