

# Ephesians 6:5-6 Commentary

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Ephesians 6:5 [Slaves](#), [be obedient](#) to [those](#) who are your [masters according](#) to the [flesh](#), with [fear](#) and [trembling](#), in the [sincerity](#) of your [heart](#), as to [Christ](#); ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [Οἱ δούλοι, ἠπακούετε \(2PPAM\) τοῖς κτὰ σάρκα κυριοῖς μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐν ἀπολήσει τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ.](#)

**GNT** Οἱ δούλοι, πακοῦετε τοὺς κτὰ σάρκα κυριοῖς μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου ἐν ἀπολήσει τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς τῷ Χριστῷ,

**Amplified:** Servants (slaves), be obedient to those who are your physical masters, having respect for them and eager concern to please them, in singleness of motive and with all your heart, as [service] to Christ [Himself] ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**ASV** Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

**CSB** Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.

**ESV** Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,

**KJV** Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

**NET** Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart as to Christ,

**NLT**: Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**NIV** Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

**NKJ** Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;

**NRS** Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ;

**Phillips:** Slaves, obey your human masters sincerely with a proper sense of respect and responsibility, as service rendered to Christ himself; ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** The slaves, be constantly obedient to those who, according to the flesh, are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart as to the Christ,

**Young's Literal:** The servants! obey the masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to the Christ;

## SLAVES, **BE OBEDIENT** TO THOSE WHO ARE YOUR MASTERS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING:

- Genesis 16:9; Psalms 123:2; Malachi 1:6; Matthew 6:24; 8:9; Acts 10:7,8; Colossians 3:22; 1Timothy 6:1, 2, 3; Titus 2:9,10; 1Peter 2:18, 19, 20, 21) (Philemon 1:16
- 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2Corinthians 7:15; Philippians 2:12; 1Peter 3:2
- [Ephesians 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 6:5-9: Spirit-Filled Believer in Work Place](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Working for God](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 6:4 Child Rearing in One Sentence](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 God's Perspective on Work](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Spirit-Filled Labor Relations](#) - John MacArthur

It is important to keep in mind that God's commandments always include His enablements and so these commandments to slaves can only be fulfilled supernaturally by Spirit-filled slaves, who have cast off the filthy garment of the Old Man they were in Adam and put on the new garment of righteousness in Christ. Although at the moment of salvation every believer put aside the Old Man and put on the New Man positionally (justification, past tense salvation), for the rest of his and her earthly life there will be a daily (even moment by moment) need to cast aside the filthy garment of the old man and put on the garment of the new man (present tense salvation, progressive sanctification). If any man or woman things he stands, let them take heed lest they fall.

In a parallel passage in **Colossians** Paul wrote...

Slaves, in all things **obey** those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, **do your work** heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. 25 For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. (See **notes** Colossians 3:22; 23; 24; 25)

Writing to Titus on the isle of Crete **Paul** said...

*Urge* bondslaves to be subject (hupotasso) to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing (euarestos), not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn (kosmeo - gives us our English cosmetic) the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. (See **notes** Titus 2:9; Titus 2:10)

**Peter** also addressed believing slaves...

Servants, be (continually willing to be voluntarily) submissive (hupotasso) to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. 19 For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. 20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. 21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps (See **notes** 1 Peter 2:18; 19; 20; 21)

**Slaves** - Although we do not have slaves per se in our modern culture (some of you would argue this point I'm sure!), the master-slave relationship clearly parallels the employer-employee relationship in our day. As in the relationships between husbands and wives and children and fathers, the principle Paul is emphasizing is that of authority and submission as a manifestation of one who is filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Barclay has a note (although it is difficult to substantiate) that in the Roman Empire there were upwards to sixty million slaves, largely because the Roman citizen considered it beneath his dignity to work. Vincent adds that "in many of the cities of Asia Minor slaves outnumbered freemen". Thus practically all work was done by slaves. This was so pervasive that even doctors, teachers and secretaries of the Roman emperors were slaves! Although some masters were kind to their slaves, that appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

**John Eadie** notes that regarding the ancient institution of slavery...

Christianity did not rudely assault the forms of social life, or seek to force even a justifiable revolution by external appliances. Such an enterprise would have quenched the infant religion in blood. The gospel achieved a nobler feat. It did not stand by in disdain, and refuse to speak to the slave till he gained his freedom, and the shackles fell from his arms, and he stood erect in his native independence. No; but it went down into his degradation, took him by the hand, uttered words of kindness in his ear, and gave him a liberty which fetters could not abridge and tyranny could not suppress. Aristotle had already described him as being simply a tool with a soul in it; and the Roman law had sternly told him he had no rights because he was not a person. He may have been placed on the "the auction block," and sold like a chattel to the highest bidder; the brand—stigma, of his owner might be burned into his forehead, and he might bear the indelible scars of judicial torture—that basanos without which a slave's evidence was never received; but the gospel introduced him into the sympathies of a new brotherhood, elevated him to the consciousness of an immortal nature, and to the hope of eternal liberty and glory. Formerly he was taught to look for final liberation only in that world which never gave back a fugitive, and he might anticipate a melancholy release only in the grave, for "there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest; there the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor; the small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master." Now, not only was he to look beyond the sepulchre to a region of pure and noble enjoyments; but as he could even in his present servitude realize the dignity of a spiritual freeman in Christ, the friction of his chain was unfelt, and he possessed within him springs of exalted cheerfulness and contentment. Yes, as George Herbert sings—

"Man is God's image, but a poor man is Christ's stamp to boot."

At the same time, Christianity lays down great principles by the operation of which slavery would be effectually abolished, and in fact, even in the Roman empire, it was suppressed in the course of three centuries. ([A commentary on the Greek text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians - John Eadie](#))

**William Barclay** ([Ref](#)) adds some interesting historical background on **slaves** in Paul's time writing that...

In law he was not a person but a thing. Aristotle lays it down that there can never be friendship between master and slave, for they have nothing in common;

“for a slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave.”

