

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:5-9

Session 60: Servanthood

Let me introduce you to the Libertines. As Rome conquered the world, it took slaves and some of them were Jewish. As time went by, some of these slaves earned their freedom. They started Synagogues with an emphasis on freedom, so they called them the Synagogue of the Libertines. We see them mentioned in Acts 6.

Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. ⁹ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, **which is called *the synagogue of the Libertines***, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰ And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. ¹¹ Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

This was the first “cowboy church” in the sense that they compartmentalized their religion into their secular life. Their emphasis was on freedom and being free men, and so it was comprised mostly of ex-slaves.

When Paul came along, preaching freedom in Christ, some of them liked that message, but they still held to their “sacred cow” of being free men. So, they taught that being “free in Christ” meant that no believer should be a servant, and that they should submit to no human authority, but only God.

This kind of teaching made believers think they should not be working for someone else. Those who made their living serving others grew weary of their position. This attitude led to servants disobeying their masters. Here in Ephesians, Paul corrects this error, just as he did in 1 Corinthians 7, where he says, if you are a servant and you get saved, just remain in your position.

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;

While in our society today, we don't have masters and slaves in the way the Libertines thought of it, Paul's doctrine still has an application since this fits in the workplace with employer and employee. Just because you are a believer in Christ does not mean God does not want you working under another person.

Here is the principle: God does not care if you are the business owner or an employee. What God does care about is how you do your job, how you conduct yourself as you do it, and that you obey the structure of authority over you in the workplace. Why? Because work is a divine institution and God has called us to labor with Him in it.

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“Fear and trembling” has to do with our attitude of humility, and the respect that is due them as bosses or employers. This means that we give them honor appropriate to their position. We do not treat them casually, but we afford them the dignity of their position. It also means that we submit ourselves to their reproofs and corrections. The “fear and trembling” has to do with God, who constrains us to obedience. It means that we are careful to be the kind of employee our Father is counting on us to be.

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In this context, “singleness of heart” involves an attitude of readiness to work, and a cheerful attitude. It means that when we show up to work, we work; we put our full attention on our work.

Everything we do should be with singleness of heart. When you are with your spouse, give them your full attention. (I learned this, so when Billie came into the

office, I would stop, turn and look at her, giving her my full attention.) Look at people when you talk to them; be present in the moment. As they say, be where your feet are. Have you ever been talking to someone whose mind was a million miles away? Don't do that.

And since I am at it, the phone is an opportunity for rudeness and disrespect.

To work with singleness of heart also means we are not slothful, but industrious. It means we conduct ourselves and our work with integrity and faithfulness. It means we always give our best effort. Why? What is our motive for always giving our best effort?

The answer is in the verse.

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;**

We work with singleness of heart because our work is “unto Christ.” The motivation is not the work, not the human boss, and not the benefits or rewards; the motivation is that by working our job we are working for Christ, laboring with Him in a divine institution whereby God expects to put things on display to your boss and fellow-workers by how you do your job.

People work hard for a number of reasons and we are about to list them. Before we examine this list of motivations, I want to put something into your thinking. The things in the following list are not “bad” things, in fact, some of them are really good things, but they should be the byproduct and not the goal. Just remember that; because if we allow ourselves to be motivated by anything other than the unchanging Lord, then when our situation at work changes, so will our job performance.

Now let's go through the list of the most common work motivations.

- Financial stability and security. The primary driver for people to work hard is to make a living, which means they want to provide for themselves and their family, and achieve some level of financial security. No doubt, we

work, so we can live. But what if our job is not sufficient to do these things to the measure we want or need? If that is the case, then we must either get a second job, or find a job that will supply our needs. But the point here is this: even if a job cannot provide the financial security we want or need, our motivation cannot be in the financial provision; it must be in our commitment to serve the Lord by laboring with Him in this divine institution. And how do we labor with Him? By working with singleness of heart as unto Christ. Then, no matter what a job pays, we will do that work with integrity.

- Personal fulfillment and purpose. Some people work hard because they find personal satisfaction in their work, or they like the positive impact their work has on others. But what if you don't like your job? What if you don't find much "job satisfaction" in what you do for a living? We are still called to labor with God in our secular jobs. And even if we do find great fulfillment in the work we do, and our work does benefit many people, our motivation still has to be that we are working hard at this job because we are doing it as unto Christ. And that means our motivation does not change even if we don't find personal fulfillment in our work. But I will tell you this: the more you work a job with singleness of heart as unto the Lord, the more likely you are to find personal fulfillment as a happy byproduct.
- Career advancement and success. We know hard work can lead to promotion, higher salary and increased opportunity for personal development. This only works for those who have a job that which we can advance and if this is our motivation, then when we have nowhere else to go, our motivation is also gone. When we do our work with singleness of heart as unto the Lord, we may indeed see advancement and promotion, but that should not be our motivation. If we find ourselves thinking this way, it is time to reset our thinking to line up with Ephesians 6:5.
- Sense of contribution or significance. Some people are motivated by a desire to make a difference. May I suggest that when you work your job with singleness of heart as unto the Lord, you are making a difference. It may not

be in the way you wanted, but the difference you can make by laboring with God in your job is eternal, not temporal. I am not discounting the wonderful achievements that some have made in medical or scientific advancements, but as wonderful as those things are, they will all go away one day. I am talking about the eternal benefits that will never pass away. By being motivated by laboring with God, there is no reason why we cannot benefit people in the world we live in by the work we do. I am not saying we should not want to make some significant contribution to the world; I am saying don't let that be your motivation, let it be the Lord.

