

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:5-9

Session 59: Appealing to Authority

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶ Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: ⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. ⁹ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

The first part is to servants. Today we will talk about how to make an appeal to work authorities if you are asked to do something which is wrong.

Ephesians 6:5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

Of course, the Bible is not instructing us to commit sin by being obedient. We should understand that there is a godly way to suffer for not doing wrong and there is a wrong way to suffer.

Let me explain. When we are asked by an authority figure to do something which we believe is morally wrong or that violates the word of God, or causes us to commit sin, or is in violation of the law, and we decline to obey their instructions, we may well suffer in some way. When this happens, it is easy to think that we are following Christ, and we are suffering for Him. But there is a wrong way to decline an evil command and it begins ever before we disobey.

The following are six Steps of Action to take when asked to do something you think is wrong. Actually, that is not entirely accurate, as these first two steps are

preliminary to making an appeal, but they are certainly part of the process if we are ever asked to commit wrong in the workplace.

Look at figure 1 on your note-taker.

1. CHECK OUR ATTITUDE

We are talking about attitudes before we talk about actions because our actions are often the result of our attitudes.

- An independent spirit is the basis of **disloyalty**

We are talking about an independent spirit in the workplace that leads us to always differ from our employer; often argue, etc.

- A disrespectful spirit is the basis of **disobedience**

What if I do not respect the authority over me? It is important to distinguish between an authority's position under God and his human personality. We respect the position, while at the same time we may be very aware of his personality deficiencies.

- A condemning spirit is the basis of **self-righteousness**

We compare our employer with ourselves and find reasons to condemn their decisions; which make us feel justified in disobeying. This kind of spirit reveals our self-righteousness which is not godly.

- An ungrateful spirit is the basis of **pride**

It is easy for prideful people to think they don't have much to be grateful for since they are earning their wages. But that does not mean they are entitled to the job they hold. A little humility goes a long way.

- A lazy spirit is the basis of **poverty** and **dishonesty**

If a man won't work, he will come to poverty as he may lose his job. This lazy attitude will also deceive us about our work aptitude. Instead of thinking about how little can be done, start thinking about improving your work skill and

efficiency. Some people learn to do a job in the first six months, and never get any better at what they are doing because they have developed a lazy attitude.

- A bitter spirit is the basis of **selfishness**

People often don't recognize this, but when you allow yourself to become resentful of your job or your boss, it starts a process of selfishness in you. When that begins to happen, you will not be working with godly love and charity, which is the first core feature of the sonship education.

- An impure spirit is the basis of **self-indulgence**

When you allow yourself to entertain lustful thoughts in the workplace, you are laying the groundwork for moral failure because thoughts are the basis for actions. But this is not restricted to moral failure; an impure spirit gets us thinking about ourselves, and what we are owed, or how unfairly we are being treated, whether that is actually happening or not.

So, what are we doing here? I am showing you that our attitude is the basis of our actions; that we do not act independently of our attitudes.

If we are going to have any power to make an appeal to human authority, it starts with the kind of spirit we have at the workplace.

Remember, this one takes place ever before we come to make an appeal. The more time we have worked with the right attitude, the more power our appeal will have. So, do this from the start.

The second step is what to do if you find that you have not had the right attitude at work.

2. DEVELOP A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE

Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men.

What is a conscience "void of offense?" It means that our conduct toward others does not alienate them from us, or make us their enemy, or offend them. Of course, just being a believer in Jesus may offend some people, but that is not what

Paul is talking about. He is talking about our deportment: the attitude with which we conduct ourselves around others, the way we interact with them which either draws them closer to us, or drives them away from us.

And why is Paul concerned about how others perceive him? Because he has a message from God that he wants them to hear, and if he is so brusque and rude that he offends everyone, then no one wants to hear what he has to say.

The single greatest hindrance to having a conscience void of offence is the feeling that the ones we offended were wrong too. In fact, we often feel they were more wrong than we were. This is how our flesh seeks to justify our bad behavior. This is a scheme of the Adversary. By focusing on blaming them, we attempt to assuage our own guilt, but in the end, we are forced to live with both guilt and blame.

Our natural inclination is to find other people or circumstances which are to blame for what we have done. The greater our guilt, the more we must blame. The resulting bitterness and guilt are devastating to our mental and emotional wellbeing, and provide the basis for strongholds to be built up in our soul.

- Correct any **wrong attitudes**

If, from our previous list we detect any wrong attitudes toward our employer or boss, then we have to change those attitudes.

- Fulfill any **unfinished directions**

If there are things which you have not done from the past because of an unwilling attitude, then make sure you fulfill those tasks, and do it with the right spirit.

- Acknowledge our wrong and **ask forgiveness**

To go to our boss and makes things right concerning our previous attitude takes some humility, which is why people are reluctant to do this. The flesh is full of pride and resists real humility. But, if we are going to labor within the divine institution of work in a way that glorifies God, then we will do this.