Varro, writing on agriculture, divides agricultural instruments into three classes—the articulate, the inarticulate and the mute. The articulate comprises the slaves; the inarticulate the cattle; and the mute the vehicles. The slave is no better than a beast who happens to be able to talk. Cato gives advice to a man taking over a farm. He must go over it and throw out everything that is past its work; and old slaves too must be thrown out on the scrap heap to starve. When a slave is ill it is sheer extravagance to issue him with normal rations.

The law was quite clear. Gaius, the Roman lawyer, in the Institutes lays it down: “We may note that it is universally accepted over the slave.” If the slave ran away, at best he was death over the slave.” If the slave ran away, at best he was branded on the forehead with the letter F for fugitivus, which means runaway, at worst he was killed.

The terror of the slave was that he was absolutely at the caprice of his master. Augustus crucified a slave because he killed a pet quail. Vedius Pollio flung a slave still living to the savage lampreys in his fish pond because he dropped and broke a crystal goblet. Juvenal tells of a Roman matron who ordered a slave to be killed for no other reason than that she lost her temper with him. When her husband protested, she said: “You call a slave a man, do you? He has done no wrong, you say? Be it so; it is my will and my command; let my will be the voucher for the deed.” The slaves who were maids to their mistresses often had their hair torn out and their cheeks torn with their mistresses’ nails. Juvenal tells of the master “who delights in the sound of a cruel flogging thinking it sweeter than any siren’s song,” or “who revels in clanking chains,” or, “who summons a torturer and brands the slave because a couple of towels are lost.”

A Roman writer lays it down: “Whatever a master does to a slave, undeservedly, in anger, willingly, unwillingly, in forgetfulness, after careful thought, knowingly, unknowingly, is judgment, justice and law.”

In his first letter to Timothy, who may have received this letter as he served as "pastor-teacher" of the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote...

Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor **so that** (here is the grand motivation) **the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against.** 2 And let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles. 3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, (1 Timothy 6:1-3)

**Slaves (1401) (doulos)** is the Greek word which describes one who is bound to another in servitude. In the Greek culture **doulos** usually referred to the involuntary, permanent service of a slave. By Roman times, slavery was so extensive that in the early Christian period one out of every two people was a slave! From at least 3000BC captives in war were the primary source of slaves. These were Christian slaves working for the most part for pagan masters.

**Doulos** was the most abject, servile term used by the Greeks to denote a slave. The word designated one who was born as a slave, one who was bound to his master in chords so strong that only death could break them, one who served his master to the disregard of his own interests, one whose will was swallowed up in the will of his master.

What a glorious paradox. Slaves that have been set free (from sin) and into the liberty of enslavement to the perfect Master, Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking to born again, Spirit filled slaves and as such they were not only the slaves of human masters but they were now slaves of their Divine Master. As slaves of Christ they were to be totally surrendered to His will, which in context called for a continual willingness to be filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the command to be obedient.

**Expositor's Greek Testament** has a helpful note writing that "Many questions would inevitably arise with regard to the duties of masters and servants in a state of society in which slavery prevailed and had the sanction of ancient and undisputed use. Especially would this be the case when Christian slaves (of whom there were many) had a heathen master, and when the Christian master had heathen slaves. Hence the considerable place given in the NT, to this relation and the application of Christian principles (1Co 7:21, 22; 1Ti 6:1, 2; Titus 2:9, 10; and Philemon, in addition to Col. 3:22, 4:1, and 1Pet. 2:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25). Here, as elsewhere in the NT slavery is accepted as an existing institution, which is neither formally condemned nor formally approved. There is nothing to prompt revolutionary action, or to encourage repudiation of the position. Onesimus, the Christian convert, is sent back by Paul to his master, and the institution is left to be undermined and removed by the gradual operation of the great Christian principles of the equality of men in the sight of God, and a common Christian brotherhood, the spiritual freedom of the Christian man, and the Lordship of Christ to which every other lordship is subordinate." ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

**John Eadie** - The apostle, in the following clauses, hits upon those peculiar vices which slavery induces, and which are almost

inseparable from it. The slave is tempted to indolence and carelessness. When a man feels himself doomed, degraded, and little else than a chattel, driven to work, and liable at any moment to be sent to the market-place and sold as an ox or a horse, what spring of exertion or motive to obedience can really exist within him? ([A commentary on the Greek text of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians - John Eadie](#))

**Be obedient** (**hupakouo** from **hupó** = agency or means, under + **akoúo** physical hearing and apprehension of something with the mind - akouo gives us our English *acoustics* - the science of design which helps one hear) (See word studies on hupakouo and on the related noun hupakoe) literally means to hear under or to listen from a subordinate position in which compliance with what is said is expected and intended. To obey is to **submit** or hearken to a command. To obey is the carrying out the word and will of another person, especially the will of God. **Hupakouo** conveys the picture of listening and following instructions. Submitting to that which is heard involves a change of attitude, forsaking the tendency of the fallen nature to rebel against Divine instructions and commands and seeking God's will, not self will.

**Hupakouo** - 21v in the NT -The **NAS** renders **hupakouo** as answer(1), became obedient(1), becoming obedient(1), heed(1), obedient(2), obey(12),obeyed(3).

Matt. 8:27; Mk. 1:27; 4:41; Lk. 8:25; 17:6; Acts 6:7; 12:13; Rom. 6:12, 16f; 10:16; Eph. 6:1, 5; Phil. 2:12; Col. 3:20, 22; 2 Thess. 1:8; 3:14; Heb. 5:9; 11:8; 1 Pet. 3:6

**How can one submit as their lifestyle or habitual practice** (hupakouo is in the **present imperative**)? In context he or she must be filled with the Spirit that He might enable this supernatural submission from the heart. [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!"

