

LSB Ephesians 6:5 - 9 Put Christ On Display

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the integrity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Work is a fact of life in a fallen world. All the way back to the first man in Genesis 3, as God is stating the curse that the creation has fallen into because of sin and rebellion, God tells Adam, you're going to have to labor to live.

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

Cursed is the ground because of you;

In pain you will eat of it

All the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

And you will eat the plants of the field;

19 By the sweat of your face

You will eat bread,

Till you return to the ground,

Because from it you were taken;

For you are dust,

And to dust you shall return."

23 therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

By God's design and hidden blessing, we toil, most of our lives. Even in retirement, we stay busy working at something most days. As I ponder the

words I will say to you, in the back of my mind I'm thinking about a huge mess of tomato plants with rotting tomatoes still on them that I need to get out in the back yard and pull out of the ground and take the whole mess to the dump. It needs to happen.

We labor and often it isn't fun while we're at it, but even so, the sense of accomplishment afterwards is good. Work turns out to be a positive. Labor occupies time and a good reward follows.

And there is definitely a sense in scripture that not working, idleness, brings with it mischief. Paul had to address non working christians in Thessalonica who had become busy bodies making mischief and eating other peoples food without work.

In 2 Thess. 3, Paul gives us his own philosophy of labor as he addresses the problem of the mischief of those who do not work but eat other people's food.

7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we did not act in an unruly manner among you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; 9 not because we do not have the authority, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would imitate us. 10 For even when we were with you, we used to command this to you: if anyone is not willing to work, neither let him eat. 11 For we hear that some among you are walking in an unruly manner, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that working with quietness, they eat their own bread. 2 Thess. 3:7 - 12

Work is normative. And Paul could have received bread for his labor as a church planter, working among the people as a missionary to them, but he didn't. His desire was to model the opposite of what he called being unruly.

Labor has a way of keeping us out of mischief. And Paul modeled that

amongst his church plants by working late into the night as a tent maker, earning money for his own food.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, as he reflects on all of his wisdom and learning and labor had a most interesting philosophy on labor and building a kingdom in this world.

9 What advantage is there to the worker from that in which he labors? 10 I have seen the endeavor which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. 12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to be glad and to do good in one's lifetime; 13 moreover, that every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God. Eccl. 3:9 - 13

All of your work doesn't achieve eternity. Everything you do here is gone in a moment. Yet, the work you do here, if you eat and drink and enjoy it, is the gift of God to men. It is a positive occupation of the time on the ground that God has allotted to you.

Our godless culture has abandoned this wisdom of a healthy view of hard work and simple pleasures. We see two opposing views. We have men who live to work. They build empires. They amass huge fortunes. But death is the great equalizer. Elon Musk will be just as dead as me in a very short while.

Then we have others who refuse to work at all. They spend their days mentally working at how to do less tomorrow than they did today.

I used to tell people that I don't live to work, I work to live. That philosophy aligned fairly well with Solomons words. And God blessed me with much real enjoyment in life. Eventually, it took a while, but God gifted me with a career out on the range that seemed to align almost

perfectly with my God given talents. I enjoyed work and I enjoyed play. I am grateful to God for His blessing.

That's our introduction, but our passage this morning is, like everything else we've covered since the introduction to chapter 4, a comparison of how christians view work compared to how the world views work.

Christians walk through life differently than the non christian world we temporarily live within. Paul calls us to walk worthy of our calling. Eph. 4:1 *Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called,*

Everything beyond those words compares how christians are to walk different from the world in all of our undertakings. We've been called out of this fallen world. We've been given a helper, the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts. And all things are new. All things are different. All things are elevated above what the fallen world around us does. Christ is the salt in every relationship.

Whether it's getting along with each other, or getting along in the unsaved world, or our marriages, or our approach to rearing children, or whether it's how we work in the fallen world, if we have Christ living inside us, we're different from the rest of the fallen world.

So what does the worthy walk look like in the work place?

Well for one thing, all or most of our other relationships are with other christians. We marry a christian wife. Our children are raised in a christian home with the expectation that they will also be christians. All of the relationships Paul speaks of involve other christians, until we get here.

Work, labor, is the one area where christians are to put Christ, and the very real difference He has wrought in their lives, on display. Work is the melting pot where christians can truly stand out amongst their peers as different from the fallen world. We are to shine Christ in the world around

us.

