

Ephesians 15-03-01b

Let's continue our study now in Ephesians chapter 6. We've covered the first four verses in some detail. And we know that these are not just direct admonitions that apply only to the target audience. This is true throughout the Bible, isn't it? What have we been seeing in the Old Testament? God addresses prophecies to Babylon, to the king of Tyre, sends Jonah to Nineveh.

But even though He is allegedly talking to someone else, the target audience is actually His own people, right? We listen to what God says to others, knowing that there is application for us, right? This isn't a difficult concept. The principles are always true. The principles always apply.

Whether it is God talking to someone else, and those are not just a different audience, but a different time. Even in a different time, the principles are the same. And this is important background as we come to verse 5 of chapter 6, bond servants be obedient to those who are your masters.

Bond servants here is Hoi Duloι, Dulas. Any Air Force cadet, any Zumi knows what Duloι means. Duloι means obedient but Dulos means in Greek, because instead of calling their first year victims plebes, they call them Doolies.

Come here, Doolie. Why don't you hang around for a while and listen to some music? Which means grab the shower bar and do a dead hang for as long as your upperclassman deems fit. You better not let go and have your feet touch the deck.

So hanging around and listening to music isn't all it's cracked up to be when you're a first year academy type. They probably don't do that anymore. I'm sure it's hazing or something.

But Dulos, Duloι, slaves, this is the standard word for a servant who became such through capture, through purchase. It's classic slavery. The Bible does not condemn slavery.

Why? You know, slavery by any other name would smell as sweet. Or as Dr. Griswold reversed it when he was castigating liberalism back in the mid-80s, a skunk by any other name still stinks. Well, slavery, people say, oh, you know, bringing people across in ships and chains and forcing them to work against their will, having essentially kidnapped them, purchased them for money and treating them as chattel property is a heinous evil.

Well, leaving that lie for the moment, is there slavery today? Is there the same level of dictating conditions and forcing work by other means? Yes. Yes, there is. There are people who cannot afford to lose their job, can't afford it.

There is no other job. It is this job or I have nothing. And when employers know this, people have to work excessive hours.

They have to work when they're sick. They don't get time off, even if they've got a sick or injured

child. There is a lot of servitude.

There is a lot of authority abuse that goes on today. And it is essentially the same thing. All of the, Patty was making this point last night, you look at the care and concern and the welcome and the encouragement that a large segment of our society has for illegal aliens.

Nobody calls them that anymore. They're undocumented workers. And they're undocumented.

Look, I'm an undocumented worker. You think anybody's written down what I do? Does everybody write down what you do? Is it all written down somewhere? Do you get credit for all of the unseen, unknown things that you do? You put a finger in the dike and stop the flood. You handle things that need handling and you get no credit, no appreciation, no.

You're an undocumented, what do you mean undocumented worker? They are illegal aliens. They are not legal and they are not citizens. They have broken the law.

But there are people who think this is great and we should not only encourage all these people but allow more in. Well, these are the same people who roundly condemn and self-righteously talk against slavery. They're condoning slavery.

Undocumented workers that come across this country are little better than slaves. Living conditions, working conditions, little better than slavery. So the label can be applied or not applied.

What is the reality? What is the truth? The truth is there has been and will be slavery in every generation. It is only a matter of degree. And in the same way that in the South on farms and plantations there were slaves who were treated very well as well as those who were treated very poorly.

And typically that time in the 1700s and mid-1800s and into the time of the Emancipation Proclamation it is often defined by the worst abuses and the most heinous treatment which also has existed in every generation and continues to exist to this day in various forms under various guises. But there are also those, usually the majority, who have been treated very well. If you stop and think and particularly if you do historical reading, contemporary reading, you find that one of the reasons slaves were generally treated well and well cared for, given health care, given provision, giving adequate housing, it's an investment.

You are foolish to invest a bunch of money in someone and then abuse them and endanger their health and prevent them from working because you're mistreating and abusing them. That makes no financial sense. People had a heavy investment in their slave workforce and needed those people to cultivate, to bring in the crops, to keep the household running, to deliver supplies and take people from point A to point B. We currently have this series from the BBC showing the Downton Abbey sort of fictionalized times from 100 years ago and the people downstairs, the

servants, the help, it's a kind of slavery.

Many of those people, one of the conceits of the story is that some of them feel trapped in that life and have no escape, have no way to get out. It's a little different. Where would you go? What would you do? How would you sustain yourself? George Washington would love to have released his slaves, but he knew that it was not possible for a couple of reasons.