"Be constantly obedient to those who according to the flesh are your masters"

**Barclay** writes that Paul's when Paul writes to slaves...

He does not tell them to rebel; he tells them to be Christian where they are. The great message of Christianity to every man is that it is where God has set us that we must live out the Christian life. The circumstances may be all against us, but that only makes the challenge greater. Christianity does not offer us escape from circumstances; it offers us conquest of circumstances. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press](#))

**Masters** (2962) (**kurios**) signifies those over the slaves who had sovereign power, absolute authority, total ownership and uncontested power.

**According to the flesh** (sarx - word study) - Flesh here speaks of physical flesh (ie, flesh and blood beings) and would identify the believing slave's earthly master and serves to distinguish these masters from their heavenly Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. As one wise monarch once said, "My dominion over my subjects ends where that of God's begins."

**With fear and trembling** - (Same phrase occurs 5x in NAS - Ps.55:5; 2Co. 7:15; Ep 6:5; Php 2:12; He 12:21) The phrase expresses a desire to not come short of the discharge of one's duty. This is not so much a dread of the master, but reflective of a genuine respect for the master's authority and consequently a desire to leave no duty undone. As noted this does not describe a fearful, shaking attitude but in this context represents **a sense of awe and reverence generated by the incredible truth that we are privileged to serve the King of kings and for a moment in time He has ordained that we serve as slaves of men** (the application is of course as employees to employers) and that we dare not think, do nor say anything that would cause our earthly masters (saved or unsaved) to cast aspersions upon our glorious Lord. And praise God, as Paul explains in his letter to the Philippians, we are not left to our own ingenuity or strength to accomplish these tasks...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Who is at work (energeo - energizing) in you, both to will (He continually gives us the "want to", something the "old man" would otherwise not want to do) and to work for His good pleasure (here is the highest motive). (Php 2:12+; Php 2:13+)

**Dwight Pentecost** explains that the idea behind fear and trembling "is of a passion to please. We might render the phrase this way: You work out your own salvation with a deep passion and trembling desire to do the right." (Pentecost, J. D. The Joy of Living: A study of Philippians. Kregel Publications)

**Henry Alford** says the phrase "**fear and trembling**" in Php 2:12 "indicates a state of anxiety and self-distrust."

**Paul Apple** commenting on **fear and trembling** in Php 2:12 says think of a "hostess wanting to make sure everything is just right for a distinguished guest opposite of being high-minded and proud and arrogant and self-confident."

**Rainy on fear and trembling** "He uses it where he would express a state of mind in which willing reverence is joined with a certain sensitive anxiety to escape dangerous mistakes and to perform duty well"

**F F Bruce** writes that "**fear and trembling**" refers to "an attitude of due reverence and awe in the presence of God, a sensitivity to His will, an awareness of responsibility in view of the account to be rendered before the tribunal of Christ (see bema seat of Christ).

**Eadie** comments that **fear and trembling** "describes that state of mind which ought ever to characterize believers—distrust of themselves—earnest solicitude in every duty—humble reliance on divine aid, with the abiding consciousness that after all they do come far short of meeting obligation..." "Work out with fear and trembling, for God it is that worketh in you. Engage in the duty, for God prompts and enables you; engage in it with fear and trembling—emotions which the nature of the work and such a consciousness of the Divine presence and co-operation ought always to produce." If the impulse sprang from themselves, and drew around it the ability to obey, there might be "strife and vainglory;" but surely if the motive and the strength came alike from God, then only in reliance on Him, and with special humility and self-subduing timidity, could they proceed, in reference to their own salvation, or in offering one another spiritual service." (Philippians 2 Commentary)

**Martin Lloyd-Jones** writes that "**fear and trembling**" are manifest by "a holy vigilance and circumspection. It means that as I work out my salvation, I should realize the tremendous seriousness of what I am doing." (The Life of Joy and Peace, Lloyd-Jones p. 178)....He does not mean that we must do it in fear of losing our salvation. You will find that in the New Testament these words never carry that implication. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians 'I was with you ... in fear, and in much trembling' (1Co 2:3), he did not mean that he was afraid that he would lose his soul. Neither is it a kind of craven fear, one of self torment. It means humility and a holy reverence, or, if you like, a holy vigilance and circumspection. It means that as I work out my salvation, I should realize the tremendous seriousness of what I am doing. (Working Out Our Own Salvation)

**Fear** (5401) (**phobos** from **phobomai** = flee, withdraw) (see another discussion of **phobos**) is used in an active sense to describe that which causes fear or terror, sometimes the source being God (of His divine works - eg, death of Ananias and Sapphira - Ac 5:5, 11, cp 1Ti 5:20, Re 18:10, 15, Re 11:11 = two slain witnesses come to life and ascend to heaven before a watching world!). Other uses of fear in a active sense are associated with man (Ro 13:13, of the Jews in Jn 7:13, 19:38, 20:19; cp inability of sons of Sceva to exorcise demons = Acts 19:17). In a negative sense **phobos** describes that which causes alarm, dread or terror (2Co 7:5, 1Pe 3:14) Here in Ephesians 6:5 **phobos** conveys a positive sense describing respect, reverential, wholesome fear or awe.

Fear is usually an emotion of severe distress aroused by intense concern of some impending pain, danger, etc, and is usually accompanied by a desire to flee because feeling inadequate or without sufficient resources. Fundamentally **phóbos** involves separating from, removing oneself and hence avoiding because of dread or fright. **Phobos** is used positively in relation to God, of avoiding or fleeing from what displeases the Lord, and embracing what is truly good and in His will.

