

I. General Instruction: Primarily in the Case of Unbelieving Masters (6:1)

- A. Command: Honor Your Masters (1:9-10; 1 Cor 7:21-23; Eph 6:5; Titus 2:9)
- B. Reason 1: So the name of God may not be reviled (Matt 5:16; Isaiah 52:5)
- C. Reason 2: So the gospel may not be reviled (Titus 2:9-10)

II. Special Instruction: In the Case of Believing Masters (6:2)

- A. Command: Do Not Dishonor But Serve Even Better (Gal 3:28; 5:1; Col 3:11)
- B. Reason 1: Because they are brothers, believers, and beloved (Philemon 15-16)
- C. Reason 2: Because slaves who serve well are benefactors to their masters (Luke 22:25-27; Matt 20:25-28; Eph 6:5-8)

III. Application: Serve and Follow Christ, Your Servant and Master (1 Pet 2:18-25; Col 3:23-25)

“Every Christian who works in a non-Christian environment is a missionary.” —Philip Ryken

Philip Towner’s translation of 6:2b: “Instead slaves should serve their masters even better because those who receive the slaves’ benefaction are believers and loved (by God/by the slaves).”

Concerning the term translated “benefit”: “What translations generally cannot really bring out is the technical meaning this term acquired within the system of patronage and honor that defined so much of social interaction in ancient Mediterranean culture. In the cultural context, the “good deed” (*euergesia*) was an act of benefaction done normally by a person of some means and influence (the benefactor) for someone who was socially inferior, for which in return he would receive honor in the form of public recognition of some sort.” —Philip H. Towner

“There are certain acts which the law neither enjoins nor forbids; it is in these that a slave finds opportunity to perform a benefit. So long as that which he supplies is only that which is ordinarily required of a slave, it is a “service”; when he supplies more than a slave need do, it is a “benefit”; it ceases to be called a service when it passed over into the realm of friendly affection. . . . And just as a hireling gives a benefit if he supplies more than he contracted to do, so a slave—when he exceeds the bounds of his station in goodwill towards his master by daring some lofty deed that would be an honor even to those more happily born, a benefit is found to exist inside the household.” —Seneca, *On Benefits*

“Not only is God your Master, but he has also become your servant, even your slave. . . . While it is one thing to obey a master, it is another thing entirely to obey a master who is so generous that he has willingly served as your slave. Since Jesus Christ has already done more for us than we will ever do for him, we should at least do all that we can for him, and we should do this at work as much as anywhere else.” —Philip Ryken

Reflection Questions (for personal reflection and family conversation):

1. What should your attitude be toward non-Christian bosses or authorities at work?
2. How do the attitude and actions of Christians in the “secular” sphere affect the witness of the church?
3. How has the gospel empowered you to be a better servant of others? How can you grow in this?