

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: August 1, 2010

Title: Slaves and Masters - Working together for the Common Good

Text: Ephesians 6:5-9

Theme: The relationship between a master and a slave is to be one of mutual submission before God where both work together for the Common Good.

Author: Patrick J. Griffiths ©2010

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.

Date: August 1, 2010
 Title: Slaves and Masters - Working together for the Common Good
 Text: Ephesians 6:5-9
 Theme: The relationship between a master and a slave is to be one of mutual submission before God where both work together for the common good.

Introduction:

Many within the church historically find difficulty with this inclusion of thought. Why did Paul not omit this injunction?

“It was necessary for Paul to offer instructions for slaves. They were present everywhere in the church, which contains all classes and strata of human society, both men and women, parents and children, slaves and masters, rich and poor, governors and the governed.” (Theodoret, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 6:5, CPE 2:36, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, NT 8:204).

Our previous paragraph places our relationships firmly on the foundation of who God is and what He has done and what the results of such a person and work are. All relationships are significantly impacted by the gospel. None are left untouched. Because of who I am in Christ all of my actions are under His power and all my actions are to be directed toward Him. Indirect application places everyone in one of the following four categories. I am either a wife, husband, mother, father, child, slave or master (i.e. employee/employer). By working from the gospel every relationship has greater significance than the shadow seen.

There are no unrelated or detached actions. All of life is to be lived with God and His Story in view. This is equally true of the slave/master relationship. Both parts are to work together for the common good of the gospel. Even in this relationship the issue of equality in essence is muted. There is hierarchy, but it is not one of inferiority or superiority. Even as a slave I am to live under and from the gospel. My “slavish” activities are redemptive and worship-filled when I place myself within The Story.

This is amazing: Your most routine and mundane activities are consequences of His Cross and when placed within the context of His Story, they take on the air of worship.

We cannot afford to separate the four noted “fruits” of God in verses 19-21 from all of the relationships cited in 5:22-6:9. Because of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling we are to be engaged in mutual edification, celebrative worship, persistent gratitude and shared submission.

Between a husband and wife, a parent and child AND a slave and his master there are to be these four “fruits” manifested. We do not think of these qualities as being shared or mutual. We often think they flow but one way, from the bottom up. Yet our text tells us that the actions are communal and reciprocal.

I cannot think of anything so incredibly radical in any culture at any time as such truths as these. Yet none of this is possible apart from the Holy Spirit’s indwelling. It is the Trinity of

God that makes possible this impossibility. Such imagery is counter-cultural. It is far-reaching. This is the breaching of sin's stronghold and the cross conquering.

"This passage does indeed raise this question in an acute form. Did Paul believe that slavery was a good thing? What do we make of it all today? The answer is that Paul could not more envisage a world without slavery than we can envisage a world without electricity." (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*, 70). Because slaves were a part of most households, they fall within the parameters of the family and are to be treated as such.

I do not believe we are to be in bondage to our own sinful self-centered assessing. But I do believe we need to live in the one Story of God. There is no aspect of your life that falls outside of His Story. When our text speaks of a service marked by "the sincerity of heart" or "from the heart" or "with good will render service" it speaks to us. The issue is not trying to self-assess whether or not your service is from the heart, but rather where is God in your life. Do you live daily with a God-consciousness? Do God and His work dominate your waking moments? Although the admonition is directed specifically to slaves and masters, it is still applicable to all of us. Regardless as to your station in life, serve God with a genuine and authentic heart. Never be content to do "fake well". With this in mind, let us consider the text and then note its application in our own existence.

Outline:

- I. IN THE AREA OF HOME/EMPLOYMENT (6:5-9)
 - A. Instructions for the Slave/Employee (vv.5-8)

It is apparent that we are no longer dealing with the realm of slaves and master, yet there is an application of the principles in our present culture of employer and employee. "The principles are valid beyond the context." (Compton, Summer School, 1985)

"He shows them their dignity as laborers in the Lord's employment, which cannot be questioned or abrogated even by cruel or pagan masters, and which must not be belied by doing poor work and offering cheap lip service." (Marcus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 757).

