

(Ephesians) Doing All Things for the Lord

by Brian Brodersen

Christians should have a biblical work ethic and serve God in the workplace, seeing their job as a service to God and being obedient to their masters.

Duration: 54:35

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 6:5-6, Ephesians 6:8-9

Topics: "Faith At Work", "Christian Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a mentality of service and mission in our daily lives. He uses the example of a man named Al who faithfully served God in his workplace. The speaker reminds us that even if we don't receive recognition or acknowledgement from others, the Lord is watching and taking note of our actions. He encourages Christians to be thankful and to do their work well, as it reflects positively on their faith. The sermon concludes with a story about three workmen building a cathedral, highlighting the different mentalities they have towards their work and the importance of seeing the bigger picture in our tasks.

Transcript

Alright, good evening. Great to see all of you out here this evening. Looking forward to a great time tonight.

Want to just remind our radio listeners about the outdoor concert at 7.30 with the Alwyn Wall Band all the way from England. And Danny Donnelly will be opening up with some... Danny's a guitar player for The Cry, but he's got a great gift himself to write and sing, so he'll be sharing a few songs. So we're looking forward to a great evening together.

We've got hot dogs and sodas and chips and all kinds of great things. So it's going to be fun. And just want to encourage all of you to be in prayer this week as we have our annual pastor's conference.

Pastors coming in from all over the world to just spend some time together and be encouraged in the word and just be a great thing if we were all praying together that God would really bless and work in a powerful way. We trust that he's going to this week. Alright, let's turn to Ephesians tonight.

Ephesians chapter six and we finished up last week. Our series within the series as we referred to it many times took about seven weeks, I guess it was, and concentrated on marriage and family. And we come

tonight to just a few verses here in Ephesians six that have to do with our relationship to the world in the area of our employment and so forth.

We'll talk about that this evening, but then next week we'll start as we continue through Ephesians, another sort of a series within a series on the subject of spiritual warfare. And so we'll go for probably about eight studies on the subject of spiritual warfare. And I think that that is a subject that is so vitally important in these days, but it's a subject that there's a lot of confusion over, as it is with so many things.

You generally have the two extreme positions. You have the one extreme where people see the devil and, you know, under every rock and around every corner and blame him for, you know, any negative thing that happens in their life. And then at the other extreme, you have people that hardly acknowledge that the devil exists.

And there is the biblical balance between those two things. And so we'll spend several weeks looking at the subject of spiritual warfare. I think it will be enlightening to you and helpful to you in your walk with the Lord.

But here we are tonight in chapter six, verse five. Let's pray and we'll read through verse nine. Father, we pray as we consider now this subject of how we're to conduct ourselves out in the workplace.

Lord, we pray that you would speak to us tonight about this. Lord, so many spend so much of their time in that environment. And Lord, may we be faithful witnesses to you in the places that you've put us.

So teach us tonight. Instruct us, we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Ephesians six, five, Paul says, bond servants be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in sincerity of heart as to Christ, not with eye services, men pleasers, but as bond servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart with goodwill, doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 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. As we come to the end of this section, dealing with relationships.

It's natural that instruction regarding masters and slaves is given because every household was affected by the master slave relationship. It is estimated that there were some 60 million slaves throughout the Roman Empire in order to fully understand what Paul's instructions meant then so we can apply them helpfully. Now, we need to know what slavery was like in New Testament times.

Whenever we read about slaves, I think automatically our minds go back to what we know about slavery in this country. And what I want to show you tonight is it was a drastically different situation at the time that Paul wrote this epistle, a drastically different situation from what we experienced here in this country. So in order to understand what it was like, we're going to explode some of the common misconceptions regarding the subject, the greatest of these being that the average slave was subject to extreme exploitation.

That simply was not so slaves under Roman law at the time of Paul's writing. Could generally count on being set free after seven years of service, 50 percent of slaves were freed before the age of 30. Slaves could own property, including other slaves.

Being a slave did not indicate one's social class regarding outward appearance. It was usually impossible to distinguish a slave from a free person by just looking at them. There wasn't anything that marked them outwardly.

