

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Ephesians 6

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this amazing letter – that the Apostle Paul writes to the saints in Ephesus and to us here this morning –

as he was under house arrest in Rome –

And I think it is important to not lose focus of the context in which he writes this letter

He is in prison –

Chained to a Roman guard

Under duress

And even under those conditions – Paul had the confidence that even in the midst of the circumstances that he was in the midst of - God was going to be faithful to complete the work.

And that is what this letter –

It is a letter that is filled with love by the Spirit of God with incredible instructions.

Paul first provides for us with an exhortation to know the magnitude of God's goodness. We sit, we press in – and quite frankly, this is something that we should do

on a daily basis – never losing sight of God’s goodness – everything He has done and continues to do in us and through us.

And then the second half of the letter – he says, in light of God’s goodness, let’s walk accordingly.

And one of those ways that this is manifested – is in our relationships with each other.

Submitting to the roles that God has assigned for us

Submitting to one another

Being Spirit filled – day by day

Not having the mentality that it is all about me – and about my circumstances – and about what I want or my emotions – but what God wants.

So we have seen over the last month – Paul describes for us what that looks like in our home

The role of wives and husbands and children

God’s order in the home –

Because the Spirit filled life is supposed to direct us to a life of submission in our homes and in our relationships – even where we work.

Let’s pray...

Read Text

Saints – embrace your role as slaves.

That was Paul's message to the saints who were really slaves in the church at Ephesus.

Now – when Paul writes this – we have to understand that slaves outnumbered those that were free.

Some say that 60% of the those living in the Roman Empire were slaves.

That means that many early Christians – many of the saints that gathered in the church in Ephesus to hear Paul's letter – were also slaves.

So after listening and hearing about God's goodness, after hearing about how God is using you in His unfolding word in the cosmos - after hearing that the Lord breaks down all these walls and grants us access to Himself and gives us hope and purpose and so much more - now Paul says, "Be the best slave you can be."

Now – these words are not directed simply to those who were slaves –

Paul includes this to those who were free

He includes those that are masters

He includes all of us – you and me.

Paul even includes himself.

You see, in the NT writings – Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and Timothy all identify themselves as slaves of God

Here is the problem

We live in a culture that prizes – almost worships personal freedom.

Personal liberties

We live in a culture that prizes – it is all about my rights - I am not a slave to no one or am I willing to be a slave to anyone.

But Jesus took on the role of a slave

Jesus took on the role of a servant

For what purpose?

To administer love

To administer healing and salvation

Jesus knew exactly what inequity and unfairness and what abusive treatment was all about

Nobody knows better than Jesus that sin is not fair.

Sin pays the same wages to every single person – because the bible says that the wages of sin is death.

And so we have to understand that what Paul writes here is not an endorsement of slavery

Paul isn't addressing the wrongness of slavery or the wrongness of an abusive relationship

It is a sin issue -

Paul is inviting us to change our attitude and our heart about any given situation.

He's inviting us to have a biblical perspective -

Our actions, attitudes, and behavior in the home, in the workplace, out in public are all supposed to filter through this perspective, where we recognize that my life is not primarily about how comfortable I am or how successful I am.

The point of my life is to receive God's love, to be a conduit of His grace, and to glorify Him in the process.

You see loved ones – we have to try to grasp that the bible is not telling us to simply to try to be better husband or a better wife or better children or employees or employers –

The bible is inviting us to embrace what it means to be radically changed as we submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ

And so – Paul is going to remind us that God wants us to honor Him even when we work for people who dishonor Him

Let's look at our text -

[Eph 6:5-9 NKJV] 5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;

What did it mean to be a “slave” or a “bondservant” in Ephesus?

One of the things we have to understand is that slavery was very different back then.

For example, people sometimes put themselves into slavery voluntarily to pay debts.

Some slaves were cooks or bakers or furniture makers.

Some were carpenters, some musicians or actors or teachers, or even physicians.

Every slave had a special job they had to do.

During my study – I came upon this – Ephesus had a public toilet system.

Like glorified porta potties – a huge piece of stone with holes every few feet.

And one of the duties – no pun intended – of a slave was that when the master of the house wanted to use the toilet – that the slave would be sent out to warm up the seat.

The slave would sit there to get it ready for the master

Not everyone volunteered for indentured servitude.