Most OT uses of **phobos** (other than those in Proverbs) convey the sense of terror and/or dread, but several do convey a positive sense of producing a reverential awe (2Sa 23:3, 2Chr 19:7, 9, Neh 5:9, 5:15, Job 4:6, 25:2, Ps 2:11, 5:7, 19:9, 34:11, 36:1, 90:11, 111:10, Ps 119:38, Pr 1:7, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:26, 15:16, 15:33, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17, Isa 8:13, Isa 11:3 [referring to Messiah], Jer 32:40, Jonah 1:16, Malachi 2:5). Here are the NT uses which convey the sense of reverential awe (Lk 5:26, Acts 2:43)

**Fear - Phobos** - 42v in the NT -**NAS** renders **phobos** as cause of fear(1), fear(37), fearful(1), fears(1), intimidation(1), respect(1), respectful(1), reverence(1), sense of awe(1).

Matt. 14:26; 28:4, 8; Lk. 1:12, 65; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37; 21:26; Jn. 7:13; 19:38; 20:19; Acts 2:43; 5:5, 11; 9:31; 19:17; Ro 3:18; 8:15; 13:3, 7; 1 Co. 2:3; 2 Co. 5:11; 7:1, 5, 11, 15; Eph. 5:21; 6:5; Phil. 2:12; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 2:15; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:18; 3:2, 14f; 1 Jn. 4:18; Jude 1:23; Rev. 11:11; 18:10, 15

**Phobos** - 195 uses in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) -

Gen. 9:2; 15:12; 31:42, 53; 35:5; Exod. 15:16; 20:20; 23:27; Deut. 2:25; 11:25; 28:67; 32:25; Jos. 2:9; 2Sa 23:3; 1Chr. 14:17; 2 Chr. 19:7, 9; 26:5; Neh 5:9, 15; 6:16; Esther 1:22; 4:17; 5:1, 2; 8:17; 9:3; Job 3:24, 25; 4:6, 13; 9:34; 13:11, 21; 15:4, 21; 20:25; 21:9; 25:2; 31:23; 33:7, 15, 16; 38:17; 39:3, 16, 19; 41:14, 25; Ps. 2:11; 5:7; 14:3, 5; 19:9; 31:11; 34:11; 36:1; 53:5; 55:5; 64:1; 90:11; 91:5; 105:38; 111:10; 119:38, 120; Pr 1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27, 29; 14:26; 15:16, 27, 33; 18:8; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; 31:30; Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; 7:25; 8:12, 13; 10:27, 29; 11:3; 19:16; 21:4; 24:17, 18; 26:17; 33:3, 7, 8, 18; Je 30:5, 6; 32:40; 48:43, 44; 49:5; Lam 3:47; Ezek 26:17; 27:28; 32:23, 24, 26, 30, 32; 38:21; Da 4:1, 5; 5:6; 7:7;

## THE MANIFOLD BENEFITS OF REVERENTIAL PHOBOS

In Ge 31:53 the phrase "fear of his father" indicates **fear** is being used in a sense as a name for God. Note how fear in a "positive" sense can motivate godly behavior (Neh 5:15 -see following discussion).

**Reverential fear of Jehovah** is something that can be learned (and should be taught) (Ps 34:11). Saints learn to fear Jehovah by learning His Word (Ps 119:38-[note](#)) and making this a conscious choice (Pr 1:29). A proper, **reverential fear of Jehovah** is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10-[note](#), Pr 1:7, 9:10, 15:33), motivates saints to hate evil (Pr 8:13), leads to and prolongs one's life (Pr 19:23, 10:27), gives one strong confidence and provides a legacy for the children (Pr 14:26), is to be desired more than great treasure (Pr 15:16), is rewarded with spiritual riches, honor and life (Pr 22:4), helps one counter any envy one might have toward sinners (Pr 23:17), seems to be associated with salvation (Jonah 1:16), was a natural accompaniment of the newly born church (Acts 9:31), characterizes the attitude of non-believers (Ro 3:18-note), should serve to motivate saints (2Co 5:11 - where context = bema seat 2Co 5:12), is the atmosphere in which saints are to cleanse themselves and perfect holy conduct (2Cor 7:1-[note](#), cp similar effect on conduct in 1Pe 1:17-note), serves as a motivation to be subject to other believers (Ep 5:21-note, in the context of men and women who are Spirit filled - Eph 5:18-note), motivates and accompanies Christ honoring obedience of servants to masters (Eph 6:5, cp 1Pe 2:18-note), along with trembling should serve as the mindset to motivate working out one's salvation (Php 2:12-note), characterizes God honoring behavior (1Pe 3:2-note), should be the attitude we have when we tell others about Christ our Hope (1Pe 3:15-note, cp Jude 23).

### Related Resource:

- [The Fear of the Lord](#)

**Trembling** ([5156](#)) (**tromos** from **trémo** = tremble, gives us our English word "tremor") describes a trembling, quaking, quivering, especially that which is associated with fear and/or consternation (Mk 16:8). The positive sense of **tromos** conveys the idea of exhibiting profound reverence or respect (2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12). The English dictionary defines **trembling** as an involuntary shaking, quivering, or shivering as with fear, cold or weakness. Paul employed **tromos** to describe his sense of personal inadequacy when preaching the gospel in Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:3). [See also the preceding comments on the combination of fear and trembling](#) in Php 2:12.

