

“Masters”
Ephesians 6:5-9
(Preached at Trinity, January 10, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen since **Verse 21** of the previous chapter, the Gospel has a transforming effect upon every human relationship. We can see it most clearly demonstrated in the family. Paul has given instruction regarding the duty of husbands and wives and the profound effect the Gospel has upon marriage. In this chapter he gives instruction regarding the duty of children and parents.
2. Now he instructs slaves and masters. As I pointed out last time, slavery was very accepted in the 1st century
 - a. Slaves were seen as necessary for an ordered society
 - b. There were an estimated 60 million in the Roman empire - they probably formed the whole of the work force - free men did not labor
 - c. I also pointed out that slaves were very much a part of many families. Children were entrusted to household slaves or pedagogues who were responsible for the education and discipline of the children.
 - d. The NT neither condemns nor condones slavery
It just seems to recognize its reality - It focuses mostly on the proper behavior of slaves and masters rather than on the ethical issues of the institution itself.
3. Previously, before God saved him, the slave saw his position as an injustice—something to rebel against. His master was one to be despised. Now all of his service is done with an eye to Christ. The Christian slave was to render to his master faithful service as unto Christ. The Gospel enables the slave to look beyond the circumstance of his condition and turn his heart towards honoring Christ, even in servitude. The Gospel is truly transforming.
4. After speaking on slaves, Paul then turns to the duty of masters. Paul is still expounding on 5:21 - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
In each of Paul's three examples he speaks first to the one under subjection: wives to husbands, children to parents, and now slaves to masters.
But Paul stresses in each case that the one in authority has a high duty to keep.
 - Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Give yourself for her.
 - Parents, be cautious how you train your children. Don't exasperate them.And now masters:
5. Paul doesn't command the Christian master to free his slaves. As I pointed out last time, the NT doesn't address the societal or ethical issues of slavery. This was a real difficulty for abolitionists in the 19th century. But they realized that the absence of condemnation is not the same thing as commendation. This passage wasn't the place to go when speaking on the evils of 19th century slavery.

- a. Paul is dealing with relationships in this passage. He is describing the effect of God's grace upon every relationship.
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
 - b. This is in the larger context of Paul's focus upon the Christian life
Ephesians 4:1-3 NAU - "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
 - c. Paul doesn't command the master to free his slaves but focuses upon his behavior towards his slaves. He commands the master to treat his slaves with grace and compassion as a fellow heir of the grace of God.
6. Again, Paul's point isn't to give a polemic against slavery. He is simply teaching how Christianity impacts how the slave lives as a slave and how master treats his slave. Paul is not giving instruction here on how to change society. He is teaching how the Christian lives within society. He does the same thing in Romans 13 as he tells us to submit to the civil authority. He doesn't describe the evils of the Roman Emperor. He simply charges submission to the authority.
 7. Don't forget the context of the Book of Ephesians. Paul is writing from prison. He is the prisoner of Nero, one of the cruelest of the Roman Emperors. Yet, how does Paul spend his time in prison? Does he spend his time writing invectives against Nero and the Roman government? Does he write one political treatise after another. NO! He writes to the Ephesian church in order to encourage them to holy living.
 8. The wonderful thing is that Christianity has a powerful effect upon the world around it. As Jesus said, we are light to shine forth the glory of Christ and we are salt to bring a sweet savor and preserving grace to everything we touch. Slavery faded in significance throughout antiquity largely because of the powerful influence of Christianity.
 9. We change culture through our holy example and righteous testimony and through our clear teaching of the Word of God. But we always remember that this world will never be made righteous. We don't look to the kingdoms of this world as our hope. Our church must always focus on powerful preaching and holy lives, not on political activism.
 10. This is why the NT maintains a consistent pattern of pressing upon us how to live.
1 Peter 2:12-18 NAU - "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority,¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.¹⁶ Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.¹⁷ Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.¹⁸ Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable."

11. Christianity not only has an impact upon those who are under authority. It has an impact upon those IN authority. Those in authority also have duty to lead with grace, humility, and justice. Just as Christian conversion has changed the mind and disposition of the slave it also has made a tremendous transformation upon the master.
Before salvation the slave was taught to behave one way and the master was taught to behave another way. Now Paul is saying, "masters, do the same things to them"
 12. This passage has much to say regarding those in authority. All of us at one time or another find ourselves in a place of authority. All of us are also under authority. Both positions carry great responsibility.
 13. There are several things a person with authority needs to understand.
- I. Before God the Master holds the same Position as the Slave -
Verse 9 - "there is no partiality with Him."
- A. Before God we are all sinners under the same condemnation
 1. All of us are absolute total failures – All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Not one of us have met God’s demands.
 2. Every man will be judged equally
1 Peter 1:17 NAU - "If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth"
 3. Paul describes this in **Verse 8**
Ephesians 6:8 NAU - "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."
 - B. God is no respecter of persons. This has great impact upon Christianity.
 1. There is equality in Christ
Galatians 3:28 NAU - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
 2. This doesn’t mean there are no distinctions – there are men and women and slave and free. All of these distinctions have been found in the Christian church. In the Church of Ephesus there would have been both slaves and masters.
 3. It also doesn’t mean that God hasn’t assigned particular functions within the church. Men and women do not serve the same function.
Within the church all are not gifted equally. Not all will be pastors or deacons or teachers.
 4. It does mean that all who are in Christ share equally in the promises of the New Covenant. We share equally in the blessings of redemption and of adoption.
 5. Both Christian slaves and Christian masters are a part of the body of Christ and so part of one another. This carries a high responsibility to care for the wellbeing of one another.
Paul commands the master: - "give up threatening"
Many masters ruled by fear – giving threats for non-compliance.
Many leaders rule by intimidation.
Paul says that instead, they should rule according to Christian love with grace, gentleness, and mercy.