- 1. The duality of my obedience
 - a. I have an earthly master ("according to the flesh")
 - b. I have a heavenly master (v. 9)

The passage cannot stress this enough. We serve God when we serve others. I am not in bondage to my activity. I am in bondage to Christ and He calls me to serve Him through the shadow. Thus, I can with sincerity of heart and from the heart and with good will render service to my wife, my children and those who are above and perhaps below me as to status and placement within the realm of God's order.

You do not serve God when you are in rebellion to God's order. No slave serves God well who serves his master poorly.

2. The manner of my obedience

a. Positively stated

1. "with fear and trembling" (v. 5)

- "With fear and trembling" - The idea is that of respect. You wish to do those things that please them and do not wish to displease them in any way.

2. "in the sincerity of my heart" (v. 5)

- "Singleness of heart" - Mental honesty, free from pretence and hypocrisy. It is not self-seeking; there is no hidden agenda or the doing of something with the intent of getting something.

3. "with good will render service" (v. 7a)

"Paul does not call servants simply to do what is barely due but to serve abundantly out of ardor, not from necessity. Serve on principle and by choice, not under compulsion. If you serve freely in this way you are not a slave. If your service comes from your free choice, from good will, from the soul and on account of Christ, you are no slave." (Chrysostom, *Homily on Ephesians* 22.6.5-8, IOEP 4:332, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, NT 8:205).

b. Negatively stated

1. "Not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers" (v. 6)

Paul defines the service by ruling out what it isn't.

- "Eye service" (Col. 3:22) - Service performed [only] under the master's eyes.
- "Men pleasers" (Col. 3:22) - Studying to please man, courting the favor of men.

"It is labor when the master is present, but relaxation and laziness as soon as he is gone. [Those who are men pleasers are those "who tries to please men at the sacrifice of principle". (Rogers and Rogers, 446).

2. The object of my obedience -

a. "as to Christ" (v. 5)

b. "as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (v. 6)

c. "as to the Lord, and not to men" (v. 7b)

In contrast to one's earthly status as slave, as believers we are "slaves of Christ". John speaks of how we are no longer slaves, but friends. We are slaves, but slaves who are treated as friends, yet not only friends but family. Each word communicates a different aspect of my relationship before God the Father.

3. The consequence of my obedience (v. 8)

There is a day of final judgment whereby all of our works whether good or bad shall be correctly enumerated and righteously rewarded.

B. Instructions for the master/employer (v. 9)

There is one primary verb in our passage for masters: do the same things. It is a present active imperative. There are two supporting participles: forbearing and knowing.

1. The impartiality of my oversight (v. 9a, d)

I cannot be two-faced as to who receives or does not receive my service. There are many factors prohibiting us from giving every object the force of all our energy and attention, but status should not be one of them.

2. The manner of my oversight ("give up threatening [v. 9b])

Stop intimidating those under you with threats of judgment and server penalty or privation. The word "threaten" is used only four times in the NT (Acts 4:17, 29; 9:1 and here). The word says, "Do this or else". Masters are told to stop this type of management and oversight.

3. The duality of my oversight (v. 9c)

"The master has a master. He should know that he too has a master in heaven who will judge justly, who will judge fairly according to our own willing, who will judge by deeds, not status." (Jerome, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3.6.9, Migne PL 26:542c [668-669], in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, NT 8:206).

In light of all we have gone through, "Finally"...

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Paul provides for us a picture of what a home looks like **in Christ**.
2. Husbands have headship.
3. Wives are to respect that headship.
4. Children are to respect the collective headship of father/mother.
5. Parents are to train their children.
6. Slaves and masters are to work together for the common good.
7. Let us work from this idea and seek to celebrate and embody such principles in our homes and churches.

8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. May you find the gospel as both the end and the means to your journey, for it is Christ who is the gospel.