**Tromos** - 5v in the NT - Mk 16:8; 1Co. 2:3; 2Co. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12

**20 times** in the non-apocryphal Septuagint (LXX) - Ge. 9:2; Ex. 15:15, 16; Dt. 2:25; 11:25; Job 4:14; 38:34; Ps 2:11 = "And rejoice with trembling"; Ps 48:6; 55:5; Isa. 19:16; 33:14; 54:14; 63:19; 64:3; Jer. 15:8; 49:24; Dan. 4:1, 19; Hab. 3:16

### IN THE SINCERITY OF YOUR HEART, AS TO CHRIST:

- Ep 6:24; Joshua 24:14; 1Chronicles 29:17; Ps 86:11; Matthew 6:22; Acts 2:46; 2Corinthians 1:12; 2Corinthians 11:2,3) (Eph 1:1-23; 1Corinthians 7:22; Colossians 3:17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
- [Ephesians 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 6:5-9: Spirit-Filled Believer in Work Place](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Working for God](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 6:4 Child Rearing in One Sentence](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 God's Perspective on Work](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Spirit-Filled Labor Relations](#) - John MacArthur

### In the sincerity of your heart as to Christ -

**Sincerity** ([572](#)) (**haplotes** from **a** = negation + **pleko** = twine, braid, weave, knit) means singleness, simplicity, uprightness, mental honesty; the virtue of one who is free from pretence and dissimulation. **Haplotes** pertains to being motivated by singleness of purpose so as to be open and aboveboard, without guile, and without a hidden agenda. The idea of **haplotes** is that of personal integrity expressed in word or action.

**Expositor's Greek Testament** notes that singleness of heart "states the spirit in which the obedience was to be rendered,—not in formality, pretence, or hypocrisy, but in inward reality and sincerity, and with an undivided heart" ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

In the present verse **haplotes** means to obey with a heart fixed on pleasing Christ and not on worldly gain. What does haplotes heart look like in context? Ephesians 6:6 tells us that their heart is sincere because they are not obeying as an outward show that would conceal an inner improper motivation. In other words, when the Spirit filled slave obeys, it is not feigned obedience but genuine obedience. In other words haplotes means "what you see is what you get". Without pretense or ulterior motive. Not half-hearted.

**McGee** says it...

means there should not be any taint of duplicity. There should be no two-facedness. There should not be the licking of the boots of the employer when he is around and then stabbing him in the back when he is away. Such action should never be in the life of a Christian. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

As noted below in 3 uses in the second epistle to the Corinthians, **haplotes** also refers to an openness and sincerity in sharing with others.

**Haplotes** is used 2 times in the Septuagint (LXX) and 8 times in the NT...

**2 Samuel 15:11** Then two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem, who were invited and went **innocently** (LXX = haplotes), and they did not know anything.

**1 Chronicles 29:17** "Since I know, O my God, that Thou triest the heart and delightest in uprightness, I, in the **integrity** (LXX = haplotes) of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Thy people, who are present here, make their offerings willingly to Thee.

**Romans 12:8** (note) or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with **liberality** (haplotes); he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

**2 Corinthians 1:12** For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly **sincerity** (haplotes), not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.

**2 Corinthians 8:2** that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their **liberality** (haplotes).

**2 Corinthians 9:11** you will be enriched in everything for all **liberality** (haplotes), which through us is producing thanksgiving to God... 13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the **liberality** (haplotes) of your contribution to them and to all,

**2 Corinthians 11:3** But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the **simplicity** (haplotes) and purity of devotion to Christ. (**Comment:** Here **haplotes** describes a simple goodness, which gives itself without reserve, with no strings attached and with no hidden agenda.)

**Ephesians 6:5** Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the **sincerity** (haplotes) of your heart, as to Christ;

**Colossians 3:22** (note) Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with **sincerity** (haplotes) of heart, fearing the Lord.

**Heart** ([2588](#)) (**kardia**) (Click word study on kardia) does not refer to the physical organ but is used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life. The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. No outward obedience is of the slightest value unless the heart turns to God.

**Vine** writes that **kardia** "came to denote man's entire mental and moral activities, and to stand figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life, and so here signifies the seat of thought and feeling." ([Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**MacArthur** commenting on kardia writes that "While we often relate **heart** to the emotions (e.g., "He has a broken heart"), the Bible relates it **primarily to the intellect** (e.g., "Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Mt 15:19). That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23-see notes). In a secondary way, however, **heart** relates to the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions." (Drawing Near. Crossway Books)



**MacArthur** adds that "In most modern cultures, the **heart** is thought of as the seat of emotions and feelings. But most ancients—Hebrews, Greeks, and many others—considered the **heart** to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom. The New Testament also uses it in that way. The **heart** was considered to be the seat of the mind and will, and it could be taught what the brain could never know. Emotions and feelings were associated with the intestines, or bowels." ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. 1986. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**As to Christ** - as if Christ were watching (which He is) and in a heart attitude that seeks to please Him.

**Eadie** - The slave is ever tempted to appear to labour while yet he is loitering, to put on the seeming of obedience and obey with a double heart. The counsel of the apostle therefore is, that he should obey in singleness of aim, giving undivided effort and attention to the task in hand, for it was to be done as to Christ. (John Eadie, D., LL.D. The Epistle of St Paul to the Ephesians)

**MacDonald** - These words show that there should be no real distinction between the secular and the sacred. All that we do should be for Him—with a view to pleasing and honoring Him and to attracting others to Him. The most menial and commonplace tasks in life are ennobled and dignified when they are done for the glory of God. Even washing dishes! That is why some Christian housewives have this motto over their kitchen sink: "Divine service held here three times daily." ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

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**A People Company**- My brother worked 42 years for the Herman Miller Furniture Company. At his retirement dinner he said, "This is my company. Where else could a production worker like me participate in the management of the company?" What had instilled this kind of loyalty? In part, it was the leadership of D. J. De Pree, longtime president of the company.

One day a worker in the plant died suddenly. When Mr. De Pree visited his widow, she told him of her husband's poetry and of his witnessing to the night watchman. This impressed De Pree with the value of each of the workers in his plant. From then on, his attitude toward the business changed. "I realized," he said, "that the manufacturer's first priority was to make his product the best he could for the one who would use it; the second was the man in the factory who made it; and the third was the ownership."

This attitude is rooted in Scripture. Christians in labor and in management all work for one Master. Employees must therefore serve with diligence. Management must do the same—with two additions. They must be fair and just (Col. 4:1-note) and must not threaten (Eph 6:9). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Integrity, concern for others, and mutual respect make any company a people company. —Dennis J. De Haan

Lord, teach me how to love and work,  
So every deed I do  
May be to someone in its turn  
A service fine and true.  
—Anon.

