

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Worksheet
Ephesians 6 (NKJV)

Ephesians 6:5–9 (NKJV) (On Servants and Masters)

“5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; 6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

Slaves?

Slavery is a topic of discussion among Theologians. It is foreign to our concept of fairness and right. The concept of slavery is especially foreign (and offensive) to Americans. Slavery, as a legal practice, was abolished in America in 1865 through the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. However, slavery remains a large industry and is practiced all around the world. It is estimated that there were 46 million people enslaved in 2016 alone.

The Bible does not overtly forbid slavery. This fact is unsettling to adherents of Scripture and viewed as supporting material to the critics. However, the Bible does show how the relationship of master and slave is to be handled. It clearly shows that God has love for the free and the slave. Furthermore, God has made provision for the release of those who are bound.

God has allowed slavery to illustrate the depravity of man. Man was created to be free but has indebted himself. The most obvious form of indebtedness is the debt of sin. Therefore, illustratively, slavery underscores the fact that unredeemed man is in bondage. Slaves to sin are subject to the tyrannical rule of a bondage that ultimately ends in death. However, man’s desire for life and freedom calls us to the redemption found only in the Lord. Jesus Christ—our Redeemer—provides the final and climactic freedom all men desire.

Jesus came into this world to redeem men from the bondage of sin—a debt they could never pay. Every man, woman, and child has been offered the redemption Jesus purchased at Calvary. Therefore, all men, having been born into the slavery of sin, may be set free to enjoy the life God intended.

The freedom God has provided in Jesus Christ came by the costly offering of His very life. Jesus paid the debt we could never pay and thereby purchased for Himself those who trust Him for salvation. For this reason Paul the Apostle said, *“...you were bought [redeemed] at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* (1 Corinthians 6:20) Those who were slaves of sin willingly become the slaves of righteousness! *“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”* (Romans 6:16–18) The believer comes under the

ownership of Jesus Himself. We who have trusted Christ for salvation chose slavery to Jesus rather than slavery to sin and death. Slavery to Jesus is true freedom!

These simple truths illustrate why God has chosen not to condemn slavery in Scripture. He uses slavery and the depravity of man to show men their sinfulness and call them to a freedom He alone can provide.

Of Servants and Masters—According to the Flesh

The first thing we should note in this passage is that Paul sets the stage for what kind of servant- master relationship he has in view: human. His use of the phrase *“according to the flesh”* places focus on the natural man engaged in the human relationship between two persons: in this case the master and his servant.

Of Servants and Masters—Obedience

Secondly, we note that Paul said, *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters...”* A servant is to do as they are told. A servant is to engage a work ethic of consistency, thoroughness, follow-through, timeliness, and competence. The work ethic of a Christian servant should demonstrate integrity in every way. A servant who is not obedient to his or her master is not representing the Lord in a way that testifies to the glory of God. This is especially important when the *“master”* is not a believer. The testimony of the servant will have deep impact on those they serve.

Of Servants and Masters—Reverence

Thirdly, we note Paul’s injunction to serve with reverence. He said, *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling...”* A servant is called upon to be reverent and respectful. A servant is to obey without resistance or backtalk. The master-servant relationship is one of leadership and submission—and believing servants should reflect that model. The master has the power of discipline over the servant; therefore the servant should obey *“with fear and trembling.”* Paul told the Colossians, *“he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”* (Colossians 3:25)

Of Servants and Masters—Sincerity of Heart

Fourthly, the obedience that demonstrates true integrity before both God and man is an obedience of the heart—sincerity. *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart... with goodwill doing service, from the heart...”* A servant who is serving out of grudging obligation will sooner or later allow the angst to show. A servant who has come to honesty of heart when serving will ultimately do a better job and find that service is both joyful and fulfilling.

Of Servants and Masters—As to Christ

Fifthly, believing servants are called to serve their masters as though they are serving Christ Himself. *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ... but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God... doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men...”* No servant will more quickly serve with sincerity of

heart than the one who serves as though serving the Lord. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said, *“whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”* (Colossians 3:23)

Of Servants and Masters—Not with Eyeservice as Men-pleasers

Sixthly, servants are to serve without hypocrisy. *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers...”* Those who perform at their best or with great effort when the master is watching but lollygag and fool around when not being watched are doing wrong. It is said that true integrity is demonstrated when a person acts the same way whether being watched or when alone.

