



KINGDOM WORK LIFE

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Text: Ephesians 6:5-9

Introduction

Together as we have travelled through the book of Ephesians we have journeyed with God in examining the “Glorious Church of Christ.”

We have seen that the “glorious church of Christ” was in the eternal plans of the Father. We have studied the great dangers of being outside of His church and dire need of being in it and a part of it. We have come to know the importance of the eternally planned blood-bought church and the beautiful unity it created.

We have witnessed in our studies how proper leadership will guide those that are “new in Christ” to walk “not in the futility of their minds” but “according to truth and love, sacrifice and submission.”

It's this walking according to love and submission that we have focused on in the last several weeks, first looking at it in the “husband/wife relationship,” then in the “parent/child relationship,” and now in the “slave/master” relationship.

Ephesians 6:5-9 ESV

⁵Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

The context

Slavery was an ever-present feature of the Roman world. Slaves served in households, agriculture, mines, the military, manufacturing workshops, construction and a wide range of services within the city. As many as 1 in 3 of the population in Italy or 1 in 5 across the empire were slaves and upon this foundation of forced labour was built the entire edifice of the Roman state and society. During the time of Christ and the first century church, slavery was extremely common. - It makes perfect sense that God would discuss it and give instructions about how to deal with it.

How should slaves be toward their masters?

Hebrew slaves were Hebrew people that had sold themselves to another Hebrews person to pay their debts, somewhat like an indentured servant.

I say typically portrayed because most of the time when slavery is talked about it is discussed with the harshest slavery in mind.

Ephesians 5:6–8 ESV

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Ephesians 6:5–8 ESV

⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.

Exodus 21:2 ESV

² When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.

- They were to obey their master with “fear and trembling.”
- They were to obey their master with “a sincere heart.”
- They were to obey their master “as they would Christ.”

The last part “as they would Christ” is the key to all this.

Their obedience was not to be based in hypocrisy.

A bondservant is a slave. In some Bibles the word *bondservant* is the translation of the Greek word *doulos*, which means “one who is subservient to, and entirely at the disposal of, his master; a slave.” Other translations use the word *slave* or *servant*.

In Roman times, the term *bondservant* or *slave* could refer to someone who voluntarily served others. But it usually referred to one who was held in a permanent position of servitude. Under Roman law, a bondservant was considered the owner’s personal property. Slaves essentially had no rights and could even be killed with impunity by their owners.

The Hebrew word for “bondservant,” *‘ebed*, had a similar connotation. However, the Mosaic Law allowed an indentured servant to become a bondservant voluntarily: “If the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” (Exodus 21:5-6).

How should masters treat their slaves?

A sincere heart.

Ephesians 6:9 ESV

⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Summary 1

Because of the time and culture there was a necessity of giving regulations on slavery.

This doesn’t mean slavery, as we think of it today, was tolerated by God because it wasn’t.

It does tell us God will give us everything we need know to live “godly lives” no matter our situation.

What can we learn from this today?

We would refer to employment and employers. We would call it going to work.

We think of life as

- Going to work Monday to Friday
- Doing life on Saturday
- Worship on Sunday

We think that the more we work, the more money we would have to do Life, but it is all a rat race, as the Kingdom often does not appear in our work life mentality.

Understanding Work and Worship

Is there a relationship between work and worship? And if so, what is that relationship?

Your answer depends on your worldview. Most Christians, functioning from a Greek mind, would say there is no relationship. Worship is sacred and labour is secular. Moderns would say that there is no worship, just work. Many Animists would see labour as a curse from the gods, and worship is something you do to minimize that curse.

In contrast, one Hebrew word shows us the radical relationship between work and worship: that word is **אָבֹדָה** – avodah (pronounced ah-vo-DAH).

Many people long for their work to have significance. Christians often think that for your work to be meaningful, it **must be “spiritual”**: evangelism, missions, church planting or pastoring.

Many careerists spend long hours in a job that may not seem significant, but the reward is money and power. People choose careers based on how much money they can make or how much power they can hold over others. Yet their lives often lack significance.

The Hebrew word that captures worship and work:

Avodah is used 289 times in the Old Testament and is translated variously as “worship,” “serve” and “work.”

In some verses, avodah means work, as in to cultivate the field or do common labour:

- Genesis 2:5 – “and there was no man to work (avodah) the ground.”
- Genesis 2:15 – “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work (avodah) it and keep it.”
- Exodus 34:21 – God, in renewing the covenant with Moses, says, “Six days you shall work (avodah),”

In other verses, avodah means worship, as in worshipping the Lord.

- Exodus 8:1 – “This is what the LORD says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may worship (avodah) me.’”
- Exodus 12:31 – “Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, ‘Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve (avodah) the Lord ...’”
- Joshua 24:15 – “And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve (avodah) the Lord.”

Work and worship are God’s purposes for humans:

Avodah reveals that the nature of the Hebrew mind is wholistic, integrative and comprehensive. There is no sacred-secular dichotomy here. The word used for working in our calling is the same word used for worshipping the Lord. In fact, God put us on earth to worship-work. In fulfilling the First Commission (Genesis 1:26-28) – the Cultural Mandate, we work (avodah) and at the same time we worship (avodah) the living God.

Summary 2

For the Hebrew mind – New Testament Church – Us, there is no separation of labour from worship. Worship is not only for Sunday, but for Monday as well. Worship is not limited to a religious meeting in a building or for a public evangelistic effort. Worship is to take place in the midst of our everyday lives, in our homes, in the office, in the factory. The God of the Bible is not a part-time God. Our worship should not be thought of as part-time praise.

Discussion questions:

1. **Are you thinking of your “job” as an opportunity to worship-work (*not worship work*)?**
2. If yes, how do you practice your commission according to Matthew 28:19 at work?
3. If not, please ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand your calling and then ask for prayer to take courage to accept the calling and then live in the calling 7 days a week.