Many of his slaves belonged to the Custis family and he could not release them. Others, legally he could not release them. He was bound as a custodian of his stepchildren, his adopted children to keep that in trust and deliver those slaves to them as a part of the estate.

It was the law. But secondarily, the ones that he did own, if he did release them, where would they go? What would they do? There was no structure. Where are they going to go? Try to go north? The north is already glutted with freed slaves, former slaves, and there were miserable conditions up there.

This is the forerunners of your sweatshops and your ghettos. They were sadly better off remaining in slavery than being set free where they had no land, they had no job opportunities, they had no education, had no ability to function outside the environment in which they were raised. It was an evil of the time.

Similar things exist today. So when we come to verse 5 of Ephesians 6 and Paul talks about this, this is reality, this is truth and it pertains. All of us to a greater or lesser degree serve in circumstances and situations that we would not choose for ourselves.

It is imposed on us from the outside and the classic exposition of this, the classic illustration of this is slavery. The instructions that are given to those who are slaves and those who are masters apply in a situation that is not perfect. We live in a corrupt and fallen world and we are necessarily sometimes the slave master and we are necessarily sometimes the slave.

We fulfill those roles. We engage in those functions. Hopefully it isn't abusive, it isn't egregious, it isn't the classic evils of slavery that are so often put forward as characterizing that institution.

It doesn't have to be an evil. It is essentially employment in exchange for room and board at its best. But as with any other authority, service, relationship it can be abused.

You have all kinds of exploitation that have taken place and always will. So the point is these principles pertain, they apply. And don't think, well, boo on slavery, I can't even hear what Paul is saying.

Deal in truth. These situations have existed ever since the days of Cain and they will exist until the end of the Millennial Kingdom. There will be slaves in the Millennial Kingdom.

I know this because of what Jesus said, bond servants be obedient to those who are your

masters according to the flesh. Interesting qualification. He doesn't just say obey those who are your masters.

He says obey those who are your masters according to the flesh, meaning you've got two different perspectives that you maintain in your mind at the same time. There is the earthly, there is the practical, there is the functional, there is the material, there is the mundane, and there is the actual higher divine truth that we serve God the Father through the Lord Christ in the power of God the Holy Spirit. We do what we do in the Lord, for the Lord, as unto the Lord.

My father wrote in front of my Bible I received at high school graduation the reference, whatever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men. This is the way you glorify God. This is the way you shine your light.

This is the way you fulfill that role. Whatever you do, you may be a master in one situation and a slave in another. Many of us fulfill these roles simultaneously.

Remember the Roman centurion? I have authorities over me and I have authority over others. I say to one come and he comes, to another go and he goes. I've got people that I do the same thing for above me.

And he says because I understand authority Lord Jesus, I know that you have authority to determine the fate of my servant or my son, depending on how you parse that. And Jesus says, I have not seen this great of faith anywhere in Israel. This guy gets it.

He understands authority and the function of it and that there is an earthly realm in which it functions and in which we function and there is a heavenly realm. The centurion in that short statement says what Israel doesn't get the whole time the Lord Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom to them. The kingdom, an authority structure.

Bond servants, be obedient. We remember from our earlier excursion into submission in verse 22, actually verse 21, the word for submitting and in chapter 6, verse 1, children obey that we have different words for obedience. There is hupotasso and there is hupokuo, hupotassoing to one another in the fear of God.

Remember that? Children, hupokuo, hear the voice of God and obey, hear under literally. The U becomes a Y when it comes over as you know, so hupo becomes hypo, remember a hypodermic needle, under the dermis, under the skin. So this is hupokuo, listen under, hear with a recognition that you stand under this authority.

Very same word for bond servants. Children obey your parents, bond servants obey those who are your masters, your lords. Kurioi, from kurios, same word that is applied to the Lord Jesus.

You have a heavenly Lord, the Lord God in three persons and you have an earthly kurioi, hupokuo kuriois, obey your lords according to the flesh. How? With phobokytromu, phobia, fear

and tromu, trembling, trembling, trembling, trembling, trembling, tremors. We get our word tremors from this.

Tromu, phoboskytremos if you want the vocabulary form. Now, really? Obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling? Aren't these the same things that we apply to our fear of the Lord? Phobos, what does fear mean? I heard an interesting discussion of fear. It's been watered down to be respect or honor or regard in some ways and this particular guy was making the point that no, it's fear.