Jesus, in His greatest manifesto, the sermon on the mount, tells us;
13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out to be trampled under foot by men.

In a fallen dark world, christians are to be distinctly different. Salt can be tasted and identified as salt in any food it is added to. And salt also has the quality of being a preservative. It limits decay. Salt is salty. Distinct.

Christians working in a fallen world are to be distinct. Like salt. And if we are not distinct, Houston, we've got a problem. It's our definition. Our defining quality is that we're different from the fallen world we've been called out of. That difference is Jesus living in my heart. And that difference is to be visible, in the world, and especially, in the work place.

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the integrity of your heart, as to Christ;

Don't get hung up on words here. Slaves and masters. The words are the same ones that describe our relationship to Jesus. Doulos is slave. Kyrios is master, or lord.

Those words were the most common term in that world to describe someone in authority and someone under someone else's authority.

Jesus is Lord. I am under obligation, and with great pleasure I might add, to do His will.

In verse 5, you see the words, according to the flesh. *masters according to the flesh* There is ultimate slave and Lord, my relationship with God, and then there are lesser situations where I am the one under someone else's authority in this world. According to flesh. In this fallen world. In the nasty now and now.

The lesson my mother taught me. Authority and submission. Authority and submission. God is ultimate authority. I gladly submit to Him. Actually there is great joy in submitting to Him, because before His son shed His blood to forgive my sins, I not only was in submission, I was guilty with penalty of death before Him. Now I come and submit with joy. My sins are removed.

Bring that idea down to earth and we have authority and submission for most of our lives, in some kind of work place where we trade our labor in submission to bosses, for money to purchase what we need to live.

Doulos and kyrios are simply words defining authority and submission. Nothing new under the sun.

In ancient times, in the Jewish nation with laws given by God through Moses, slavery was noble. It was a contract where you sold your services, for a limited time, to someone else who within that contract, supplied you with what was necessary to live. Food, shelter, security.

God's law defined boundaries for slaves and masters. And the Jewish culture under Moses was always living within seven year cycles. At the end of seven years, all slaves were freed. So you made new contracts. A slave could be released from a contract before the seven years if relatives paid the value of the contract. It was different from what our minds concoct when we speak of slavery.

But in the Roman world, slavery was much darker. More like the slavery we think of where humans are chattel to be bought and sold, and who have no rights at all. In Satan's world, every kind of debasement and oppression results in unrestrained slavery.

In a fallen world, slavery resulted from one group of people conquering another group of people, hauling them off and selling them as slaves. My name, Galli, indicates that we were a group of people captured in Gaul in

the Roman era, and sold as slaves in northern Italy. We were Gaul-ies. So bring on the reparations. I'm waiting.

5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the integrity of your heart, as to Christ;

If you find yourself under someone else's authority in your work life, this verse is for you. Christian workers are to obey their bosses. And not just obey, but we are required by this verse to do it heartily. We are called to obey our masters as if we were obeying Christ.

The word integrity excludes phoniness. We don't pretend a grudging obedience, we put our heart into our work for our earthly masters as if we were serving Christ, and not some boss. The words *fear and trembling* are a command for real humility in this authority / submission relationship.

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

Paul is going to get redundant in this passage. He just keeps saying the same thing over and over again in different ways.

The redundancy is because, this is hard for us to do. Raise your hand if you've ever had to work for idiots who aren't half as smart as you are. It kills you that you have to work for the benefit of someone who is evil and stupid. I'm supposed to make this slimeball rich. It can be irksome.

Paul says, work as though you were the employee of Jesus. *not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers*

We used to have a couple of co-workers who would go down range, in separate trucks, to take a nap, and they would broadcast these big technical conversations over the radio for all the bosses to hear and be impressed with their fantastic work ethic. Snoozing and putting on a men pleaser show.

We're all guilty. I couldn't help myself trying to look sharper than usual whenever the big boss was out and about touring our shops. Paul says, work as if Jesus was the boss. We would work hard to please Him at all times. Paul says, work for your earthly boss as if you were working for Jesus.

7 serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men,

Same idea exactly. Our motivation is to work in our secular workplace as if we were working to please our Saviour.