**When integrity and people rate higher than pay and profits,  
everyone profits!**

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**The Real World** - The owner of a company was talking with one of his managers about an employee who was stealing from the firm. The owner, who was a follower of Christ, asked, "What do you think we should do about him?"

"Give him the ax!" replied the manager.

"Suppose he admits his wrongdoing and agrees to pay for what he's stolen," said the owner. "Why not let him keep his job? Isn't that how you would want to be treated?"

"Well, yeah," said the manager, "but that's not the real world!"

Jesus calls us to follow the rules of His world, which is the real world. His rules demand our integrity, responsibility, and accountability. When they are practiced, employees become more dependable and fulfilled. And employers make their workers' welfare as important as making a profit. The result? More people stay off welfare rolls and out of unemployment lines.

Paul had some advice for workers and employers. He urged workers to carry out their duties "as bondservants of Christ, ... as to the

Lord, and not to men" (Eph. 6:6,7). And he instructed masters not to threaten their servants, reminding them that their Master shows no partiality (Ep 6:9).

What about us? Are we living in the real world by the rules Jesus gave us? — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Thinking It Through** - What principle does the golden rule (Mt. 7:12) give us for serving others? How does it apply in the workplace?

**The reward for honest labor  
is always greater than the wages received.**

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**Just A Job?** - Three men were hard at work on a large building project. Someone asked them, "What are you doing?" "I'm mixing mortar," one said. The second man said, "I'm helping put up this great stone wall." But the third man replied, "I'm building a cathedral to the glory of God."

Those three men could just as well have been working on a car, in a factory, behind a counter, or on any legitimate product or service a man or woman might provide.

Most people work to earn a living, attain success, or amass wealth. Such reasons, however, must not be the Christian's primary motive for working. Like the third man in our story, we need to see that what gives work eternal value is not the product or service of our labor but the process of laboring itself--doing the job faithfully to the glory of the Lord.

God commands us to work because it is good. But work also gives believers the opportunity to represent Jesus Christ to unbelievers. By performing our God-given tasks to the best of our abilities, we bring honor and glory to His name. And we demonstrate to fellow employees the difference Christ can make in a life. Is our work just a job? Or are we doing it to the glory of God? — Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Man's work can make of him a slave  
And lead him to an early grave,  
But if it's done as to the Lord  
His labors bring him great reward. --DJD

**We are given time to build for eternity.**

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**Ephesians 6:6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** [me kat' ophthalmoudoulian os anthropareskoi all' os douloi Christou poiountes \(PAPMPN\) to thelema tou theou ek psuche.](#)

**Amplified:** Not in the way of eye-service [as if they were watching you] and only to please men, but as servants (slaves) of Christ, doing the will of God heartily and with your whole soul; ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** not with the idea of currying favour with men, but as the servants of Christ conscientiously doing what you believe to be the will of God for you. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** not in the way of eye service as men-pleasers, but as Christ's bondslaves, doing the will of God from the soul,

**Young's Literal:** not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as servants of the Christ, doing the will of God out of soul,

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**NOT BY WAY OF EYESERVICE AS MEN-PLEASERS BUT AS SLAVES OF CHRIST: me kat' ophthalmoudoulian os**

AMPLIFIED Not in the way of eye-service [as if they were watching you] and only to please men, but as servants (slaves) of Christ, doing the will of God heartily and with your whole soul;

GNT Ephesians 6:6 μ κατ φθαλμοδουλ αν ς νθρωπ ρεσκοι λλ ς δο λοι Χριστο ποιο ντες τ θ λημα το θεο κ ψυχ ς,

NLT Ephesians 6:6 Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.

KJV Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

ESV Ephesians 6:6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

ASV Ephesians 6:6 not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

CSB Ephesians 6:6 Don't work only while being watched, in order to please men, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart.

NIV Ephesians 6:6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

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

NRS Ephesians 6:6 not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

YLT Ephesians 6:6 not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as servants of the Christ, doing the will of God out of soul,

NAB Ephesians 6:6 not only when being watched, as currying favor, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

NJB Ephesians 6:6 not only when you are under their eye, as if you had only to please human beings, but as slaves of Christ who wholeheartedly do the will of God.

GWN Ephesians 6:6 Don't obey them only while you're being watched, as if you merely wanted to please people. But obey like slaves who belong to Christ, who have a deep desire to do what God wants them to do.

BBE Ephesians 6:6 Not only under your master's eye, as pleasers of men; but as servants of Christ, doing the pleasure of God from the heart;

- Philippians 2:12; Col 3:22; 1 Th 2:4
- [Ephesians 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 6:5-9: Spirit-Filled Believer in Work Place](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Working for God](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 6:4 Child Rearing in One Sentence](#) - Steven Cole
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## CORAM DEO EMPLOYEES!

**Not by way of eyeservice as men-pleasers** - NLT = "Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you." CSB = " Don't work only while being watched, in order to please men." Paul is saying that Spirit filled slaves serve Christ on the job with a [Coram Deo](#) ("before the face of God") attitude, fully aware that He is always watching us! Work must not be done well and not with one eye on the clock or only when the overseer's eye is on us but must be done in the awareness that God's eye is on us. Paul is saying believing slaves must avoid eyeservice and pursue a deeper motive for "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

**Eyeservice** (3787) ([ophthalmodouleia](#) from **ophthalmos** = eye + **douleia** = service) is literally "eye slavery" (!) which means working when the master is watching and loafing when he is gone! It is service rendered only for appearance sake. Slaves were under more temptation in this respect than paid laborers, since they had nothing to gain materially from diligence. This is service that is performed only to make an impression in the owner's presence. It describes work done without dedication or a sense of inner obligation but primarily to impress and to attract attention. Our English idiom "brown nosers" is appropriate epithet for those who perform their tasks in this manner only to curry favor or for appearances sake. Spirit filled believers steer clear of this subtle selfish attitude.