I think the truth is in the middle there. I've given you the illustration before. For example, in the military when you're under the uniform code of military justice, what the earlier version of which they used to call the rocks and shoals, if you are a functional, obedient, get with it soldier or sailor or marine or airman, all of these strictures and penalties and threatening judgments don't cause any fear.

But if you are deficient, if you fail, if you disobey, if you disregard, if you willingly and with malice of forethought break those regulations, you can be shot. You can be executed in certain situations. It has the power of death like civilian law does not have.

Military regulations under certain conditions, you disobey a direct order, you refuse, you can be shot on the spot. Should you respect that? Should you have a healthy fear of the dire consequences of disobedience? Yes. But it only becomes fear when you are its target, when it applies, when you qualify for its judgments.

And we should serve the Lord with fear knowing that if we fail to serve, the consequences are dire. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God in judgment. Right? So there is a range here.

The fear is directly proportional to our level of obedience. Less obedience, the more actual fear ought to be in place. Well that's what it's talking about here with fear and trembling, knowing that God for whatever reason has either caused or allowed this situation in which you are under this master.

There was a little girl in Israel. The northern kingdom was so often under judgment from God and so often not blessed with victory or success in their military endeavors and in their border defenses. They were raided.

They were conquered. They were exploited. Their cities and villages were burned to the ground by Syrians and others that surrounded them.

There was a little girl living in a village and a Syrian detachment came across the border, raided, burned down the village, probably killed her parents and took her into slavery, dragged her back to Syria, sold her into slavery and she went into the household of an individual who served in the

military. Well that individual turned out to be Naaman, the Syrian general. And Naaman having contracted leprosy as you'll remember from our relatively recent study was at his wit's end as to what to do.

And this girl spoke up and said there is a prophet in Israel who knows what to do. Her slavery has been immortalized. Her service speaking the truth of God in a tough situation has invested her life and witness in the pages of Scripture for centuries and into all eternity.

God had a purpose. It probably didn't make sense to her at the time to see her entire life destroyed, her family destroyed, uprooted. Think about Hananiah and Azariah and Mishael and Daniel when a similar thing happened to them and they were dragged to Babylon, castrated, sent into service to the Lord.

For the royal house of their enemies. Did God have a plan and purpose larger than what they could have possibly known or foreseen? Were they bond servants? Did they serve faithfully and well? Did they obey those masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling? They did. At the same time, they found a way to stand up for their faith.

They were never disobedient until the point at which they could no longer do so in the fear of the Lord as unto God. Only when told to bow down to the idol, only when told to stop praying did they engage in outright disobedience. As far as it is possible, live peaceably with all men.

To the extent that it is possible, honor the king. To the extent that it is possible as unto the Lord, obey with fear and trembling. And so it becomes clear when we are to submit and when we are to stand up and engage in what has been called civil disobedience.

It is defined by our relationship with God and the truth. And that line becomes ever more clearer as we think about it, as we pray about it. Be obedient, hup akua, listen and respond to those who have been assigned to you in the flesh as masters by God in heaven.

And unless and until they violate that trust and try to get you to do things that are against conscience and that you cannot do as unto the Lord, serve with fear and trembling. In sincerity of heart, we are always a little suspicious of the word sincerity. This is the word haplotes, haplotes.

The basic meaning is simpleness, simplicity. No design, no subterfuge, no craftiness, no manipulation, no playing one against another. Little kids get into this.

It is amazing, little devious toddlers, little root of evil, tiny children are just as corrupt as all the rest of us. We are conceived in iniquity and born in sin and you can see it in toddlers. And toddlers have this instinctive, corrupt perception of how things work and they quickly learn how to play one parent off against the other, little heinous crafty manipulators.

It is insidious. It is really just fascinating to watch. You think, wow, look at the potential that God puts into us from our birth.

You have got to watch toddlers so carefully because they are crafty, they are sneaky and they will play one parent off against another and then stand back and watch the fireworks because now it is not about them. Mom and dad are having a tiff and, hey, I have escaped. This is good.

I am going to throw a fit next time. What have you done to make little Johnny roll on the floor and do the dying cockroach? So in sincerity of heart this is simplicity. This is genuine transparency.

You are not playing for favor. You are not as they used to say, well, there are all kinds of adjectives and phrases for this, talking about trying to curry favor for one's advantage. I will polish an apple and hand it to the teacher so that I will get a better grade.

This is not apple polishing. This isn't wrongful cultivation of favor. It is simplicity.