As christians we work tirelessly to build up God's kingdom. Our goal while we're on earth is to make the kingdom of God richer and the kingdom of Satan poorer. We're trying to convince and persuade people to come out of Satan's reign and come into God's authority to reign.

There's a sense that Satan loses and God wins. God's assets are built up and Satan's assets are diminished. That's flawed, because ultimately God owns everything, but it works in our fallen minds. And it works because a ruined person becomes a rescued person.

We work for the Master's profit. I keep returning to the parable of the talents. The Master gives His slaves a pot of His money and says, make me a profit with my money while I'm away. You remember, the 10 talents of money guy invested it and made 10 more. 5 talent guy made 5 more. 1 talent guy said, why am I going to make a profit for you. I work for me. But I didn't lose the talent, here it is back.

In the work place this idea carries over. *7 serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men,*

We work for our heavenly Master's profit. We work to add to His bottom line. We build for His assets. And Paul says, in the world, working for a living, make your earthly master a profit just like you work to make your

heavenly Master a profit. Same idea.

We serve our earthly masters with good will. We work for their profit. We are told to do that as if we were serving Christ, and not earthly men.

Compare communism to free enterprise in the Western world. The most profitable and thriving nations in the world happened as a result of what is called protestant work ethic.

In the west, western Europe, after the reformation when most of Europe was protestant, people flourished because of this very work ethic. I work with good will towards my employer. My hearts desire is for him to profit directly from my work. Trickle down. Hopefully if my earthly master profits some of it comes back to me. My needs are also met.

In communism, no such motivation exists. No one profits from work, so why bother to work. You do the bare minimum to keep out of prison. Like everyone else.

Henry Ford set up factories in Russia in 1929 to build Model A's but it took about 10 times the labor to actually produce a car. Nobody would work. They spent their time arguing in meetings about who had to do what. Nothing got done. It's the exact opposite of what Paul tells christians in verse 7.

7 serving with good will as to the Lord, and not to men,

No Lord. No good will. No motivation for profit, either for the masters or the workers. Total breakdown. Satan's world without God, work ethic evaporates into petty bickering. I suppose the motivation degrades to work captains with punishment available for those who refuse to work.

Christians are to work to produce wealth for their earthly masters. That's the good will. A window into 1960 America versus 1960 Russia would be an eye opener. Bland people hopelessly standing in line to get a daily portion of bread compared to Super Markets in every town loaded with

excellent things.

The richest nations in the world got that way from this protestant work ethic. We work with good will for our earthly masters. We work so they will profit. We work for them with the same love and good will that we work for our Saviour. When that happens, everything flourishes.

Our nation in 1960 had more wealth probably than all the other nations combined because of our protestant work ethic. 60 years later we are secular, our Bible based work ethic is lost, along with all the rest of the moral law, and our nation is floundering.

There is a very real connection. God's book and His morals brought wealth and prosperity. Abandoning His book and His morals is bringing us into poverty. Thriving is turning into want. When the motivation to work is lost, Satan has an alternative. Envy. Greed. Anger over what your neighbor has that you don't have. Every kind of covetousness.

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Why do obedient God fearing peoples seem to thrive while people who discard God and abandon His book seem to never have enough?

Haggai chapter one. A difficult to find little book near the end of the Old Testament. Listen to what God Himself tells His chosen people, who had set him aside in order to spend everything on themselves. There's a principle here that is impossible to equate in mathematical terms.

5 So now, thus says Yahweh of hosts, "Set your heart to consider your ways! 6 You have sown much, but bring in little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

This is non mathematical. The arrogant world rejects this. It is non scientific nonsense to a world that has discarded, abandoned and divorced the God of the Bible.

But in verse 8 of Ephesians chapter 6, and in the verses that the prophet Haggai received as direct revelation from God Almighty, there is an unquantifiable connection to having plenty or being in want, never having enough to satisfy.

And it wasn't from lack of labor, either. The farmer worked hard to sow a crop but the return on his work was poor. Hard work didn't result in enough to eat. Or drink. Hard work didn't result in warm clothes.

The last part is the most devastating and actually should frighten those of us on fixed incomes in retirement. The money . . . vanishes. It's like you put your money into a purse with holes and when you go to get it out to supply your need, it's gone away.

This is inflation; Pure and simple. You worked hard, you earned money, you stored it away, and when you needed it, it wasn't enough.