**Jonathan Edwards** wrote...

Resolved, never to give over, nor in the least to slacken, my fight with my corruptions, however unsuccessful I may be. ([Read all his resolutions- very convicting!](#)) but remember resolutions unless read under grace and obeyed in the power of the Spirit can become burdens of subtle, or not so subtle, legalism - cp Ro 7:5-note)

**Comment:** [Read a longer list of Jonathan Edwards' resolutions - if you dare! They are very convicting!](#) However, be careful! Remember that resolutions must be read with a strong reliance on grace and a trust in the power of the Spirit to obey, or otherwise they can become legalistic burdens (cp Ro 7:5+) In fact read Edwards' prayer that prefaces the resolutions...

Being sensible that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat him by his grace to enable me to keep these Resolutions, so far as they are agreeable to his will, for Christ's sake.

**Expositor's Greek Testament** adds that "It is the service that is done only when one is under the master's eye—an obedience to save appearances and gain undeserved favor, which is not rendered when the master is absent as it is when his scrutiny is on us." ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

As **Barclay** says "Every single piece of work the Christian produces must be good enough to show to God. [Ibid](#)) (I LIKE THAT THOUGHT!)

The only other NT uses of **eyeservice** and **men-pleasers** is found in Colossians where Paul instructs slaves...

Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. (Col 3:22+)

Here's a humorous [illustration](#) of "eye service" from the Reader's Digest - A retired friend became interested in the construction of an addition to a shopping mall. Observing the activity regularly, he was especially impressed by the conscientious operator of a large piece of equipment. The day finally came when my friend had a chance to tell this man how much he'd enjoyed watching his scrupulous work. Looking astonished, the operator replied, "You're not the supervisor?" (Howard A. Stein in Reader's Digest)

**Men-pleasers** (441) ([anthropareskos](#) from **anthropos** = man + **arésko** = to please) pertains to causing people to be pleased with the implication of being in contrast to God or at the sacrifice of some principle. This describes one who tries to make an impression on others. He acts merely to please men. He sacrifices principle to please someone of superior authority. In short, he's a people-pleaser. We are not to "butter up" the boss. The only other uses are in Col 3:22+ (see above) and the Septuagint translation of Ps 53:5<sup>+</sup>.

**Slaves of Christ** - again emphasizing that the Spirit filled slave does his work as if in the Lord's presence.

Remember that our Lord was a slave for as He declared...

even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45+)

**Comment:** Lord's own servanthood. He himself took the form of a slave and performed the menial task of washing His disciples' feet. As servants of the One Who became the Servant of men, Christian slaves should enthusiastically embrace the known will of God in this respect.

**John Eadie** - Need we add that this is a vice which slavery everywhere creates and exhibits? Hence the necessity for drivers and overseers, whips and collars, treadmills and dungeons. The slave has usually no higher aim than to please him who has in his hands the power of punishment and sale; and whether in deception, or in an ingenious show of obedience, or a cunning feint of attention, this one motive prevails—to prevent his master taking offence at him. But the apostle presents another and deeper inducement, which should lead to punctual and honest industry carried on to please the Lord in heaven. For the slaves were to work not as man's but as **slaves of Christ** ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

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## On Being a Good Employee - Ephesians 6:5

1. **Be loyal.** Bosses will forgive carelessness, stupidity, tardiness and the occasional temper tantrum. These can be corrected, but disloyalty is a true character flaw. You cannot—and will not—be trusted.
2. **Keep the boss informed.** The boss should be informed about what you are doing, where you are, whom you are talking to and why. If you must err, err on the side of overkill. Bombard the boss with bulletins, memos, and FYI's until he or she says, "Stop." No one had ever lost a job because they told the boss too much.
3. **Embrace change, even if you do not understand it.** Any boss must, as part of his or her job, instigate change. It is not your job to resist.
4. **Respect the boss's time.** If you need thirty minutes with him, don't take sixty. Better yet, take twenty.
5. **Don't tread on his turf.** At least, don't do it without permission.
6. **Follow up quickly.** Bosses don't pull out a stopwatch when they give a command. But their internal clock is ticking. (Bits & Pieces, May 27, 1993, pp. 2-3 quoted in [10000 Sermon Illustrations. Dallas: Biblical Studies Press](#))

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**No Vacancy-** Fred, a clerk in a retail store, was rude to the customers and lazy. On several occasions his boss was about to fire him. But he didn't follow through because of his concern for Fred's wife and children, who would suffer from his dismissal.

One day a regular customer stopped in and noticed that Fred wasn't there. He asked the manager about him and was told that he had taken another job. The customer asked, "Are you planning to replace him?" The manager replied, "No, it isn't necessary. Fred didn't leave a vacancy."

Fred's work was of such poor quality that the business was better off without him. That should never be true of any employee, especially a Christian.

The apostle Paul told servants to be obedient to their masters "with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7).

God expected Christian servants in Paul's day to work diligently for their masters, and we too should give our employers an honest day's work. It's the right thing to do, and it strengthens our witness for Christ.

One good way to test the value of your work is to ask yourself this question: If I left my job, would it create a vacancy? —Richard De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Some people stop looking for work  
when they get a job.**

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### DOING THE WILL OF GOD FROM THE HEART: poiountes (PAPMPN) to thelema tou theou ek psuche:

- **Doing the will of God** - Eph 5:17; Mt 7:21; 12:50; Col 1:9; Col 4:12; 1Th 4:3; Heb 10:36; 13:21; 1 Pe 2:15; 4:2; 1 Jn 2:17
- **From the heart** - Jeremiah 3:10; 24:7; Romans 6:17; Colossians 3:23
- [Ephesians 6 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 6:5-9: Spirit-Filled Believer in Work Place](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Ephesians 6:5-9 Working for God](#) - Steven Cole
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**KNOWING GOD'S WILL  
DOING GOD'S WILL**

**Doing the will of God** is only possible if (1) we know God's will and (2) we are filled with (controlled by) the Spirit of God.