Of Servants and Masters—Sowing and Reaping

Finally, servants who serve reverently, sincerely, honestly, and without hypocrisy are promised blessing from the Lord. For *“whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”*

As mentioned above, Paul told the Colossians, *“he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.”* (Colossians 3:25) Therefore, we see that there is a promise of blessing for obedience but consequence and discipline for disobedience. Yes, even Christian servants should be aware of the consequences for disobedience. These consequences are not eternal and will not be administered in the afterlife, but they are and will be handled in this temporal world. The believer’s sins and their associated eternal consequences have been suffered at Calvary by our Lord. However, servants who disobey should anticipate those things necessary to bring into subjection the things out of order. God, in His great love, chastens those who disobey and blesses those who walk in His ways.

Of Masters with Servants—Accountability

Paul does not simply suggest that masters should be treated with reverence, sincerity, honesty, and integrity, but also that Christian *“masters”* live up to the same. Moreover, he adds that the Christian master is not to threaten his servants—but is called to treat them fairly and impartially. Paul said, *“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven...”* Oddly enough, some might suggest that this instruction to *“give up threatening”* is itself a threat. However, this is no threat—it is a reminder of leadership by example, a warning against favoritism, and a reminder of accountability.

Leadership by Example

Jesus said, *“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”* (Luke 6:31) As believers, we are called to treat others the way we would like to be treated. If we desire that others are patient with us, we should be patient. If we desire that others are merciful to us, we should be merciful. If we desire that others speak kindly to us, we should speak kindly. If one is a master, he is to treat his servants the way he would like to be treated. Most importantly, a master is to treat his servants the way he is being treated by the Lord—with love, mercy, grace, and patience.

Favoritism

Paul uses the fact that God shows no partiality as an example of good leadership. *“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”* The “master” is to treat every “servant” with the same level of love and grace. A “master” is not to put down or be condescending toward the one(s) he finds less appealing and give special favor and privilege to the one(s) he is especially fond of. It is understood that one servant may perform better than another and thus be advanced or privileged. However, this is no excuse for the mistreatment of the others. All believers are called to love without hypocrisy.

Of Employers and Employees

As mentioned in the opening comments, “The concept of slavery is especially foreign (and offensive) to Americans.” “It is foreign to our concept of fairness and right.” However, we in America (and in many other parts of the developed world) have a working model that is not completely unlike the master-slave relationship—that of the employer employee.

All that we have seen in the teaching of Scripture concerning master and slave can and should be translated to the employer and employee.

Please allow for a little adaption.

“Employees, be obedient to those who are your employers according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is employed or not. And you, employers, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

You can see the correlation!

I trust that all who are employee or employer will follow the pattern Paul sets forth herein.

“Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave.” (1 Corinthians 7:21–22)

“Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” (Colossians 3:22–4:1)

“Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.” (1 Timothy 6:1–2)

Of Servants and Bondservants

During the Old Covenant Dispensation, the Law allowed a person taken into slavery to become a voluntary lifetime servant to their “master.”

“If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.” (Exodus 21:2–6)

It seems that Paul may have had this concept in mind when he wrote about his own role in the Lord. You and I (like Paul) have become willing lifelong servants to the Lord. We too have said, *“I love my master.”* May we all serve the Lord (and those around us) with the voluntary and joyful humility that demonstrates the nature of our Lord and Savior!

Notes:

Questions

- 1) True or False: The Bible does not overtly forbid slavery.
- 2) True or False: God has allowed slavery to illustrate the depravity of man.
- 3) True or False: Jesus came into this world to redeem men from the bondage of sin—a debt they could never pay. Therefore, all men, having been born into the slavery of sin, may be set free to enjoy the life God intended.
- 4) True or False: We who have trusted Christ for salvation chose slavery to Jesus rather than slavery to sin and death. Slavery to Jesus is true freedom!
- 5) True or False: The application of master and slave can apply to employer and employee.
- 6) True or False: If I am a servant of Christ, I don't need to be obedient to my employer. I am free in the Lord.
- 7) True or False: If I am disrespectful to my employer, it is a poor testimony to my profession of faith.
- 8) True or False: Everything I do as an employee should be done as though I am doing it for the Lord.
- 9) True or False: If I only work hard and do a good job when my employer is watching, I am actually stealing from my employer.
- 10) True or False: There are consequences for bad behavior and poor performance. In fact, if I disobey my employer, it could cost me my job. This could be seen as a chastening from the Lord.
- 11) True or False: Employers are allowed to treat their employees poorly if they like. After all, they're the boss!
- 12) True or False: Employers are accountable to the Lord just like employees.
- 13) True or False: If I am a leader, I should lead by example.
- 14) True or False: God shows no personal favoritism and neither should I.
- 15) True or False: I am a bondservant to Jesus—and I like it.