That is what haploteness is. It is I do this because I am doing it as under the Lord. If the Lord had given me this instruction, given me this assignment, given me this mission, this is how I would do it.

If I am going to do it, I am going to do it heartily as under the Lord. It is simple. I don't care about all of the wild implications and who is going to think what about what.

I am a servant. I have been given an assignment. I can do it as under the Lord and I am going to.

It is simple. It is straightforward. I don't have to complicate it.

This is not a part of a big soap opera. Simplicity as to Christ. It is very simple.

If I was doing this for the Lord Jesus, how would I do it? If I was folding these clothes, sweeping this floor, washing this car, mowing this lawn, carrying out this assignment at work, doing this task, this piece of labor, responding to this injunction, this enjoiner, this mission given to me by someone who has legitimate authority, do I do the minimum or do I do it as well as I can? Well, if the Lord Jesus had walked up and said, Sam, please do this, how well would I do it? Well, that is how I should be doing everything, as though the Lord Jesus requested it. Now, there are certain things I know the Lord Jesus would never request. If I am Lieutenant William Calley and I get some kind of an order saying, go wipe out everybody in the village of Meli, the Lord Jesus is never going to give me an order to wipe out civilians without a cause.

He is not going to do it. So I can't do that as under the Lord and therefore I should stand up and say, I need more information before I can carry out this order because this looks to me like an illegitimate, unfounded order. And he got court-martialed because he did not ask that question, if you remember back in the Vietnam War.

In simplicity of heart, what is the heart? This is the seat of motivation. This is where we think about why we do what we do. Well, it is simple.

I am going to do it because it is all the same as if the Lord Jesus asked me to do this. How well would I do it if He was standing right here? Well, guess what? He is standing right here. I represent Him.

I am His body on this earth. If the Lord Jesus Himself was doing this, if He was going to gird Himself about the waist and get a bowl of water and a towel and wash feet, how well would He do it? Sloppy? Just do a few disciples and quit? That is how I should do it. We are His body.

We represent Him. We are in Him. We are Him on this earth.

That is why we are here. Not with eye service. Here is an interesting phrase.

Ophthalmoduleon. You can break that down, right? You know what ophthalmo is, right? Who do you go to get your eyes looked at? The ophthalmologist. So the ophthalmo part is pretty good.

Ophthalmo. Duleon. Do we know what that means? Dulos? An eye slave.

A slave just in appearance. The eye looks at it and says, slave, but they are really not serving, not functioning. Not with ophthalmoduleon serving just to keep up appearances.

I want to be sure I look good regardless of the reality. But, or as in the phrase, as men pleasers. Anthropoloscos.

A little better pronunciation there. Of course you know what an anthropos is, right? Looking at men and what they can do for you. Cultivating their favor.

Hoping they will do some good in return. There are friendships based on this. This would be a good friend to have because they can get me in.

I'll look good. I'll be accepted in other circles because this person is my friend. Men pleasers.

But as Duloi, slaves of Christ. Do what you do as a slave to masters in the flesh as though you are a slave to Christ. It's a mental association.

It is a mental process. Because many times we do not want to do what we should. We don't want to do it as heartily as we should, as fully as we should, as completely as we should because we think, well, I'm serving a rascal.

This is a poor excuse for a mission. This is a lousy job. I don't like it.

I don't think it makes any sense. I think it's misguided. I think it's ill-conceived.

I think it's pointless. I think it's a waste of time. It is certainly a waste of my grand talents.

I'm wasted in this job. I'm better than this. I'm not getting my props.

I'm not getting my recognition. This is unseen and unknown. This is a dead end where if God says, do it as unto the Lord, do it as a slave of Christ, it makes all the difference in the world if this is a request, if this is an instruction, if this is an opportunity handed to us by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fill in your name here. Would you do this for me? He who was willing to humble himself and become obedient to the point of death on our behalf, are we willing to do these menial tasks, these slavish functions for him as unto him? The great thing is when we do, when we dedicate to him, you have the blessing and the favor of someone far more powerful, far more influential and far more lasting in his authority than any earthly person with whom we could curry favor. Look up.

Look beyond. Think ahead. Remember who we represent and who we serve and with whom we will be reunited at the return of the Lord Jesus.

If you really have an instinct for self-preservation and self-advancement, you'll be thinking where it counts. Far better to do it out of love and appreciation and recognition of who and what the Lord Jesus is and ultimately what it means to serve God the Father the way the Lord Jesus did to accomplish His purpose. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God so that what? How does that end? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God so that He may what? Exalt you in due time.

