

# “With Good Will Render Service, as to the Lord, and Not to Men”

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Read Ephesians 6:5-9

The verses we consider in this short read are potent because of the subject treated: slaves and masters. Yet the immediate paragraph for the study and the paragraphs preceding and following it unpack the passage in such a way as to bring great light on a dark matter.

Beginning in chapter one, the apostle Paul lays down the enormity of God’s redemptive plan in saving His people from their sins. All of this was done “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (1:6, 12, 14). From this great act of salvation flows the Church, His Body. Within this Body there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus (chapter two). Within the church His glory is manifested and His purpose is carried out (chapter three). He gives to the church gifted individuals for the work of the ministry in order that His Church would continue to expand (chapter 4). Chapters 4:1 through 5:21 describe the fruit of His work in and through His Church. By the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, He works in His people those qualities present within the Tri-unity of God. The listing provided in 5:18-21 is suggestive (not exhaustive) of what God enjoys within the Trinity and works in and through His people: mutual edification, celebrative worship, persistent gratitude and functional submission.

These same four qualities are to be evidenced in the more intimate and invasive relationships found within the home/family. The issue is not whether verse 21 is part of verses 22 and following, but if the entire section from verses 18 and following colors and permeates the home. Here we argue for the inclusion of all four qualities to be present in each of the relationships noted in the home.

What we fail to see to the detriment of our understanding is that slaves were a part of most homes and churches of the first century. Slaves were a part of the household. As such, and as those who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they were to equally work for the common good of the entire household. Slaves were given “rights” just as children were given “rights” and they were to be treated as ontological equals, yet functionally distinct. The issue is not one of superiority or inferiority, but one of function and administration.

Regardless as to what position one held, their service was always to be directed toward God. He is the one who is served through the shadow. It is from this context we pick up the next paragraph where we hear a call to arms. Why? How does this work?

All our actions as believers come from the cross and resurrection. Apart from His indwelling and our placement into His Body, there can be no capacity for the family to function well. It is the Holy Spirit who enables His people to live lives marked by mutual edification, celebrative worship, persistent gratitude and responsive submission. Yet we are called upon to put on the full armor of God. The assault against the home is real and fundamental. If the devil can

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overthrow the home through influencing our flesh and enticing us through the venue of the world's system and attractions, then the gospel's light and advancement will be hindered.

The gospel finds its first and most powerful display within the context of the home. It is hypocritical for us to profess Christ publicly if our homes exist in a state of private decay. This does not negate God's placement of us in the Story where hardship and heartache exist, but it does remind us that we must put first things first, and the order is immutable as it relates to the gospel.

Our first priority must be God and our relationship to Him, then to our immediate family whether that is wife, husband, child, parent, slave or master. It is only as God works powerfully in this context that the gospel can aggressively move out into the world of darkness.

Where does this leave us? Seek God first. Worship Him in all of your activities regardless as to how glorious or simplistic they appear to be. Second, work hard at keeping your home Christian. In fighting for your family rest knowing you work from victory and not for victory. It is the indwelling Holy Spirit and your placement in Him that guarantees the victory. Third, always remember that fighting for the gospel demands putting on the full armor of God. This must serve as a constant reminder as to the intense nature of our fight. May you find the gospel as both the end and the means to your journey, for it is Christ who is the gospel.

Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.