God causes this to happen. You abandon Him, He abandons you. God Almighty has the power to fill your cup to overflowing and He has the power to make it so you never are satisfied.

Our nation is already under this judgement. You have to be blind to NOT see it. But arrogant pride causes blindness. God hates pride. He has the power to put entire nations into destitute poverty who once were rich. This book says so. We are actually legislating ourselves into poverty.

One example. The governor of California is legislating so that if his desire comes true, only electric vehicles will be allowed. Jeff and Donna have a son who works in the electric distribution industry. Mark says if the governor is successful, there is enough electricity to charge your electric car once every two weeks.

That's insanity. That's Haggai chapter one verse 5 and 6. Not enough to be satisfied. And the arrogant God rejecters can't get us into poverty and want fast enough.

We are living on the final remnants of the wealth that a protestant work ethic built for our nation. But there is a God who has the power to make all of the wealth vanish. Fasten your seat belts. It's already in motion. We know we've borrowed all of that wealth and wasted it on foolish things. We know we can't pay back the debt. We're living in a house of cards that can collapse any day. Our God rewards arrogance with destitute poverty.

It looks to me like the stage is set perfectly for the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Christians, our God has the power to supply all of your needs. Ancient Job, in the time of the patriarchs, before God chose a nation of His own from among the nations, said something that is true of God in every dispensation in every age, true in the ancient world and just as true now. It transcends everything else. Job 1:20, 21

20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh."

God is sovereign over wealth and poverty. He gives and He removes. The situation around us, whether it's enormous wealth like our nation enjoyed 65 years ago in my lifetime, or whether it's the most dire poverty and chaos which we know, from the words of this book, must come, means nothing.

We belong to God and He can provide plenty when all around us are perishing, or He can bring poverty when all around us are seeming to be getting away with their arrogance. He controls it all.

We as christians have the power to put wealth into the bank of God. When we work for the benefit of others in our careers, as if we were working for the Master, He has the power to return that wealth to us, outside of what's happening around us in the world. Read verse 8 again and think about what it's actually saying;

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

There is a direct connection of working hard in the world's workplace for the benefit of your earthly master, and unseen wealth from God that you will receive back.

The workplace, in the world, is the place where christians put their real christianity on display. We put Christ on display when we work hard for the benefit of someone else. It is selflessness that christians have that the world really has no outside of themselves source.

We supply well being to our earthly masters, and our heavenly Master repays us in His time and His way which far surpasses anything we could have done.

David in Psalm 23 said simply;

1 Yahweh is my shepherd,

I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside quiet waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He guides me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

*4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You have anointed my head with oil;
My cup overflows.*

*6 Surely goodness and lovingkindness will pursue me all the days of my
life, And I will dwell in the house of Yahweh forever.*

Israel abandoned God, and instead of cups running over, they opted for the polar opposite.

Jeremiah 2:13 says this. See if it doesn't resonate with our current culture;
*“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the
fountain of living waters, and hewn them out cisterns—broken cisterns that
can hold no water ...*

The arrogance of abandoning God. We don't need God. We can dig us out some cisterns ourselves to supply our thirst. But they are broken. We thirst. When we abandoned God, we abandoned the source of plenty. Real thriving comes from God.

Well, we need to finish up.

*9 And masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing
that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality
with Him.*

Sometimes the Christians are the boss. If that's the case, we work for the slaves benefit.

No partiality with God. If it pleased Him to put you in authority over others, He isn't impressed by your authority. Your rank. To God, workers in submission and bosses in authority are equals. God isn't more impressed

with Donald Trump than with the most insignificant child.

Christian bosses, don't threaten your workers.

This verse is the great equalizer. This week a theologian who was an architect for what we call liberation theology died. His theology was errant. In it he claimed that God is sympathetic with the plight of the poor. God loves the oppressed and hates the oppressors.

It was a poor marriage of christianity with marxism, still popular with some classes even today. Barack Obama famously attended a liberation theology church. And one of our presidential candidates at the moment does also. Making God the champion of the oppressed. It seethes with covetousness for what someone else got that you did not.

This verse charges christians in authority to not be oppressive, but it also clearly states that God is impartial. The worker and the boss both bow down to the same master. In that, there is equality. The knees of the poorest poor and the richest rich will all bow down before King Jesus.