

# **WISDOM FOR THE WORKPLACE**

1 Timothy 6:1-2

## **INTRODUCTION**

- True religion/Christianity is not merely an *addition* to one's life.
- It *transforms* the whole life, in every area – home life, social life and work life.
- The opening of chapter 6 continues dealing with relationships within the church.
- Paul now instructs the church at Ephesus, through Timothy, in the proper dealings of Christian servants towards their masters.

Note here three aspects of the servant's employment:

## **I. HIS CONDITION OF SUBORDINATION**

A. These verses are addressed to slaves

1. *douloi* (plural of *doulos*) – slaves, bondsmen
2. *despotas* – absolute master, lord

B. Slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire

1. Some have said that there were about 60 million slaves throughout the Empire, or half the population
2. Their society could not have functioned without slaves
3. Slaves could come from warfare and conquering of new territories
4. Many became slaves for financial reasons, not having money to pay debts
5. Slaves had few rights; legally, they were not considered as persons

C. Many of these slaves converted to Christianity

1. God chooses the foolish, weak, base, despised and worthless (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)
2. Those in bondage found freedom in Christ (Luke 4:18)
3. In Christ, the slave/free distinctions are abolished before God (Galatians 3:28)

D. What is the biblical position on slavery?

1. Some condemn the bible for seeming to support slavery
2. The Law gave guidelines for dealing with slaves (cf. Deuteronomy 15:12-18)
3. Slaves were to be treated humanely
4. They were regarded as part of the owner's household (Exodus 20:10,17)
5. The stealing of men was forbidden (Exodus 21:16; 1 Timothy 1: 8-10)
6. The slavery permitted by God was vastly different to the cruel and barbaric slavery of recent centuries
7. The New Testament neither condemns or supports slavery (cf. Colossians 3:22-25)
8. The priority of Christ and the apostles was see individuals transformed by the gospel rather than bring social reforms
9. The principles of the gospel are against slavery (cf. Philemon 21)
10. Where the gospel has spread, slavery has been abolished
11. Atheism and evolution rather support slavery

## II. HIS CONDUCT TOWARD HIS SUPERIOR

A. Towards unsaved masters (1)

1. The servant is to have a right attitude about his condition and toward his master (1 Corinthians 7:21)
  2. Masters are to be honoured (Romans 13:7)
  3. Joseph (Genesis 39:1-6), Daniel (Daniel 4:19) and Nehemiah demonstrate this honour in the service of their heathen masters
  4. This falls under the broader application of the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12)
  5. The believer is called to go the “second mile” (Matthew 5:41)
- B. Towards saved masters (2)
1. They are not to be despised
    - a. Their equality in Christ could lead to diminished respect (Galatians 3:28)
    - b. Their spiritual brotherhood did not dissolve their civil relationship
    - c. It is an abuse of religion to make it a pretence to neglect the duties and honour owed to one’s relations
  2. They are to be rendered service
    - a. Because they are believers (Galatians 5:13; 6:10)
    - b. Because they are beloved (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16)
    - c. Because they are like partakers of the grace of God

### **III. HIS CONFESSION OF THE SAVIOUR**

- A. Christian servants who were insolent and disobedient would bring reproach upon Christ
- B. This would prohibit Christians from belonging to labour unions (Luke 3:10-14)

1. Unions rebel against authorities in order to get more money and privileges. Rebellion against God-ordained authority is rebellion against God. (Romans 13:1; 2 Peter 2:10)
  2. Striking is a direct violation of Scripture. (1 Peter 2:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:10)
  3. Unions achieve their ends through corruption, intimidation, threats, vandalism, verbal abuse and physical violence.
  4. As union control increases, productivity and efficiency proportionally decreases.
  5. Unions are based on a foundation of discontent, covetousness, greed and selfishness.
  6. Union membership fees are directed to the Labor party; a godless, anti-Christian party that promotes sodomy and the murder of children (abortion).
  7. Christians may suffer persecution for refusing to join wicked and godless labour unions.
- C. The power of a Christian's testimony must never be underestimated
1. It can blaspheme God (Romans 2:24)
  2. It can glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31)
  3. It can win others to Christ (1 Peter 2:12; 3:1-2)

## **CONCLUSION**

1. These truths are to be exhorted and taught
2. Christ demonstrated the life of a servant (Philippians 2:7)
3. He calls His disciples to the life of a servant (Matthew 20:25-28)
4. We are all servants to something – to sin or to righteousness (John 8:34; Romans 6:16-18)
5. We are called to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2:10)