- Responsibility and obligation. Some people feel a sense of duty or obligation to meet their responsibilities to their employer. This is not a bad thing, but we can do better than that. We can do our job as unto Christ, and if we do that, we will automatically fulfill any sense of obligation. The good part of this is when we have the right motivation, not only can the other things still be a byproduct of our work, but there will be eternal reward because we did what we did unto Christ, and not ourselves or some other person.
- Building character and skills. Some work hard because they know that can foster valuable qualities like discipline, perseverance, and resilience, which can benefit in other areas of life. And while that can happen, it should be a byproduct of building the character of Christ in us. One of these promotes the idea that we can be all we need to be without God or Christ; we can do this on our own. This is the way of the flesh. The other idea says that we need the character of God's Son in us to make us what we should be. That is the way of the Spirit. And if we do our job with singleness of heart as unto Christ, we will have his character in us and our discipline will be the godly version and not the worldly version; and our perseverance will be the godly version and not the worldly version, etc.
- Recognition and respect. Hard work can lead to recognition and respect from colleagues, superiors and clients, it is true. But this motivation may lead us to do things which are not pleasing to God. So, don't let this be

your motivation. As we labor with God in our work, we may or may not get recognition and respect, but that doesn't matter because the recognition we are after is from the Lord for laboring with Him in our work. That is the one that matters. And it matters which one is motivating us because those two motivations are at odds with each other at times.

- Passion and interest. We hear the saying, "Do what you love and you never work a day in your life." For some, they are motivated because their work is something they want to do. And even though that works to motivate them, that is a shallow motivation. Everyone needs to learn to do things they don't want to do, and they need to learn to do them with singleness of heart as unto Christ. That way, no matter if you love your job or not, you will honor God by your work. This is a good lesson for me, because I love my work. And while I hope to earn a living from it: and I find some satisfaction in it, and I hope I am making a contribution; and I do feel an obligation to all of you, and while I do hope I am building character as I continue to do it, and I do love my work; the motivation for doing this is to labor with my heavenly Father in such a way as to accomplish His purposes and bring Him glory.

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**;

"As unto Christ" means that we obey the doctrine of verse 5 because we are doing it to glorify Christ. When we go to work, it should be with the idea that we are going to do our work in a way that glorifies Christ. Our speech and our conduct will all be in line with our working as unto Christ.

Ephesians 6:6 **Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers**; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

This means we don't only work when the boss is watching, but we work with the same industry and diligence when no one (human) is looking because that is the measure of who we really are.

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

It is the will of God for us to labor diligently and obey our work authorities, so when we do, we truly are being the servants of Christ. Did you get that? When you understand that this is an opportunity to labor with God, every time you obey your boss at work, no matter if he has a bad attitude or a good attitude; no matter if he is the biggest jerk in the world, or he is the nicest boss in the world, every time you do what he asks, and you do it with the right heart attitude, there is a reward for that.

Now, if you want to miss out on that reward, then argue with him about it, or have a bad attitude, or don't say a word but go do it while thinking about what a jerk he is. Instead, think of it this way: Christ has called you to shine the light of Jesus Christ in a world of darkness. He has called you to do it willingly and gladly. He knows this is a world of darkness which means He knows all about your boss. But He also knows that He has given you in Christ everything you need to do your job as unto Him.

I would call Isaiah 53 to our attention where the Messiah is called the "servant of the LORD." Read that chapter and look at the lengths Christ goes to, the things He endured, as the servant of the LORD, and you will have an example for yourself.

Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

If the Second Person of the Godhead can take upon Himself the form of a servant, then we can do our jobs as "the servants of Christ."

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

This means that God requires industry, faithfulness, conscientiousness, submission and obedience in every rank of work life. When we conduct ourselves this way at work, because we know it to be the will of God, then that becomes an acceptable service to God, no matter what our job is.

Notice Paul says that we do the will of God, “from the heart.” It means we are pleased to do our job; that we determine to do it well. It means we happily do it to the best of our ability because we know why we are doing it this way. It means that we do our job without malice or complaint. Why? Because this is the will of God. It is God’s will for us to work, and it is God’s will for us to do that work as unto Christ. It is God’s will for us to do our very best, regardless of the circumstances. And it is God’s will for us to do all of this “from the heart” which means willingly and gladly because we know what it is producing in us, in those who see us, and in God’s glory.