A slave's duties could range from that of a common laborer to a stewardship and a stewardship would have been at that time what today would be an upper management position in a company. Perhaps it will actually a steward over a person's affairs would have been really the equivalent of our modern chief executive officer, someone who has oversight of a business. So many slaves also live separately from their masters.

Again, when we think of slavery, we usually think of, you know, people living in little shacks and being mistreated and underfed and those kinds of things, which did, of course, occur here in this country, but not at the time that the New Testament was written. Quite often, a person would sell himself into slavery to obtain Roman citizenship. That was one way of obtaining citizenship by becoming the slave of a Roman citizen.

So slavery in biblical times was far more humane and civilized than it was in more recent times. Now, I have a twofold purpose in giving you this information. First of all, I want to answer those who criticize Christianity because the New Testament nowhere directly attacks or condemns slavery.

Some people are very critical of the Christian faith over the omission of any direct attack against slavery, but that's because they don't understand the slavery of the time. They don't understand the context in which the New Testament was written. You see, the reason the apostles didn't do that.

We're several, one of them was because the institution of slavery was not generally considered evil by slaves or slave owners at the time. It wasn't, again, what we think of when we think of slavery in the minds of the people at that time. Secondly, because to attack slavery would have wrongly labeled Christianity as being economically subversive because the economy was built on that kind of a social structure.

So in order to attack it directly would have been seen as an attack against society in general, and then thirdly, because the radical brotherhood and equality explicit in the gospel would ultimately deal the death blow to slavery. So there's that built in. Message just inherent in the gospel itself that would ultimately undermine an abusive form of slavery, and it did the abolition of slavery in Britain.

And the abolition of slavery in this country was to a large degree due to the efforts of evangelical Christians basing their convictions and their whole approach to the matter on what they learned from the scriptures and from their personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the other reason for giving this information is to show you that the first century relationship between slaves and masters, in many ways, parallels our present day relationship between employee and employer. When we think of employee and employer today, that is actually closer to what was happening in biblical times than, again, what we normally think of as slavery.

So with all of that in mind, let's look at Paul's instruction. He speaks, first of all, to the bond servants. He speaks to the employees, if you will.

And he says, be obedient to those who are your masters, according to the flesh. With fear and trembling and sincerity of heart as to Christ. So what Paul is saying to us today.

As employees, when he says be obedient, what he's basically saying is, do what you were hired to do. You know, it's interesting that today. There is an entirely different work ethic that is permeating the culture than we've known in the past, and it's really not much of a work ethic at all.

It's sort of an anti work mentality that's permeating the culture. And you see it all around today as you go out shopping and you do your different things where you encounter people who are going to do some sort of service for you or something. You find that a lot of times there isn't any real passion for what a person is doing or any real deep commitment to making sure that they're doing the best job possible.

It's you know, the mentality is almost just, you know, just do as little as possible just to get by and just leave it at that. Cheryl and I have recently moved into a new home, and so we're having to deal with a lot of different people in regard to that. And we're finding this out firsthand as we've got things that are needing to be repaired and so forth.

And you're calling the company and they're just saying, oh, well, you know, hey, that's not our problem. That's yours, you know. And it's it's a bit frustrating when you have somebody come out to repair something and you actually know more about it than they do and it's their product.

And especially when your wife knows more about it than they do now, you know that there's some serious problems there. But, you know, we just find this a lot of times. You know, there used to be a time when you would go out and shop and people, you know, would would approach you.

And this is still the case sometimes. But a lot of times it's not. But, you know, there used to be people were wanting to help you and they were there and they were pligh and they were, you know, going out of their way to to give you service.

And sometimes, you know, you go up and you had to wait at the counter for 10 or 15 minutes before anyone acknowledges you. And then when they finally do, it's like, hey, what do you want? You know, I just thought I'd like to buy this from you, you know, and give you some money. But if you don't want it, I would go somewhere else.

But people today don't necessarily do what they were hired to do. But that should never be the case with a Christian. Christians should really be the best employees around.

Because Christians are not just serving the boss or the company, Christians are serving the Lord. And that's the point that Paul's making here. So.

He says, be obedient or do what you were hired to do with fear and trembling. Now, what Paul's talking about here is reverence and respect. Respecting your employer.

