

Submission in the Workplace

Ephesians 6:5-9

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I. Slavery in biblical times was not the wicked institution of recent centuries. (v. 5)

Modern Slavery:

Claimed Racial Superiority
Evil institution
Denied human rights and dignity
Physical and sexual abuse
Couldn't own property
Punishment for running away
Slaves were owned for life

1st Century Slavery:

Not racially motivated
Professionals included
Education encouraged
Master's status transferred
Property ownership allowed
Pathway to full citizenship
Temporary condition

Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. (1 Corinthians 7:21-24)

“But 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)

“Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper's possession. (Exodus 21:16)

II. Christian workers are to hear and heed the authority of their employers. (v. 5)

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Romans 13:1)

III. Christian workers are to have the appropriate attitudes. (v. 5)

a. Fear and trembling. (v. 5)

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and

persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves. (1 Timothy 6:1-2)

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. (Titus 2:9-10)

b. A sincere heart. (v. 5)

But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. (Matthew 5:39-41)

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky... (Philippians 2:14-15)

I fear that there may be discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. (2 Corinthians 12:20b)

Without wood a fire goes out;
without a gossip a quarrel dies down.
As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.
The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;
they go down to the inmost parts. (Proverbs 26:20-22)

c. With consistent effort. (v. 6)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. (Colossians 3:22-24)

IV. Christian employees must have the proper perspective on their work: it is not for men but for the Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 5, 6, 7)

Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:18-21)

V. Christian employees will eventually be rewarded by the Lord. (v. 8)

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. (Matthew 16:27)

The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. (Proverb 11:18)

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12)

VI. Christian employers are to view and treat their employees as though they were Jesus. (v. 9)

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. (1 Corinthians 7:17)

Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. (Colossians 4:1)

Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. (James 5:4)

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Bring the mind of Christ into the workplace and work as an act of worship.