

LOVE
Without Hypocrisy
 (in the book of Romans)

11 – Serving the Lord (2)

(We have been looking at the last part of v. 11.)

Never be lacking in zeal,
 but keep your spiritual fervor,
 serving the Lord.

Romans 12:11 (NIV)

★ THESE ARE "MASTER-SLAVE" WORDS! ★

- These words describe our relationship to Jesus as that of a slave to a master.

A SLAVE OF JESUS!

Never be lacking in zeal,
 but keep your spiritual fervor,
 serving the Lord.

Romans 12:11 (NIV)

- "SERVING" (Greek: δουλεύω) = "TO SERVE," to do the work of a slave.
- "LORD" (Greek: κύριος) = "MASTER," one who has authority over others.

(Summary of last week.)

The Bible describes many types of slavery:

- Some evil, and harmful to the slave.
- Some good, and beneficial to all.

But in one matter, each of us is a slave:

- Either we are a slave to sin.
- Or we are a slave to obedience to God.

(See Romans 6:16-23.)

**YES,
 YOU ARE A SLAVE,**

AND YOUR ACTIONS → DEFINE → WHO YOUR MASTER IS. *

* (Your master is either SIN, or OBEDIENCE to God.)

Jesus himself became a slave.

He became a slave for us ...
 (In a cruel and unjust situation.)

He ... took the humble position of a slave ... he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Philipp. 2:7-8 (NLT)

So that we could become slaves for him ...
 (Instead of remaining slaves to SIN.)

Tomorrow, we* celebrate "Labor Day."

So our topic today is going to be...

* (In the United States.)

Work situations in the BIBLE

#1 – Slavery
#2 – Hired workers
#3 – "Other" (not our main concern)

#1 - Slavery

There were many kinds of slave situations.

Life-long vs. temporary Punishment vs. to-pay-off-a-debt Forced vs. volunteer
Cruel (condemned by God) vs. pleasant (And more)

In nations NOT influenced by the Bible,
slavery was often very cruel.
But in the Bible...

On the one end of the spectrum...

E V I L G O O D

The Bible describes some types of slavery as **EVIL** situations.

☹ Those causing it deserved the severest of punishments.

Kidnappers *must be killed*, whether they are caught in possession of their victims or have already sold them as slaves.
Exodus 21:16 (NLT)

On the other end of the spectrum...

E V I L G O O D

The Bible describes some types of slavery as **GOOD** situations.

☺ So desirable that even the *slave* might want to remain in the situation.

But if your slave says to you, '*I don't want to leave you,*' because he loves you and your family, and is well off with you, ...
Deut. 15:16 (HCSB)

The ultimate issue:

The issue is *not* the EXISTENCE of slavery, but the CONDUCT of those involved (both slave and master).

[The Bible prohibited mistreatment of the slave.]

The pay? Varied, depending on the situation.

- It may be *food and lodging*.
- In some situations, it would include *money*.
- In other situations, the slave was treated like a *family member*.

#2 – Hired workers

There were different types of situations.

- Long-term, short-term.
- By Jesus' day, many people were "day-workers," who worked and got paid one day at a time.

This type of situation is closer to what most of us experience.

Employee
Temporary help
Contract worker
(And more)

Hired worker conditions



Just like the "slave" situations, hired worker situations involved:

- Someone who was being worked for.
- Someone who was doing the work.

The pay? One day's wages = enough to survive one day.

The hired worker's situation might be better or worse than for some slaves, depending on the availability of jobs.

At five o'clock that evening [the landowner] was in town again and saw some more people standing around.

He asked them, "Why haven't you been working today?"

They replied, "Because **no one hired us.**"

Matthew 20:6-7a (NLT)

No work... no food! (The slave at least got fed.)

Sometimes hired workers were not very reliable (just like today).

I WILL HIRE YOU TO TAKE CARE OF MY SHEEP.

YOU CAN TRUST ME!

LATER...

The hired hand ... sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and runs away.

So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them.

Because **he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep**, he runs away.