Having reverence, and I think a lot of that has to do also with being thankful for the fact that you have a job instead of being unthankful over it. But giving honor to whom honor is due, the Bible teaches that we are to respect. One another, the Bible or Bible teaches that we're to respect people who hold positions over us.

And, you know, again, the culture is sort of permeated with an anti-authority mentality. And so even many times on the job, you see that there's a lack of respect for the leadership. There's a lack of respect for the boss, perhaps, and maybe they haven't done much to earn your respect.

But nevertheless, as Christians, you see, that's the difference. As Christians, we are to be different. We're to do what the Bible says, regardless of what they're doing.

You remember when Peter was talking about similar kinds of things, he talked about even being submissive to those masters who were abusive. And taking their abuse and their criticism and just turning it over to the Lord, trusting God. He says also here that.

We are to conduct ourselves in sincerity of heart as to Christ, you know, the work ethic that did exist. In the Western. Culture is a work ethic that was born out of the Protestant Reformation, it's actually known as the Protestant work ethic.

And the interesting thing that happened when the Reformation occurred. Is that the reformers? They sought to bring to people the understanding, the biblical understanding that all of life was sacred. You see, prior to the Reformation, there was a sharp distinction between.

That which was sacred and that which was secular. And there was this division, if you were in the church or in involved with the things of the church, if you were part of the clergy, then that was considered sacred duty. But everybody outside of that, well, they were just involved in, you know, secular duty, which wasn't important, didn't really matter in comparison to the sacred duty.

And because of that mentality that that did at that time permeate the culture because the church was so dominant in Europe, there wasn't a real strong work ethic at the time. But when the Reformation took place and the Bible was brought back into the picture, there was suddenly the realization that all of life is sacred, that everything you do can be done for the Lord and that not just, you know, the priest and the cardinals and the bishops and the pope, they're not the only people serving God, which was the mentality up until the time. But everybody is a servant of God and every type of business and every sort of a task can actually be done as a service to God.

And I think the Reformation did a tremendous service to Western civilization in bringing back that mentality, that's the biblical mentality. That whatever you do. As Paul goes on to say, you do as unto the Lord and not to men.

So you see, when a person has that mentality, when they go off to work every day, they're thinking, I'm going off to serve God today. They're going to put their heart, soul, mind and strength into what they're doing. But if they see going off to work as this sort of, you know, this is a necessary evil.

Oh, I've got to do this. I hate doing this. That's not the mentality to have.

And again, to a large degree, that seems to be the mentality today, work is seen as a necessary evil. If you can get out of it, do it. If you can get rich without working, boy, that's the thing to do.

And a lot of people have done that today, gotten very rich without really working, sitting around playing computer games and become millionaires. But it's one explanation for why the culture is the way it is, but we're to do everything as unto the Lord. And this is really a great thing, because what it reminds us of is that all life is service to God and you're just as much a servant of God as I am, although I'm serving God in this capacity here.

Being a pastor at the church and teaching, you're serving God as well, wherever God has placed you and what you're doing, where you're at is just as important as what I'm doing, where I'm at. You see, it's being

in the will of God that matters and the will of God varies from person to person, and God wills that some people work in a more stricter context of the church life itself. God wills that most people are outside of that.

God has most of his people outside in the various walks of life, but isn't that the way it ought to be, because that's where the unbelievers are, that's where the darkness is. So the light has to be there. That's where the putrefaction is taking place.

So the salt needs to come into contact to stop the decay. Now, I know that sometimes as Christians, we all want to just quit our jobs and come and hang around at church. And we will get to do that in heaven.

That's what heaven is going to be like. We'll all be together then and it'll all be over. But for the time being.

God. He has put us in these various places, and if you begin to see your job as a place where you serve God. Your job can become a joy, even if it's a drudgery right now.

Now, of course, there's always the possibility that God is calling you out of what you're doing, so you've got a discontentment and then that's fine. You just you know, you just have to pray through that and see what God has for you. But unless God's calling you out of that arena, then we need to find contentment there, understanding that this can be my calling in life to serve God out in the workforce as any number of type of things, you know, whatever it is now.

Again, Paul emphasizes that we do it as to the Lord on September 11th. When the Trade Center was hit. On the hundred and fifth floor, there was a company based there on.

