



Reading Ephesians Together Pt 8: Admonishments for Bondservants & Masters

Ephesians 6:5-9

THE FIRST CENTURY BONDSERVANT

- Slavery in the 1st century was drastically different from that of the 17th – 19th century.
- Self-sale into slavery carried guaranteed freedom with full citizenship as a Roman.
- It was often harder to live as a free man and look for work each day (day laborer) than it was to sell oneself to a good master and live easier.
- Bond servants in the New Testament were considered parts of the extended household. For this reason we see “entire households” becoming Christian along with their owners.

Paul’s primary message for his hearers was that Christ should be the central motivation for daily living. Furthermore, Christians should serve “unto the Lord” in whatever condition they are in.

CHRISTIAN BONDSERVANTS

- Bondservants were instructed to obey with “fear and trembling” and “with a sincere heart.”
- Bondservants were to consider that they were first a “servant or bondservant to Christ.”
- Service to the Lord would be rewarded with God’s blessing and provision.

CHRISTIAN MASTERS

- Masters were reminded that they too were bondservants to the Lord and under authority.
- A Master’s desire should be to do the will of God from the heart.
- Like the bondservant, the Master was to serve his bondservants and treat them “as to the Lord.”

PERSONAL DEVOTION/FAMILY WORSHIP QUESTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

1. Review the life of the first century bondservant and think about the influence the Gospel must have had on entire households in the 1st century (ex. Acts 10:1-2; Acts 11:5-14; Acts 16:11-15, 25-34; Acts 18:5-11).
2. As you consider the life of the first century bondservant, read the entire letter of Philemon, which was written during the same time as Ephesians.
3. In what ways can you be a better employer and/or employee?

Catechism

Question: What does the tenth commandment forbid?

Answer: The tenth commandment forbids any dissatisfaction with what belongs to us, envy or grief at the success of others, and all improper desire for anything that belongs to someone else.