Many were kidnapped or taken through conquest.

Many were forced to work with no time off until they died –

So this is the range of experience.

And to all of these slaves, Paul says obey as if your master was Christ.

I had you make a note of the word bondservant –

Again – this can be a slave by choice or it can be referred to someone who has been forced into slavery.

This is the same word that Paul identifies himself in some of his letter in relationship to Jesus

He is a slave

He is a slave by choice

He voluntarily has taken his life / his being and he has subjected it to the lordship of Jesus

And that is the command that Paul is giving us here –

The person who says that they love the Lord / if they believe that the bible is true / concede that Jesus is their Master according to the spirit – but some of us have masters according to the flesh –

We have jobs, we have people that we have to report to, we have supervisors and managers that we are to obey

This is the same word that Paul used last weeks in regard to how children are to obey their parents.

Now, as the believer is spirit filled – the Holy Spirit provides us with the power to be obedient

Again, this is not something that we can simply do out of our will or by trying harder
God doesn't command us to do something if He doesn't empower us first.

We rely on His guidance and strength and wisdom and power to do it.

The believer has a power that is different from the world

We are to obey with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart

This doesn't mean to cower, it means to obey with respect

And then he says in the sincerity of your heart.

This way of living comes from the depths of the new life we have in Christ.

Our attitudes, words, and behaviors well up from the fountain of grace the Lord has put in us.

We may not love our job

We may not look forward to waking up every morning and going to work

We may even want to quit our job

We may be overqualified for our job

We may see a lot of wrongdoing in our job

But, the fundamental command God has for the believer is:

Work respectfully, treating our fellow employees and our boss with grace and generosity because we should think about our job as if we were doing it for Jesus Christ.

Because as far as He is concerned, we are!

It doesn't matter if the boss is a believer or not

Paul reminds us that we are to serve apart from the worthiness or the unworthiness of the employer

We serve Christ

Our desire is not to please the company or to please the supervisor

We exist to please the Lord Jesus

6 not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

What Paul is saying is not only challenging to us, it was also challenging to the Roman culture.

Slaves had no rights

Culturally and legally they did not have the option to obey.

But Paul makes it clear - You are an individual with value and dignity and the capacity to choose whether you will do what God says you can do or to not do that.

It is not simply having a good attitude toward your employer

It is about giving it your best –

Not because you might get promoted or because you will be recognized or because we want to kiss up to our boss.

We give our best because that is what is right

Because as we work – as we are energized by God's grace, as we accomplish our job with integrity and respect and diligence – we are doing God's will.

He counts it as ministry.

He counts it as service to Him.

We are given permission to respect our employers – even in difficult circumstances.

It doesn't matter if I am in a dead-end job

Or a crummy job

We are to work with energy and enthusiasm

With diligence

The principle is to work as if we are working for Jesus

Some slaves in the Roman Empire had the ability to buy their freedoms

Some slaves were also set free by their masters

But for those that were slaves – Paul says, here is the way you should slave.

One of the books in the bible we have not done – is Philemon – read it for homework tonight.

Paul met this guy named Onesimus.

He became like a son to Paul.

Paul was so helped by Onesimus and he wanted him to stay and be a part of the ministry.

But then he found out that Onesimus was a runaway slave.

And he told him, “The right thing to do is for you to go back and present yourself to your master.”

Philemon was his master

Philemon was a Christian and Paul even knew him.

But that’s how serious Paul was about not reacting to circumstances but living with Christian character. “Go back to the slavery you escaped and be a Christian there.”

7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether [he is] a slave or free.

The Culver’s that the girls and I go to every Thursday night –

They have adopted the Chik-fil-a mentality.

So every time I place an order – the response from the young man or lady is always, “my pleasure”

That is the attitude that Jesus invites us to serve.

We perform our tasks as if we are personally serving Jesus

Imagine you are working at the register at IN N Out

Jesus walks in – you are all excited

Jesus orders a double double animal style with a large diet coke and immediately you question whether it is Jesus because a double double is not kosher in the first place –

But here is the idea –

Since Jesus is going to give the ultimate reward and the ultimate punishment

It is what He thinks that matters the most

So we can serve with a smile on our face because we do it unto Him

This isn't just a slave thing, it's a Christian thing.

And though a Christian may be unrecognized or under-compensated, the Lord promises to reward our day-to-day faithfulness in the life He has scattered us into.

