

**THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE
MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF
EPHESIANS**

(LESSON ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE)

“OBEDIENT AS UNTO CHRIST”

(PART FOUR)

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

In chapter 5 and verse 18 of his letter to the believers in Ephesus, Paul writes, “*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*” The Apostle is not making a suggestion here; he is issuing a command to all believers. Every believer is to ensure that he or she is continually filled with the Holy Spirit.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to have one's mind completely under His control. According to **Colossians 3:16**, being filled with the Spirit is synonymous with allowing the "*Word of Christ*" to dwell in us richly. When our minds are saturated with, immersed in, and surrendered to God's Word, His Spirit will control and dominate us. The fruit of the Spirit will be produced in our lives, and our speech and behaviour will testify that we are Spirit filled. The Spirit's filling is not a matter of available **power**, for God's supplies are infinite. Rather it is a matter of available **will**. It is a matter of the willingness of an already saved individual to surrender to the influence and control of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The more willing a believer is to surrender to the influence and control of the Spirit, the more the Spirit's power becomes available to him or her.

According to **Galatians 5:16-23**, being filled with the Spirit is also synonymous with "*walking in the Spirit,*" or "*living by the Spirit.*" The secret of victory over sin is found in surrender to a divine Person—the Holy Spirit, who at the moment the sinner places his or her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, takes up His permanent residence in his or her being for the purpose of ministering to his or her spiritual needs. The Holy Spirit has been given to the believer to counteract the evil nature, but He does that for the believer when the he or she puts himself or herself under His control.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit, does not necessarily result in an overwhelming emotional experience, but results rather in a state of being controlled. The believer who consistently puts himself or herself under the control of the Holy Spirit is a believer who is "*filled with the Spirit.*"

In verses **19-21** of chapter **5**, Paul writes,

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

In this passage, he mentions three practical results of the Spirit's filling of believers: **worship**, **gratitude**, and **submission**. In verse **21** Paul transitions to an extensive discussion of relationships that continues through to verse **9** of chapter **6**. The general principle of **mutual submission**, "*Submitting yourselves one to another,*" is not only one of the practical results of the filling of the Spirit but is also the foundation of the more specific principles of authority and submission as it relates to husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. It means "submitting to others according to the authority and submission established by God."

In verses **22-33**, Paul applies this principle of mutual submission to the relation between **wives** and **husbands**; in verses **1-4** of chapter **6**, he applies the principle to **children** and **parents**, and in verses **5-9**, he applies it to **slaves** and **masters**.

In previous Lessons, we observed that the first-century master-slave relationship parallels the employer-employee relationship in our day. As in the relationships between wives and husbands, and children and parents, the principle Paul is emphasizing is that of authority and submission as a manifestation of one who is filled with, and therefore controlled by, the Holy Spirit.

In both verses **6** and **7**, Paul makes the point that the obedience of the believing slave is to be rendered to his or her earthly master as if his or her earthly master were the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! The believing slave is to serve his earthly master, with the same attitude and exertion as if he or she were working for Christ! We who are employees must do the same!

Brothers and sisters, this principle is to govern every detail of our service. As we work, our service is to be rendered exclusively to Christ! A believing employee owes complete obedience to his or her employer as a ministry to the Lord.

In **Titus 2:9-10**, Paul again deals with the principle of mutual submission as it relates to slaves and masters. He writes,

9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again;

10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

(King James Version)

In verse **9**, Paul instructs Titus to urge believing slaves to “*be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things.*”

The words “*please them well*” are the translation of a Greek word which means, “pleasing, desirable, proper, fit, agreeable.” It speaks of that which is well-pleasing, approved, eminently satisfactory, or extraordinarily pleasing. The believing slaves in Crete, where Titus was the Overseer, were being encouraged to be continually well approved, eminently satisfactory, or extra-ordinarily pleasing to their masters, “*in all things,*” or without any exceptions!

The words “*In all things,*” should, of course, be understood as, “everything that does not require disobedience to God.” For example, a Christian employee should not lie or engage in dishonest accounting practices to please his or her employer. But as long as it does not involve disobedience to God, a Christian should be subject to his or her employer.

In **2 Corinthians 5:9** Paul writes, “*So then whether we are alive or away, we make it our ambition to please him*” (**New English Translation**). The Greek word translated “*please*” in this verse is the same word translated “*please them well*” in **Titus 2:9**. Paul’s service on earth was designed to bring pleasure to the heart of his Lord, whether he was still here on earth or whether he was standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. To be well-pleasing to God was Paul’s highest goal, and it should also be for every believer.