Ephesians 6:7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

The “good will” here has two parts to it. The first is that we do our work with good intentions. Have you ever done something out of spite? Did you ever do something you didn’t want to do, and the only reason you were doing was to “prove someone wrong?” That “I’ll show you!” is not good will.

Good will is that which is done kindly (it kind of reminds you of the core feature of godly love: lovingkindness). Goodwill is actually a derivative of “God’s will,” which we saw in the previous verse. This means that we do our job, not in an adversarial way, but in a cooperative way.

The second idea behind “good will” is that we do the job with eagerness, enthusiasm, and zeal. We are ready and willing to do this job. In other words, we do the job cheerfully. Don’t look at your work as a burden you must bear, but take it as something from the Lord, and doing it well is pleasing to Him. There is honor in this kind of service.

The cheerfulness of verse 7 comes from an attitude which says, “I am not a servant of these things which I do, or of these men which I serve, but of my God whom I love, and wherever I am, I will work for His sake, and show the world how a son stands when he has a difficult job, for the reputation and testimony of God is at stake in me.”

Our consecration to God will influence our work.

Ephesians 6:8 Knowing that **whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord**, whether *he be bond or free.*

What does Paul mean, “the same shall he receive of the Lord?” First of all, it means that with whatsoever good thing we do, we receive the fruit and advantage of what we have done. Do you understand what I mean? When we do some good thing (working diligently, being honest, doing more than expected, etc.) then those things in themselves result in “good things” for us. I am not saying that those things are our motivation, but they are a byproduct.

That may be in the form of respect, reputation, job security, pay raise, promotion, etc. In that sense, these “good things” are the reward in and of themselves. So, the “good things” which we do in connection with our work have a present day reward while we are on this earth. Even so, there is no promise of any of all of these things, but they may happen.

But, that is not the end of it. Paul also has in mind a future reward, an eternal reward which, if we run the reference over to Colossians, I think we will see the fulness of what Paul is getting at.

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: ²³ And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; ²⁴ **Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.** ²⁵ But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

Now, read that back into the Ephesians verse and combine the verses by substituting parts.

Ephesians 6:8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, **he shall receive the reward of the inheritance**, whether he be bond or free, **for ye serve the Lord Christ.**

That does not just apply to our work. No matter what the “good thing” is which we do (suffering with Him, honoring our spouse, rearing our children in the

nurture and admonition of the Lord, or working our job as unto the Lord, and submitting to human authority), any and all of that qualifies us to receive the reward of the inheritance. I will say it again, any time we allow the life of Christ to be lived in us, that qualifies for reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Everything done in the flesh will be burned up.

I do want to say a word about this. The reward of the inheritance is the joint-heir inheritance of Romans 8. Yes, we are “heirs of God” simply because we are in Christ. We receive that inheritance because of our position or status of being in Christ, which means we can never lose it.

But the reward of the inheritance has to do with being joint-heirs which is not permanent. While this deserves a whole treatment, which we will do in a Bare Bones Series (BBS) one day, but for now just consider the following verses.

Colossians 2:18 **Let no man beguile you of your reward** in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

If we can be “beguiled of our reward,” then this cannot be connected to our position in Christ, for if it were, it would not be possible for us to be beguiled out of our reward.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ **If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.** ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

The plain statement of scripture is that to receive the reward, our work must abide the fire of judgment. If it doesn't, there is no reward. Therefore, the reward cannot be connected to our position in Christ, for those things cannot be lost.

When it comes to the reward for laboring with God in our earthly work, it must be done from the heart, with charity. We know from 1 Corinthians 13, that if it is not done in godly love, it counts for nothing.

So, what we do in our jobs and in our homes, and in our families, it all has to be done: 1) out of grace (the doctrine/that which God has provided), 2) in charity, and 3) as unto the Lord.

In short, if we work for someone else, we who are adopted sons and daughters of our heavenly Father should be the best workers on the job. We should be honest, obeying the company rules, working in the best interest of the company and going above what is expected of us because we are doing it as unto the Lord. There are both present day, and future, reward for laboring with God in the divine institution of work.

Major Points from the Lesson

Addendum

Praying Ephesians 6:5-8

Thank you, Father, for allowing me to be your servant, and for the privilege of laboring with You in the divine institution of work. I recognize that work is an area where I am laboring with You and so, when I am under the authority of another, I will submit myself as unto You. I will show the respect due to the position of authority, no matter the character of my boss, because I do this work as unto You. I will have an attitude of humility as I do my work with singleness of heart, which means I will give my work my full attention, my best effort and I will do it joyfully because it is a privilege to work on Your behalf in any job, in any kind of work. I will work just as diligently when no one is looking as I do when everyone is looking because that is the measure of who I really am, because that is what it means to be your servant; to accomplish Your will. And I will do this work from my heart, which means I will do whatever my job is with cheerfulness and thankfulness. My service is ultimately unto You, and not to men, for I know that whatsoever thing I do, I shall receive the same from You, which is important to me because that will be a reflection of Your glory.