

## 1 Timothy Pastor Lou DeVizia

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Introduction. Church life obviously extends beyond what happens when the church gathers together. What sorts of things should a church teach its people with regards to how they live? There are obviously many things which pertain to everyday life which are taught to Christians in the Bible. The first half of Chapter 6 presents one of them. Without question, it was true when Paul wrote, and it is true today: *work* dominates most people's lives. This has many implications, for as members of Christ's church everything we do should bring glory to Him. Present in this passage are instructions concerning our attitudes towards the people we work for, our view of work itself, and the impact we allow the typical compensation for our work (i.e., money) to have on us.

It may seem like an abrupt change of theme. The first five chapters clearly dealt with order in meetings and right relationships among the people of the church. Why suddenly now the shift to talking about people's work (the context here being that of slaves and masters)? You will see that this is still actually on the issue of relationships among brethren in the church. Christianity attracts people from all walks of life. It seems that in the Ephesian church there were both slaves and masters, both poor and rich. In Christ, we are all one: one salvation, one Holy Spirit. Perhaps a slave, or a poor person, would be tempted to despise a master. Perhaps his master was also a believer and a member of the same church! Notice that Paul does not command the masters to release their slaves (just as he did not command Philemon to release Onesimus). Instead, he addresses, in these verses, the slaves directly, and commands *honoring* of masters, and *especially* if those masters are believers (but honor just the same even if they are not)! *God is much more concerned with our character than He is with our comfort.* A healthy church needed for everyone to be content in their role in life. God can and does use many different people in different roles to bring glory to Himself. A content, loyal, diligent slave brought much more glory to God than a bitter, complaining, resentful one. And this display of godly character made the church as a whole stronger.

Paul does address the master in the Chapter. But this first section is directed entirely towards the *slave*. Certainly we can be greatly instructed for our own lives, even if the form of work is not strictly that of slaves and masters in our day. Modern-day employee-employer relations should be guided by all of the same principles: respect, a servant's heart, contentment, etc.

1. Verses 1-5 - The right attitude towards our earthly masters, and the right view of work itself.

- v.1 - **bondservants** = *douloi* (plural of *doulos*, i.e., "slave"). **count their own masters worthy** - Clearly, this speaks to our attitude towards those who rule over us in our employment. We are to consider them worthy of **honor** - that honor taking the form of obedience, diligence, humility, respect and honesty. Why? We profess Christ, who Himself took the form of a servant when He delivered us from sin. We don't want our profession to be mocked by having a proud attitude towards our earthly masters when our Lord humbled Himself. *Our diligent, loyal service makes the Gospel shine!*

NOTE: The use of the concept of *honoring* was applied to true widows and teaching elders (i.e., pastors) in Ch. 5.

- v.2a - If your master is a believer, what a great blessing that is to you! Don't resent him/her. Rather, see a great opportunity to bless a brother/sister! *What is your view of work? Learn to see work as an opportunity to serve God, no matter what the work is! You are glorifying God by working hard and honestly.* Honor your master, and work with excellence.

- vv.2b-5 - **Teach and exhort these things.** Timothy is solemnly charged to faithfully instruct the church in these ways. This is very practical church ministry. This teaching is described as **wholesome**, is personally ascribed to the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and it is consistent with **godliness**. No one should object! Those who do are treated with a very harsh description: they are **proud**, ignorant, and bent on arguing. Paul commands separation from such: complaining and divisiveness are contagious.

2. Verses 6-10 - The right attitude towards compensation and possessions.

- v.6 - A well-known statement. Having the right attitude towards our earthly masters is godly. Being godly in this life is one of the great, high calls on a Christian's life. Hand-in-hand with that godly attitude towards laboring for our masters is **contentment** with our compensation and possessions. Here is an area where there is obviously some flexibility in appropriating the doctrine to modern, American life; for employment here and now is at-will, not subject to the same obligations as slavery. An employee can negotiate a salary in some cases, or take a new job, etc., whereas a slave could not. Nevertheless, the *principle of contentment* still applies. We must not be bitter, complaining, lusty, ungrateful workers. We must learn to view our work as something higher than providing for material needs and desires, though that is a noble thing. Our work, our service, and our contentment display our Christian character for those around us.

- v.7 - Why be content? Because this world and all of its things are temporary.

- v.8 - A true Christian spirit does not lust for more and more in this life. Food, clothes, shelter (though Paul does not mention this, it is reasonable to surmise that a slave, who was owned, was sheltered by his master)... With basic necessities met in this temporary world, a Christian can be joyful beyond the world's understanding. We miss out on so much of the Christian experience when we lust and covet!

- v.9 - Note that it is still to the slave, the poor, that this is addressed. Lusting for wealth is a trap which leads to **destruction**.

- v.10 - It is interesting that a poor slave can love money as much as a rich master. This corrupt love can lead to sin and wickedness. It can destroy **faith**. And it brings the sadness of unfulfilled lusts and/or an unclean conscience from the misguided acquisition of earthly riches. Frustration and sadness - and all self-inflicted - are the fruits of the **love of money**. Rather, the worker should delight in his opportunity to glorify God through diligent, humble, honorable service with a right spirit. He promises to meet our needs and deliver us to eternal life! Why covet more? What could be better?