Earlier, we stated that a believing employee owes complete obedience to his or her employer as a ministry to the Lord. We said that this principle is to govern every detail of our service. Our service is not to be rendered to our human masters, but exclusively to Christ! In seeking to be well-pleasing to the Lord Jesus in everything, every believer should endeavour to please his or her employer well in everything!

One of the ways in which a slave was to please his or her master was by not being argumentative or, “*answering again.*” The Greek word translated “*answering again,*” literally means, “to speak against.” Here, the word is modified by the negative particle and includes the ideas of not contradicting, not back-chatting, not being rude or impudent. The word is in the **present tense** which calls for this to be the slave’s habitual practice.

Again we ask, “How could a believing slave habitually render this kind of service to his or her master?” And again our answer is that it would be impossible unless he or she was continually allowing the in-dwelling Holy Spirit to fill him or her!

Another way in which a slave was to please his or her master was by being completely honest and trustworthy. In verse **10** Paul writes, “*Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity.*”

The word “*purloining*” is the translation of a Greek word which means, “to set apart, separate, divide; to set apart or separate for oneself, i.e. to embezzle, withdraw covertly and appropriate to one’s own use.” the idea is of misappropriation, often by a breach of trust. The word implies repeated acts of theft in small amounts.

The word is in the **present tense**. Paul is saying, “Don’t continually keep setting apart for yourself a part of that which has been entrusted to your care by your master. Don’t embezzle or appropriate wrongfully some of the Master’s goods for your own use.”

The “**Biblical Illustrator**” comments as follows in respect of the issue of “purloining”: “**Stealing** is a term applicable to the conduct of a man who goes to the house, or the farm, or the shop of another, and takes away his goods or other property. We turn an act of theft into one of **purloining** when a servant helps himself, without an understood allowance from his master or mistress, to that which is under his care, or to which he has access; or when a workman pockets, for his own use, what he thinks he may bear away without detection; or when a labourer carries away from his master's farm something to add to his own little stock, or to maintain his own family. To **steal** is to take what is not our own. To **purloin** is to take what is not our own too; but it is something we had in trust, or to which we had access. If **purloining** be practised on a large scale, it changes its name and becomes **embezzlement**.”

Warren Wiersbe made the following remarks regarding the same matter: “There are no slaves in our society today, but there are employees. Christian workers...must not steal from their employers. Millions of dollars are lost each year by employers whose workers steal from them, everything from paper clips and pencils to office machines and vehicles. ‘They owe it to me!’ is no excuse. Neither is, ‘Well, I’ve earned it!’”

Instead of purloining, believing slaves were to habitually demonstrate “*all good fidelity*.” The believing slaves were to continually demonstrate loyalty and trustworthiness. They were continually to prove themselves to be faithful servants in everything they were entrusted with. When a master noted integrity and faithfulness in a slave, he or she would have been intrigued, for such qualities were very rare in slaves. What was it that made this slave, who perhaps before had been sullen and rebellious, to now be so honest, respectful, loyal and obedient? Eventually the master would learn that the “beautiful live” of the slave, was a reflection of the life of the One who was the slave’s real master. He or she would come to appreciate the beauty and transforming power

of the Gospel and perhaps be led to own the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Saviour and Lord.

What was it that our Lord said in **Matthew 5:13-16**?

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

By habitually demonstrating “*all good fidelity.*” The believing slaves would “*adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*”

The **New Living Translation** renders **Titus 2:9-10** as follows:

9 Slaves must always obey their masters and do their best to please them. They must not talk back

*10 or steal, but must show themselves to be entirely trustworthy and good. **Then they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way.***

Spurgeon writes that, “The life of the Christian, even if he be a servant, is to be an ‘ornament’ of Christianity. Christ does not look for the ornament of his religion to the riches or the talents of his followers, but to their holy lives ‘that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.’”

Brothers and sisters, as we labour at our place of employment, let us remember who we are really working for. The **New English Translation** renders **Ephesians 6:5** as follows: “*Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely **as you would serve Christ.***” Our primary motive for being gainfully employed should be to honour and glorify our Lord. This means that we need to pay close attention to our behaviour and attitude on the job. How will it make others think about the Saviour that we profess to love and serve? Our life should be the foundation for any verbal witness. If our life is not an adornment of the doctrine of God our saviour, then let us not tell anyone that we are Christians, for if we do, we will dishonour the name of Christ and give excuses to unbelievers to continue in their sins. But let us remember that the only way our lives can be adornments of the doctrine of God our Saviour is if we are “filled with the Spirit.”