I think the hundred and four hundred and five hundred and six floors called Cantor Fitzgerald. And when I was in New York, that was the company that we actually ended up doing ministry with and counseling for them. But one of the employees there was a man named Al Braca and Al was a Christian who attended Calvary Chapel in one of the Calvary Chapel fellowships in New Jersey.

And Al would go into work there at Cantor Fitzgerald every day and he went there basically as a missionary. He didn't always like going into work because he was ridiculed quite often. They would mockingly refer to him as the Rev. And they would do little things to try to, you know, poke fun at him and get to him.

He would come in and they'd have pornography up on his computer screen and they would send him little gag gifts and things that were pornographic in nature. And, you know, they were just harassing him a lot. But then, of course, when anybody had any serious problem, boy, Al was the guy they made a beeline for.

But his wife was telling a testimony of Al. She was talking about how many times it was very difficult to go in, but each morning they would pray together before he'd leave and he would go out the door realizing he's going out to serve God, he's going to his mission field. Well, on September 11th, he went to work at Cantor Fitzgerald and we all know what happened that day.

And just before the towers collapsed, a number of people with their cell phones called their families and said, we're not going to make it out, but we're joined together over 100 of us. And Al is leading us in prayer now. And they all died together.

And, you know, it's interesting in the thousands of people that died, over 3000 that died, you know, very few bodies were found. Al's body was found completely intact just a few days after the event, and they were able to have a proper burial for him and everything else. But what what an incredible testimony.

This man of God, there in the darkness, there with the ridicule, there with the mockery, that there being a bright and shining light and who would have ever imagined that on that fateful day he would have led over 100 people with him into heaven. Amazing. But I think that we need to have that same mentality, the mentality that Al had, that that was his service to the Lord, that was his mission field.

And so he went there and he served faithfully his God in that environment. That's what Paul's talking about here. Now, as he moves from, well, let's look at verse eight before we go to verse nine, he says.

Knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is slave or free. So we have to remember that the Lord, even though you might never get the acknowledgement on the job, even though you never are getting the recognition that might be due to you or whatever the case, know this, that the Lord is watching and the Lord is interested and he's taking note of those things. And there is coming a day when there will be a reward, not from men, but from the Lord for your faithfulness.

Now, from there he goes on and he addresses the masters. And notice what he says to the masters and you masters do the same things to them. So basically, he's calling the masters to have the same mentality that the slaves had.

And you see, this is where the built in. Ultimate downfall of slavery would come. This was the sort of seed that was sown in there by the Lord that would finally, you know, in in a non subversive manner manner, it would actually serve to undermine it because the master would have to always be thinking in terms of equality.

Notice what he says here. He says, for there is no partiality with him. So the employer would have to conduct himself in a in a very sensitive manner as well.

He says, you employers, basically you do the same things, same things. It's obviously a different role, but the same principles apply. And so he says to the masters, what he's saying, in other words, is be respectful to your employees.

Now, this, of course, can be applied to anyone who's in business as a Christian and who has employees under them. You ought to be respectful to them and you ought to seek to show. Then through your attitude toward them.

The reality of Jesus Christ, be respectful and be appreciative. You know, people have different ways of conducting business or different philosophies about how you handle your employees and things like that. And you can go to seminars and they can teach you various means of intimidating your employees, you know, so that the minute they look at you, they just start trembling and they'd never think to ask you for a raise or anything else because you just scared them to death, you know.

And, you know, there's certain ways when they come into your office that you treat them to keep them at a distance. You know, you fold your arms a certain way or, you know, all of this body language and all of this kind of stuff, you know, and maybe you've gone and learned some of that stuff. But.

That's not. That's not God's way. God's way is that we be respectful, we be appreciative.

We. Let people know that we care about him or even thankful as, you know, as an employer. Now, some people have the mentality as an employer that what do you mean thankful I'd pay this guy to do what he's doing? Well, yes, you do.

But I think it would probably help him to do it even better if you just told him thanks once in a while that he thought he was doing a good job or something like that. And that's the kind of stuff that Paul's talking about here, just being sensitive, being appreciative, being respectful. I think also that there is the need to be sincerely interested in your employees.