It is essential that we recognize and confess wrong actions against those whom we have offended. This can be more difficult than we realize. We are so involved

with our thoughts and emotions that we fail to recognize the attitudes which we are actually reflecting to the people around us.

More than we realize, people are reacting to our attitudes. It is therefore essential to learn how to “judge ourselves” in wrong attitudes in order that we be not judged by others, and by the Lord.

- **Make restitution** when necessary
- **Limit freedoms** to avoid offending others

We talked about this extensively in our study on 1 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 10.

The next step concerns what we do if we are asked to do something that is wrong.

3. DISCERN BASIC INTENTIONS

In other words, determine what it is they are trying to accomplish. How do we do this?

- Ask **what their goals are**

Have a conversation that is not condescending, angry, or outraged; but this is so you can understand what the goal is.

- Find their **frame of reference** in the command

First, a wrong frame of reference on our part comes from thinking that when we are told to do something wrong, that we must either be blindly obedient or exhibit a spirit of disobedience. That is not the case.

Secondly, discover the frame of reference for the authority. In other words, discover what is going on with them that make them give you a wrong command.

- Ask them to point out any **blind spots**

Don’t ask this question unless you are willing to hear the answer without arguing. This effort has to be genuine, which means if they do point something out, you need to go to work on it without disparaging them, or pointing out that they do the same things. Complaining to others about what the boss had to say is not the answer. Don’t go around looking for confirmation that the boss was wrong or

being unreasonable. Realize that others, who also have the same blind spot, will defend you because it defends their wrong actions. Don't get into condemning them, but keep the focus on yourself.

- Discern **God's goals** in the situation

What do I mean by that? I mean, think about what you think God might want to accomplish in all of this. Does He want to put godliness on display through you? Does He want to open a door to give the gospel to your boss? Does He want to minister through you to your saved boss? We could keep going, but you get the idea.

Once you discern what your boss is trying to achieve, don't just refuse to do evil, but demonstrate that you are not just looking for a way to suffer unjustly; you are not just looking for an excuse to disobey his instructions because you are so spiritually superior to him. Instead...

4. DESIGN CREATIVE ALTERNATIVES

In other words, is there a way to accomplish the goal without committing sin or doing wrong? So, how do we do this?

- Remove any **resistance spirit** to being creative

The flesh will say, "This isn't my job, to try to figure out another way to do this." Maybe so, but as a believer in Jesus Christ, it is your job, because this is about more than just the company or the boss, this is about the testimony of Jesus in you, this is about the ability to minister to those in your work place. We won't take the time to cite the instances in scripture, but people like Daniel and Joseph were elevated in hostile governments because they exhibited these kinds of principles. How much more should we do this under grace? Until we remove any resistant spirit, we won't make headway.

- Use **difficulties** to expand your frame of reference

Just because something is difficult is not a reason to not try. Get creative, do some research on how others are accomplishing this goal in a different way.

- Gain insight from **the doctrine**
- **Design an alternative** to accomplish the goal

Once you have designed an alternative, bring it to your boss and make your presentation. This is your appeal, for something to be done in a way that does not involve wrongdoing.

5. APPEAL TO AUTHORITY

How do we make our appeal? It is important to do it the right way, if our appeal is to be successful.

- Have the spirit of a **learner and servant**

We are talking about humility; don't be condescending or prideful. Don't come across like you have all the answers; or that you know better than your boss. Maybe you do, but that isn't the issue here; do you know why? Because you are not the boss. Continue to be under authority so that God can use you to change minds.

- **Explain convictions** without condemning

Explain why you cannot break the law, or commit sin, but you do want to achieve the goals of the company. This is an opportunity to talk about your faith, and showcase godliness. Make this part short and concise; don't turn it into a sermon.

- Present your **creative alternative**
- Explain how it will **reach his goal**
- Leave the **final decision** up to him

Only when we have applied the above five steps are we scripturally ready for step six, if indeed it comes to that.

6. SUFFER FOR NOT DOING WHAT IS WRONG

- **Suffer willingly**
- **With humility (no complaint)**
- **Yet rejoicing**

When we work for someone in the way Paul is about to explain in verses 5ff, this process is given power to work. What I mean is that by working in the way Paul is about to teach us, if a time comes when we are given an evil command, our appeal to authority will have weight and power behind it to change the mind of the person in authority; which means you are ministering to the one in authority. And if they are saved, then you are helping to edify them.

Look, this is advanced doctrine in Ephesians. We are no longer going to live or work like the world. But this is only the start of the advanced doctrine. When we get into Colossians, the bar gets raised even higher. We have to ask ourselves if we are really committed to being sons or daughters who make the life of Christ manifest in our daily lives. How important is this, to us? What are we willing to do, for Christ's sake?

I implore you to follow me on the greatest path that men have ever taken; the path of godliness. We are not losing anything by taking this path, but we stand to gain everything. Don't look at this with this world in view, but with eternity in view. Look at it from the standpoint of the judgment seat of Christ where we will stand before the Lord to give account of our actions. May we do it with joy!

Major Points from the Lesson