Is that our goal so that we can be exalted? You know what it means to be exalted? It means you have bigger and better opportunities. You start out small. You serve small.

And when you're exalted, you get to serve big. You get to make big differences. You get to bear large fruit.

You go from being a 30-fold slave field to a 100-fold master field. You get to be functional. Which would you rather be, a messenger angel or an archangel? Which would be better? If I could qualify, if I didn't think I would mess it up and pull a Lucifer, I'd rather be an archangel, wouldn't you? To be that close to the throne of God, to reflect His glory to that extent, to be that useful, to be the angel that gets to come down and communicate to Mary that she's going to be the mother of the Christ child, to communicate to Joseph that he has this privilege because he's been faithful and because he knows, to come and stand and talk to the shepherds, to come and speak to Daniel.

What a privilege. What an opportunity. God relies on those senior angels for these wonderful tasks to advance His plan and purpose.

What a great thing to be at the heart of things, to be at the pivot point, to be where it counts. Well, we are determining how close we will be to that goal by our service in the little things. How well do we serve our masters according to the flesh? How well do we both exercise and function under authority in this life? There's authority in the next life.

Did Jesus say something about being great in the Kingdom and being least in the Kingdom? Do you know what that means? Structure, authority, opportunity, things that are little and things that are large. Look, if you only go around, I've got the Schlitz mode of life. If you only go around once in life, let's grab for the gusto.

If you're going to do it, do it big. Do it large. Make it count.

Why not? There aren't very many people pushing for the tape. Let's hit the sprint. Let's give it all we've got.

Let's empty the tank. In artillery we say, expend all remaining. Whatever ammunition you've got left, pull the lanyard on it.

Let's crank it out. Let's make it happen. Let's blow it up.

Why not? What else have we got going on that's a better opportunity? Push for the tape. Serve as unto Christ. Not with eye service, just for appearance's sake.

I just don't want anybody to throw rocks at me. Not as men pleasers, currying favor with these temporary delegated authorities, but in fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as to Christ, as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. We've talked many times about how you can't always decide what's in your heart.

You can't decide to love. You can't decide to like green peppers if you don't. You can't decide that refried beans are the best food God ever put on the earth if they mess you up.

There are certain things you just can't do by decision. So if it says serve and do the will of God from the heart, how do you get this in your heart? It's what we're doing right now. It's why you're here.

Why are you here right now, this moment, listening to a Bible class and suffering through to the very end? Why? Because the power of the Word of God is putting this motivation in your heart. Seeing what the Word of God reveals, hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking these truths in our soul puts in our heart the motivation to serve. It's the only way you get it.

You don't get it by choice. You don't get it by wishing. You don't get it by singing praise songs.

You don't get it by listening to praise songs. You don't get it by listening to vapid, empty-headed social commentary. The motivation, the power and the purpose of God is implanted in our heart and it bears fruit and grows and redounds to the glory of God and shines like a light through the truth of the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

That's what we're doing right now. If you want to fulfill this, keep doing what you're doing. Not just listening.

We're going to leave in one minute. You've got one more minute to listen. Then what is the task? What's going to be the task until next Friday night? What's the task? What's the challenge? How many minutes a day are we going to stop and go back and reflect, return to this light that has been shed on our path, revisit these truths, have our motivation rekindled and refreshed, our perspective restored and renewed? How is that going to happen if we don't come back to the source of light and wisdom and love? It's this truth.

We've got to drink this living water or we're going to die of thirst. We're going to perish in the way. We're going to fall off the narrow road.

We'll hit the side post of the door and never get through the straight gate. There's only one way to do it. It's what you have heard.

Value it. Treasure it. Return to it between now and Friday.

Find other sources of it and think about that. It is the only way. It's the truth of God.

It is alive and powerful and it exposes the thoughts and intents of our heart and it will define the thoughts and intents of our heart if we pursue it. Doing the will of God from the heart. We'll pick up at verse 7 next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the power and the truth and the light that we find in Your Word. Thank You for the gift of the presence and guiding comfort of Your Holy Spirit.

Thank You most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ who is the bridge between heaven and earth, who is our mediator, who is our Savior, who is the head of all things for us, our example of how to live this life to which we have been called. We pray that as we reflect and as we ponder on these truths, that You will illuminate our path, that You will guide our steps, that You will speak in our ears so that we can reflect Your glory, we can accomplish Your purpose and we can prepare ourselves for future service now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.