Loved ones –

God is watching.

He cares about our conduct.

He pays attention to the things we do and the things done to us.

We may have a terrible boss who doesn't treat you right.

In the end, God will hold them accountable.

Meanwhile, we must keep a Biblical perspective.

Your boss / my boss isn't the problem!

In fact, our boss is an opportunity.

They are a potential sibling in the family of God.

And our behavior may be the one demonstration of Gospel grace they see.

One of the important things we learn here is that oppression is not an excuse for wrong-doing.

That's a popular idea in our culture right now.

If I decide I'm oppressed, then I'm excused for bad behavior or lashing out or abandoning my duties.

I know believers who can't keep a job –

“They don't treat me right”

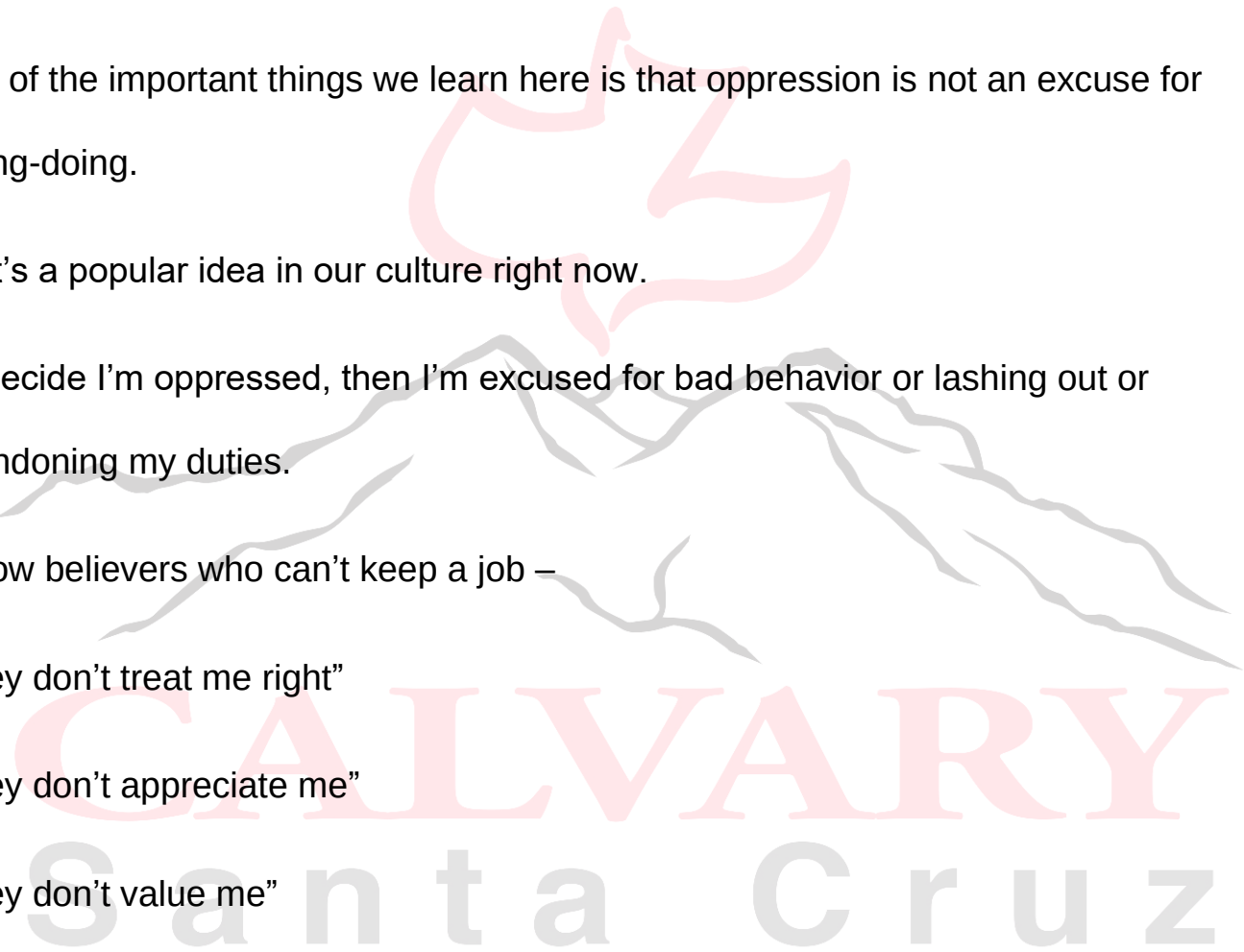
“They don't appreciate me”

“They don't value me”

“I deserve better than that”

But that's not Godly.