Now, things have definitely changed in the workplace to some degree, and there's all kinds of laws intact now because of the abuses that happened. You know, if you go back to the Industrial Revolution and times like that where, you know, employees had no rights whatsoever and there were no minimum wage laws. There was had nothing to do with, you know, the age of your employee, any kind of health benefits or anything like that.

And, you know, legislation has come through that's changed all of that. But still, there are people that can conduct themselves as employers and in a fairly ruthless manner. And that's what Paul is speaking against here, being sincerely interested in your employees.

Taking time to get to know them, taking time to get to know about their families, and of course, as a Christian, all of this serves to witness to them. And, you know, you can be praying for them and letting them know that you're praying for them and those kinds of things. And then I think giving a fair wage would also fall under the kinds of things that Paul is dealing with here.

The gist of it is, again, that we're Christians and our Christianity is to impact every facet of our lives. It's to affect us when we're at church, it's to affect us when we're at home, it's to affect us when we're in the workplace, it's to affect us when we're out just having a leisurely time. We never leave our Christianity somewhere else.

We take it with us wherever we go. If we are employees, we go to work, we take it with us. If we're employers, we've got a business.

We take our Christianity with us there. Now, that seems like a no brainer, doesn't it? But evidently it's not because, believe it or not, a lot of people don't do that. A lot of people have sort of compartmentalized their whole life, and so we've got the Christian department right here.

Then we've got the ruthless employer department right here or the flaky employee department here or, you know, the party animal department here. You know, so, hey, at church, I got my Christian face on and I've got my Bible with me and I'm saying praise the Lord and I've got the lingo down. But once I'm out of here, then I put on the next mask and go into that environment and, you know, I'm right home there.

That's completely. Completely contradictory to what the Bible is teaching us. We ought to be godly men and women all the time, everywhere, under all circumstances, in every situation, whether it be a church, home, the office, out playing, whatever the case might be.

And because people do not do that, that's why the church gets such a bad rap so often. Because, you know, there's always the guy who's, you know, he's preaching out one side of his mouth and he's cussing out the other side and it's a contradiction. And it shouldn't be the case, whatever we do, we're to do everything as unto the Lord for his glory.

All life is sacred. There's no dividing it up between the secular and the sacred. All life is sacred.

Everything that we do, Paul said in writing to the Colossians, whatever you do, do with all of your heart as to the Lord and not to men. Whatever you do, everything and this is something that I think is really wonderful that God, you know, it's like God is so anxious to bless us. And to reward us, you know, it's kind of like a father with a small child.

You know, you just want to. You want to do something good for them, you want to bless them and you have it in your heart just to lavish things upon them, but, you know, you want them to think that they're actually doing something to earn it, too. So you give them some sort of a task that, you know, doesn't really even need to be done.

But yet you just let them do it and then they feel good about it and then you give them a you know, you give them some compensation that's, you know, so far above and beyond what they should have gotten from it. You know, that's a, you know, something that a parent would do. That's something that more likely a grandparent would do, actually.

You know, I've seen my father in law do that with my children. My son, I pulled his tooth the other night. And so he said, if I put this under my pillow, will you give me something? I said, you know, there's no tooth fairy.

And I said, OK, I'll give you a buck, a buck. You know, you get 10 bucks from grandpa. That's a little tighter than grandpa, I guess.

But, you know, you know what I'm saying? You know, God's been like that. God says, all right, I'll tell you what, just whatever you do, you just do it as unto me and I'll reward you for that. So whatever you're doing, what an incredible thing.

So you're called upon to do something that, oh, man, I don't want to do that. Oh, wait a second. But I can do that as unto the Lord.

And all of a sudden everything changes. Isn't it true that that any task, you know, a task? To me, it depends on my attitude about the task, really more than the task itself, whether or not it's going to be a burdensome. Laborious sort of a thing.

And you know how it is, if you go into something thinking about how you hate doing this and I wish somebody else was doing this and the whole time you're doing it, it's just a miserable thing. But the very same thing, if you approach it with an entirely different attitude, the very same thing could be enjoyable even. And it's possible to do the most menial task, to do the most, you know, despised kind of a thing.