6. The early church would have had slaves and masters worshipping in the same church, loving and caring for one another. They were absolutely equal before Christ. This, however, did not remove the slave/master relationship.
7. If an employer worships in the same church as his employees it doesn't change this relationship. On Monday morning he is still the boss.
8. This can sometimes create an unusual dichotomy. What happens if a bi-vocational pastor has his employer as one of the members of his church? Like the slave, the pastor should not expect favored treatment from the employer. But likewise, at church the employer should submit to the authority of his pastor.

II. The Master serves the same Master as the Slave

"knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven"

- A. We are all servants of Christ - He is our Master
 1. This is how Paul identified himself
Romans 1:1 NAU - " Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,"
 δοῦλος
 2. We are bought with a price - He owns us
 3. We are under His law and dominion
 4. The master must recognize he isn't the ultimate master. He too was a slave. All who are in authority are under authority. They will give account to their Master.
- B. Christ is the ultimate Judge of all men
1 Corinthians 4:1-4 NAU - " Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. ³ But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. ⁴ For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord."
 1. He sees all - nothing escapes His notice
 2. We are accountable for everything
Mat 12:36 NAU - "But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment."
2 Corinthians 5:10 NAU - "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."
 3. We are the slaves of Christ. This should affect everything in our lives. Our life is a life of servitude to our Master. Jesus is our Lord. This must not merely be an empty word. Are you giving yourself in service to Him? How are you doing in service to His church? How are you doing in service to His people?

4. A recognition that all of us as Christians are fellow servants should have a mighty impact upon how we interact with one another. Too often we set ourselves up as if we are the ultimate judge of our brothers and sisters. We criticize and condemn. We think we have all the answers. They are not OUR servants.

Romans 14:4 NAU - "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand."

III. The Master has the same Purpose as the Slave

"And masters, do the same things"

- A. Both slave and master are to live their lives with an eye towards pleasing Christ.
Ephesians 6:5 NAU - "in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ"
Eph. 6:6 NAU - "as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."
Ephesians 6:7 NAU - "With good will render service, as to the Lord"
Ephesians 6:8 NAU - "knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."
- B. Our purpose is to bring God glory
1 Corinthians 10:31 NAU - "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
 1. Our purpose is to declare God's glory to the nations
 2. Our purpose is to shine forth Christ in every aspect of our lives in whatever condition He has placed us – wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters, employers and employees, teachers and students
 3. Slaves and masters are stretching forth for the same prize.
- C. Both the slave and the master are interested in the same thing
 1. What is meant by the words at the end of **Verse 5**
Ephesians 6:5 NAU - "with fear and trembling"
 2. It isn't speaking of the threats of the master, although godless masters ruled by the threat of fear – Notice **Verse 9** - "give up threatening"
 3. "with fear and trembling" refers to the holy reverence we put forth in our service to Christ. Paul wrote the Philippians
Philippians 2:12 NAU - "work out your salvation with fear and trembling;"
 4. Both the slave and the master should give great attention to their duty since Christ is the focus.
 a. The Bible is far more concerned about our relationship with God than with our particular earthly condition. This doesn't mean our earthly condition is irrelevant. It simply means that our chief emphasis is always upon God. What effect does our relationship with God have upon our relationship with men? The words of our Lord:
Matthew 6:33 NAU - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"
Colossians 3:2 NAU - "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

Philippians 3:20 NAU - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"

- b. Both slaves and masters must be vigilant to live holy lives because Christ the Master is watching.

Ephesians 6:6 NAU - "not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

Conclusion:

1. Do you approach life with an eye always upon Christ? This is true whether you are a husband or wife, a parent or a child, a slave or a master, an employee or employer – and on and on.
2. Christ must be at the center. Paul has been stressing this during this entire section
Ephesians 5:21 NAU - "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
3. Ultimately, the only person you need to please is Christ.
Earthly masters may fail to notice the excellence of your work, but your Heavenly Master never ceases to watch and will not fail to give recompense.
Ephesians 6:8 NAU - " knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."
4. Do you give the same excellence towards your work when the boss is not present as when he is? Do you put in a full day's work seeking to be faithful to your employer? Do you recognize that it is actually service to Christ?
5. Children, do you give the same diligence in your obedience to your parents when they are watching and when they are not? Do you realize that Jesus is always watching?
Ephesians 6:7-8 NAU - "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."
6. Some of you have given acts of service to the church that no one knows about. You've done acts of service for one another. But Christ knows. This is the nature of the Christian life. We have a higher observer.