It's not the Christian way.



You see, Slavery wasn't a "good" thing.

But, for the Ephesians, their work situation was an opportunity to exercise faith.

Did they believe that God was in charge?

Did they believe that vengeance belonged to Him?

Did they believe that the best is yet to come?

Did they believe that life was not defined by circumstances but by the power of God?

The same thing applies to us

That doesn't mean some of us don't face difficulties at work.

But do we believe God?

That my work is really about me doing it for Jesus?

That I can be gracious and diligent even when circumstances aren't good?

Do I believe that the Lord is looking out for me, or do I think I should demand all of my rights and take revenge for the all the wrongs that are done to me?

For the believer –

There will be an ultimate payday

And everything that we ever said

And everything that we have ever done is going to be rewarded or not rewarded

Because everything we do is going to fall into the category of wood, hay and stubble or gold and silver and precious stones.

Every believer is going to receive a work performance evaluation from Jesus

It is not the pastor who works for Jesus

It is not the full time person in ministry that works for Jesus

It is every single person who identifies himself or herself as a Jesus follower that work for Jesus

9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Notice the beginning of this verse: "Masters, do the same things to them

So verses 5 through 8 apply to masters and verse 9 applies to masters.

He tells them, "In addition to being respectful and generous and having the proper perspective on who you're really serving in your day-to-day life, you need to give up the threat of violence against your servants."

The threat of violence was all masters had to make slaves obey.

But Paul reprograms the perspective here, too.

He says, "This person isn't your property.

They aren't a living tool.

They aren't your toilet seat warmer

They are just like you, because guess what: You are a slave, too. You have a Master in heaven. And He sees every single person as equal.

When you do your homework tonight –

When Paul wrote to Onesimus' owner he told him, "I want you to receive Onesimus back into his job as a slave, but you are no longer to think of him as a slave.

He is much more than a slave, he's your brother, and not just your brother, but a dearly loved brother.

Treat Onesimus in the same way you would treat me.

Paul is advising Christian masters to treat their slaves – saved or unsaved – in the same way and with the same concern that would reflect God's will and would reflect God's glory and would reflect God's character.

We are to treat our employees as men and women created in the image of God

Christian employers are to be fair, honest and kind

And in doing so – Paul is stressing that there can be harmony between slaves and masters if slaves and master treat each other in the same way that Jesus treats you and me

What happens in the home affects the church

What happens at work affects the church

The point in all of this –

Jesus is watching

Jesus is watching

But so are all the people that God has placed in our lives

Most of the people we know are not going to come to church on Sunday to see how we behave

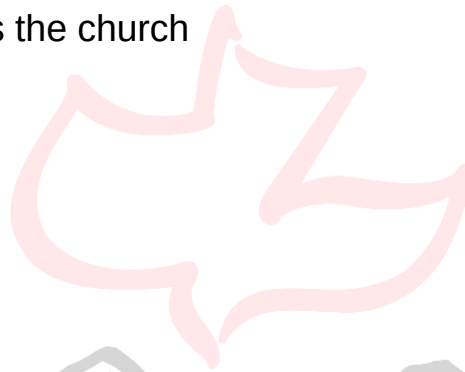
Most of the people we know are going to watch us at work and they are going to decide what we really are like

So the enemy will try to undermine our identity in Christ

The enemy wants to exploit our inconsistencies at home and at work

The enemy will try to mess us up

But God has an answer



CALVARY
Santa Cruz

That is why next week – we are going to be looking at spiritual warfare -

So we need humility in our heart, we need unity in our church, we need purity in our lives

We recognize that we are children of God and friends of God, but we also want to be like the apostles and self-identify as the slaves of God.

It may not make every circumstance feel easy, but it keeps our purpose in the forefront.

What a wonderful thing to know our 9-to-5 has value and worth and dignity.

That our faithfulness in small, seemingly menial things, counts as doing God's will, and He will reward us for it.