It's possible to do it and derive joy from it if you're doing it with the attitude that I'm doing this for the Lord. It makes all of those things just. Seem like nothing.

But that's the way we ought to be. That's the way we ought to be as Christians. That instead of grumbling and complaining, we're just thankful and now we do it and we do it as unto the Lord and we do it well and wait, people, that's impressive.

People look at that and people say, boy, there's something to this Christian thing. But then, you know, if you have the you sort of the reputation on the job that, well, you're the Christian, but you never. Do your

job right or you always come in late or you're flaking off and, you know, over talking instead of doing what you were hired to do or whatever, that sends a message as well.

And so we are to do all of these things as unto the Lord. In closing, close with this story, I heard. You know, whether or not this story is true, I don't know.

But nevertheless, it proves a good point. It's always those the story is told that I wonder who told this. I mean, did they make it up? Did it actually happen? But regardless of that, there's a good moral in the story.

The story is told of three workmen building a cathedral who were questioned by a visitor as to what they were doing. I'm chipping these stones, said one. I'm earning wages, said another.

The third man said, I'm building a great cathedral. And whether or not it's true, think about that. That shows the different mentalities that one might have, but the statement by the third guy, that would be the kind of mentality that God would have us to have to some, it's just a drudgery.

I'm just chipping these stones resentfully to someone else. Hey, I'm just earning a living, you know, I just got to do it. But to someone else, he sees it as this is an important task.

This is something and, you know, sometimes we think that certain things aren't important. Oh, I you know, I just do this. This doesn't really mean anything.

But, you know, if there is a task to do, it's it's important at some point along the line. You know, it's like in the realm of nature. Certain people have looked at certain aspects of nature and seen things that they thought they understood, and they said, oh, that isn't important right there.

That doesn't mean anything. This little creature here, this insect, where this doesn't do anything, let's just eradicate this. Let's just get rid of it.

And so they go in and they exterminate the population. And, you know, they do away with it and think, all right, now we don't have that problem anymore and we've succeeded. And the next thing you know, they got a bigger problem because what they find out is, oh, that little insect did this, which kept that from happening.

And now that it's gone, this is happening. And oh, no, we've got a greater crisis than we had before. And that's that can be the same in this dimension as well.

Little things that, you know, little detailed things that might not seem important, they can in the end, they can be important because this little thing right here is connected to this thing over here that's connected to that thing up there. And if this is missing, then this isn't going to function properly. And then, you know, you've got a problem.

So whatever we're doing, even though it might seem. Not that important, it is important and it's important ultimately to God, God wants to use us. On our jobs to expand his kingdom.

You can chip away at stones, you can earn wages or you can be building God's great cathedral. You can be building the church while you're. They're on your job.

By just doing whatever you're doing for the Lord, you're actually furthering the kingdom of God. Just by doing that with the right attitude. And so there's no division, everything is sacred, do all that we do as unto the Lord and not to men.

Lord, we thank you that in your goodness, Lord, you have. Just made it so simple. That we could take.

What seems to be the most insignificant task in the world, and we can do it. As unto you. And Lord, that honors you.

And you bless us for it, how we thank you for that, Lord and Lord, I thank you for each person. Here tonight, each person listening, Lord, that you've placed in a strategic place somewhere out in the workforce. And Lord, I pray that you bless them and I pray, Lord, that they would see.

The ministry that you have for them there where they're at and Lord, we realize that sometimes you want to make changes, too, and we grow discontent and. And for those who are discontented where they're at tonight, Lord, maybe it's because you want to make a change, maybe it's because you want to move them on. Maybe it's because they've just had the wrong view.

Either way, Lord, minister to them, we pray. And Lord, we thank you for the great privilege of being your servants. That whatever we do.

We can do with all of our hearts, as unto you, Lord, we. Thank you that we get to be part of building this great cathedral, the church, your kingdom. Use us, Lord, to expand it in these days.

In Jesus name, we pray, amen. Let's stand together. If you'd like some prayer tonight, some of the guys are up front here.

We ended just a bit early to give us plenty of time to still have a bit of fellowship and then we can head on out. Some of you are going to go out on the field. Some of you maybe have other things to do.

But whatever the case, God bless you. And you have a great week as you go to do all things as unto the Lord and not to men.

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