

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
"Servants and Masters"
Ephesians 6:5-9

INTRODUCTION

1. Control by the Spirit is the central thrust of this section of the book (v. 18). It is a necessary command.
2. Spirit control affects personal interrelationships (vv. 19-20), husbands and wives (vv. 22-33) parents and children (6:1-4) and now servants and masters.
3. Consider the Biblical standards enjoined upon servants and masters. They supercede all earthly controls.

1. SERVANTS vv. 5-8.

Basic responsibility: obey. This is the comprehensive term of duty (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). It is the same verb used of children. The servant was in fact a "slave." Slavery was common and accepted in the Roman Empire. Many Christians were slaves (cf. Philemon). The obedience rendered was to be:-

a. With Fear v. 5.

Abject terror is obviously not meant, but conscientious solicitude is meant. It is the Spirit that leaves no duty undone (cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Phil. 2:12).

b. Singleness of Heart v. 5.

"Singleness" means being without folds. Simplicity as contrasted with pretence, dissimulation, insincerity. It is the opposite of doublemindedness and duplicity.

c. Unto Christ v. 5.

This places a slaves service as a Christian duty, a service performed to the Lord. The motivation here is divine authority and its object is a divine person.

d. No Eyeservice v. 6

The preposition notes the principle or rule of action. Two nouns (eyeservice, menpleasers) are only used here and Colossians 3:22 in the N.T. They denote work done only when one is under the master's eye and with a view to curry favor with the master. This is an appropriate behaviour.

e. Servants of Christ vv. 6, 7.

Believers have a divine relationship. They are His slaves. Hence they do things out of regard for the will of God. They work with hearty readiness to please God. The obedience (v. 5) is from the inner man. This type of service is done with alacrity and cheerfulness. It is all done to Christ and not men. Such service is

no galling yoke or heavy burden.

f. Knowing Rewards v. 8.

Here is presumed knowledge. If anyone does any good thing, he will receive back from the Lord. The certainty, equity, and adequacy of the reward is signified. At that time (coming of Christ) social distinctions will be disregarded. The issue in the end will be spiritual conditions.

Note: The motive for service is what counts with Him (Matt. 6:1-18). Payment is only once. Read vv. 2, 5, 16 (reward) and compare with vv. 4, 6, 18 (recompense).

2. MASTERS v. 9

The master in this context is one who is "according to the flesh" (v. 5). This is a great contrast with the Lord Who is absolute and is over all earthly slave and master relations.

a. Principle

Duty was not all on the side of the slave. Masters also had obligations. Here was something radical as most thought slaves had no rights. Basic to the concern is that masters are to act toward their slaves with the same regard to the will of God and authority of Christ as had been enjoined on them. The same moral and spiritual obligations govern both classes.

b. Prohibition

This is appropriate for most felt slaves must be kept in check by fear of punishment. The present participle suggests: "letting up on threatening." All manifestations of contempt, ill-temper, or undue severity are included.

c. Provocation

The true incentive for masters is knowledge (cf. v. 8). That knowledge is that the master of the slaves is the same as that of the masters. The Lord has no favorites. He is impartial.

CONCLUSION Justice and equality are upheld, albiet Scripture does not relieve slaves and masters from their positions (1 Cor. 7:20-24). Believers will act in conformity to the will of God. Such obedience will bring to an end evils of systems conceived by fallen man.