John 10:12-13 (NET)

[He just wanted the money!]

#3a – "Other"

These "other" are not our focus, since they don't always involve people working for other people.

SELF-EMPLOYED

- Growers, producers, traders, merchants, etc.
- Conditions varied greatly.

Pay? Varied greatly.

#3b – "Other"

FAMILIES

- In many families, *everybody* had responsibilities
- Even children, instead of "playing their lives away," were "preparing for life."
- As a child, Jesus would have learned carpentry from his "adopted" father, Joseph.

Pay? As a family member, you got what you needed. (Not necessarily any extra.)

YOU MAY ASK (and it's a good question):

WHAT DO "WORK
CONDITIONS BACK THEN"
HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

Worldwide: *All of these types of situations still exist.*

EVEN SLAVERY WILL EXIST TO THE VERY END OF THIS AGE.

Slaves are mentioned in Revelation 6:15; 13:16; 19:18; and possibly 18:13. Since the nations will reject the Bible, these will tend to be horrible situations.

(Some of the food and items YOU have purchased were made by slaves or abused workers. You paid less for the products, because the workers got paid less.)

In our nation: (1) – Slavery *still* exists (illegally).

There are an estimated 60,000 slaves. (The exact number cannot be determined.)

This is the *evil* form of slavery that the Bible *prohibits*.

In our nation: (2) – "Normal" work situations are deteriorating.

Who is contributing to the problem?

- **The employer:** Increased abuse of hired workers.
- **The employee:** Decreased productivity and lower work quality.
- (There may also be external factors that vary.)

"THIS IS A PROBLEM!"

"WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?"

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED!

What can we* do about it? (1)

1. **BE AWARE** that God will judge *all* people for how they treat others in *any* type of work relationship.
2. **OPPOSE** sin in *any* form.
 - We must start with *ourselves*.
 - There may be limits to what we can do about *others*.

* ["We" = The people who are most directly involved in the situation.]

What can we do about it? (2)

3. **DEAL WITH** our own conduct – whether:
 - As an employee (working for someone).
 - As an employer (someone working for us).
4. **OBEY** God's commands that deal with work situations!
 - Even though some of the Bible's instructions use terms such as "slave" and "master," the PRINCIPLES apply to ALL work situations.

THE BIBLE GIVES US COMMANDS –

"Principles of conduct" to show us:

- How the slave / worker / employee is to act.
- How the master / owner / employer is to act.

Everyone can benefit from the outcome – IF all those involved follow God's commands.

- Ignoring these instructions opens the door to all kinds of sin and abuse.
- If others aren't willing to obey God, at least you can. (Then God will not hold you guilty for the problems that occur.)

WHAT ARE SOME OF THESE COMMANDS?

- **IN GENERAL**, any Scripture passage that explains how to "love one's neighbor" may be applicable.
- **SPECIFICALLY**, some passages address the issue of work relationships (expressed in terms of a slave / master situation). The two most extensive passages are Colossians 3:22-4:1 and Ephesians 6:5-9.

(Some Old Testament regulations were for specific situations that do not exist today, and so are difficult to apply.)

EXAMPLE

TO EMPLOYEES: Paul's instructions to "slaves" should influence how YOU do your job.

Slaves, always obey your earthly masters. Don't obey them only while you're being watched, as if you merely wanted to please people. Be sincere in your motives out of respect for your real master. ...

Col. 3:22 (GW); see through v. 25.

YES, I WANT TO DO MY JOB WELL!

THIS REFERS TO JESUS CHRIST (SEE V. 24).

EXAMPLE

TO EMPLOYERS: Paul's instructions to "masters" should influence how YOU do your job.

Masters, be just and fair to your slaves because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

Col. 4:1 (GW)

YES, I WANT TO TREAT MY EMPLOYEES WELL!

People who deny that there is a "master in heaven" will still be judged by that master. They will stop pretending that he doesn't exist.

WE WANT TO TREAT EACH OTHER WELL, AND WITH RESPECT!


- There is nothing wrong with a "master-slave" relationship, if BOTH are willing to obey the Bible.