We can be excited about whatever we do, because God says, "I'm with you and you're doing it for Me and I'm watching and I'm counting it."

AMEN

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Jhn 13:12-17 NLT] 12 After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? 13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. 14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. 15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. 16 I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger

more important than the one who sends the message. 17 Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Jesus showed us how to do it

Whether we are the servant or the master

We serve a God who sends us to wash the feet of others to care for those around us

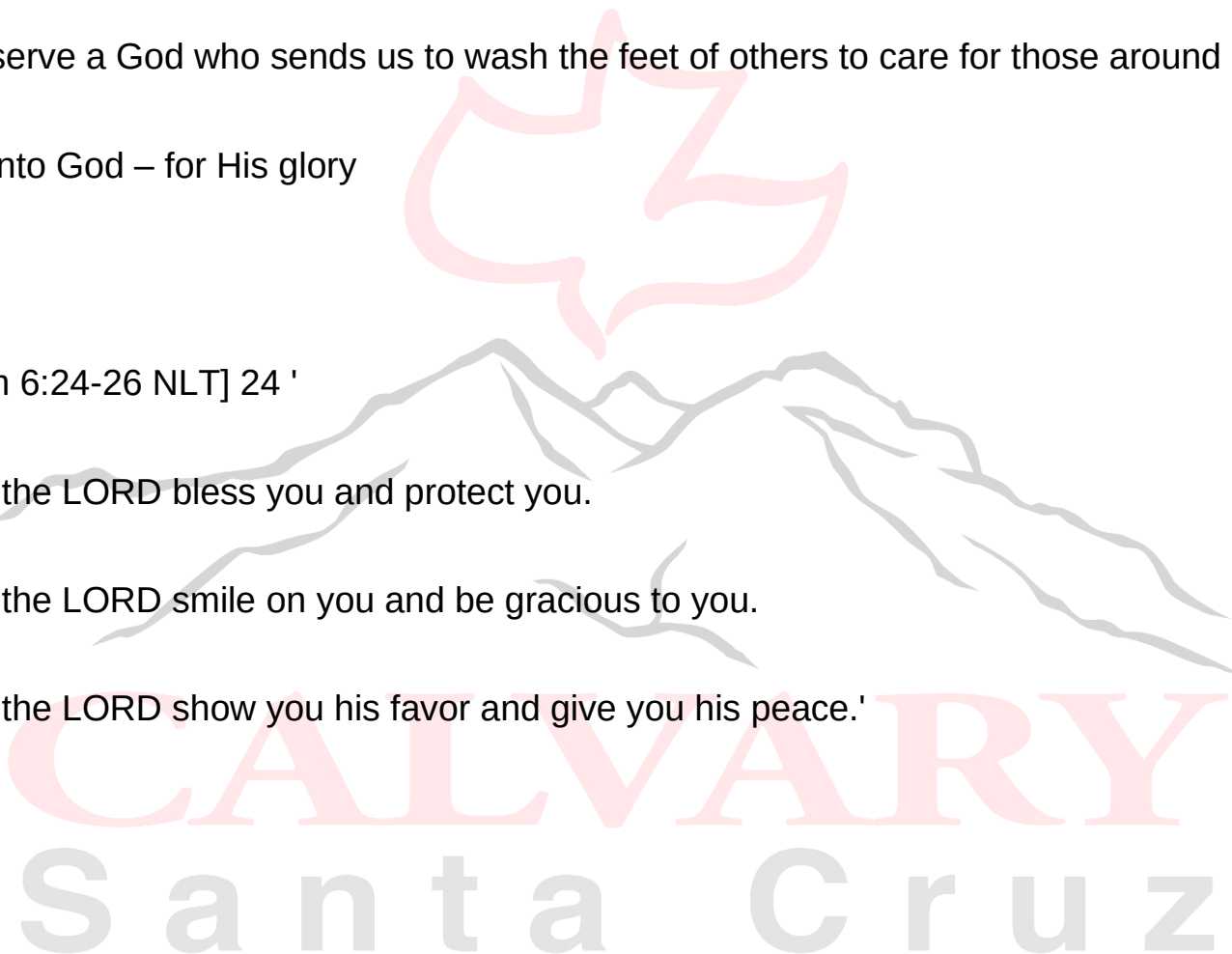
As unto God – for His glory

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'



CALVARY
S a n t a C r u z