- It's only when people ignore the Bible, that things go wrong.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE BIBLE ... I WILL DO ANYTHING I WANT!

- Even **ATHEIST** employers and employees will be judged by God, based on God's truth.

(They will stop suppressing the TRUTH they KNOW about God – Romans 1:18-20.)

ONE MORE ISSUE...  **VERY IMPORTANT!**

Each of these work-related instructions is **CONNECTED** to our service to God, as HIS slave.

... out of respect for your real master. Col. 3:22

... you also have a master in heaven. Col. 4:1

WHAT THIS SHOWS US:

- **IF** you are NOT obeying God in your **day-to-day work situation**, ...
 - **THEN** you are NOT obeying God in your **"service to the Lord"** (Romans 12:11b)!

ALSO →

- **IF** you are NOT obeying God ...
 - **THEN** you are a SLAVE TO SIN & God is NOT your Master.

This takes us right back to our theme verse:

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, **servicing the Lord [= MASTER].** Romans 12:11 (NIV)

- **Slaves/workers/employees:** Must serve their employer as an act of serving God.
- **Masters/owners/employers:** Must treat workers the way they want their master (God) to treat them.

ALL WILL BE JUDGED, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ADMIT THAT GOD IS THEIR MASTER. Claiming to be an "atheist" won't allow you to get away with sin.

Your Mission...

SERVING OTHERS is a part of **SERVING THE LORD.**

Do YOU CLAIM TO "SERVE THE LORD"? → **THEN PROVE YOUR CLAIM TRUE BY THE WAY YOU FULFIL YOUR WORK OBLIGATIONS!**

Credits

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Your Mission...

**"Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor,
serving the Lord."**

Romans 12:11

One of the ways we "serve the *Lord*" is by serving *people* in a way that honors the Lord. This includes the way we interact in our work situation - whether it involves masters and slaves (typical at the time the Bible was written), or employers and employees (typical now). It is *impossible* to "serve the Lord" if we are sinning in our work situation!

WHAT are we to do?

- 1) God gives us many instructions related to the basic principle, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).
- 2) There are also specific instructions related to work situations. Though the individuals addressed in the N.T. situations were masters and slaves, *the principles are applicable to any work situation, even those involving employers and employees.*
- 3) As always, our *ultimate* obligation of "love for God" (Matthew 22:37-38) must also be considered. If someone tries to get us to sin, we must refuse to obey, out of love for God.

HOW are we to do it?

On the next page are some basic principles. (You will find more details by reading the passages.) If you want to fulfil your obligations *to God*, then fulfil your obligations *in your work place!*

"Working at Work," in service to God

(Since today's work situations tend to be "employer-employee," instead of "master-slave," we will summarize the principles using the "modernized" concepts of employee and worker.)

BASIC PRINCIPLES - Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1

WORKER: You must obey your employer the same way you are to obey Christ, aware that you will be judged by God and rewarded for what you do.

EMPLOYER: You also will be judged by a Master. This fact must influence how you treat your workers.

EMPLOYEES WITH UNSAVED EMPLOYERS - Titus 2:9-10

This passage shows you how to be a *positive* example of what it means to "follow Jesus."

There is no guarantee that your employer will get saved; but don't let your conduct result in a reaction similar to this: "If *that's* what a 'Christian' is like, *then I want nothing to do with it!*" (Don't become guilty of what Romans 2:24 describes!)

EMPLOYEES UNJUST EMPLOYERS - 1 Peter 2:18-23

You must do what is right *regardless* of what your employer is like - whether he is good or evil.

Don't do anything that deserves punishment! But if you *do* get punished, make sure it is *undeserved*. Respond by following Jesus' example. (After all, *he* was unjustly punished for *us!*)

SOME OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPTS... JUST FOR EMPLOYERS!

Deuteronomy 24:14 - Don't take advantage of hired workers.

Job 31:13-15 - The attitude you should have toward your workers: Remember 1) your own future judgment, and 2) your equality (under God) with those who work for you.