Paul had referred to the **will of God** in the previous chapter...

So then do not be foolish, but **understand** (**sunieimi** = put together "pieces of the puzzle" so to speak and thereby exhibit ready comprehension. Here the verb is a command in the **present imperative**) what the will of the Lord is. (Eph 5:17-note)

**Comment** - If God commands us to understand His will, that means we can. He will enable us to do so through His Word, His Spirit, prayer, etc. Regarding the keeping of this command to understand [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!"

**Doing God's will** is a marker of one's eternal destiny as Jesus emphasized declaring that...

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **the who does** (present tense = Speaks of the general direction of one's life, not perfection, which is not possible in this non-glorified phase of the believer's life. The corollary is that one who habitually, continually does their own will is not born again) the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." (Matthew 7:21-note, cp 1Jn 2:17-note, He 10:36-note)

**Comment:** As stated obviously Jesus is not calling for perfection, but He does emphasize that unless the "direction" of one's life is toward the **will** of God, they will **not enter the Kingdom of Heaven**. Why? The implication is that only a regenerate person with a spiritually circumcised heart (Col 2:11-note, Dt 10:16, Jer 4:4, Ro 2:28, 29-note) would even desire to do God's good and acceptable and perfect will. Further, only one who has been born again and has the motivating influence and enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit would even desire or be able to do God's will. Fallen man seeks his will not God's will. Redeemed man seeks God's will over his own will.

**Jesus** reiterated this truth concerning God's will later declaring...

For whoever does the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother. (Matthew 12:50)

Although the phrase **will of God** is not present, the principle is also stated in Paul's charge for Spirit filled believers to be...

trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ep 5:10-note)

**Expositor's Greek Testament** writes that "It belongs to the character (*hōs* = as) of the bond-servant of Christ to do the will of God, the God and Father of Christ, in his condition in life, and to do that not grudgingly or formally, but with hearty readiness. ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

**Doing** (4160) (**poieo**) is in the present tense which calls for the believing slave to do the will of God as his or her lifestyle only possible by wholly relying on [the Holy Spirit!](#)

Although, the following "factoid" is difficult to substantiate, the magazine, U S News and World Report, once reported that employees, on an average, spend 34% of their paid time not working!

**MacDonald** writes that "We should always be diligent, not only when the boss is looking, but conscious that our Master is always looking. It is a natural tendency to slack off when the employer is away, but it is a form of dishonesty. The Christian's standards of performance should not vary according to the geographical location of the foreman. A customer once urged a Christian sales clerk to give him more than he was paying for, assuring him that his employer was not looking. The sales clerk replied, "My Master is always looking!" ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**John Eadie** adds that "Though they were slaves to a human master, they were to live and labour in the character of Christ's servants, the characteristic of whose industry is, that they do God's will from the heart. That sphere in which they had been placed was of God's allotment; and when they discharged its duties, they were to labour not to please men, as if simply doing man's bidding, but to please God, and under the idea that they were doing His will. Such an impression must create motives which no secular premiums or penalties could ever have originated. ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

**Will** (2307) (**thelema** from **thelo** = to will with the **-ma** suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") means what one wishes or has determined shall be done or that which is desired or wished for. It refers to a desire which proceeds from one's heart or emotions. This term expresses the result of one's purpose or desire. Thelema has both an objective meaning ("what one wishes to happen") and a subjective connotation ("the act of willing or desiring"). It describes the will not as a demand but more as an inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, which pleases and creates joy. God's will signifies His gracious disposition toward something, what God Himself does of His own good pleasure.

**Zodhiates** says that **thelema** is the "Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. ([Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

**Thelema** - 62x in 58v -Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col 1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11-note. **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).

#### Related Resources:

- [The Will Of God](#) - lengthy discussion compiled from multiple sources
- [Romans 12:2 Commentary](#)
- [Colossians 1:9 Commentary](#)

**From the heart** - NLT = "with all your heart" (Eph 6:6NLT) Young's Literal = "out of soul." New Jerusalem Bible = "who wholeheartedly do the will of God." (Eph 6:6 NJB)

**From (1537) (ek)** means out of, expressing in context God's will that originates from the new heart of the believing Spirit filled slave.

**The heart (5590) (psuche)** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow) and is a difficult Greek word to define with a simple definition but denotes life in two chief respects: breath of life, the natural life and seat of personality (See more detailed discussion below on [psuche](#)). Louw-Nida defines psuche as "essence of life in terms of thinking, willing, and feeling - 'inner self, mind, thoughts, feelings, heart, being.'" and in the context of Ephesians 6:6 refers really to the entire being of a person, so that Eph 6:6 may be appropriately rendered as 'but with your whole being, do what God wants, as slaves of Christ.' (Louw-Nida) This makes me think of the idea to "throw yourself wholeheartedly into" your work! Don't hold back. Don't procrastinate or prevaricate! One dictionary say [throw yourself into something](#) means that if you *throw yourself into* an activity, you start giving all *your* energy or attention to doing it. That would seem to be Paul's idea for believing bondslaves.

Man's work can make of him a slave  
And lead him to an early grave,  
But if it's done as to the Lord  
His labors bring him great reward. --DJD

We are given time to build for eternity.

**Eadie** writes that "The phrase *ek psuche* (literally out of soul) signifies "heartily," and stands in contrast with "eye-service." The slave is to do the will of God from the soul—not reluctantly, and as if from mere conviction that it should be done. This cordiality is an essential element of Christian service. The limbs of the slave move with a reluctant tardiness and heartlessness; and such forced or feigned obedience is one of those inevitable results of slavery, against which the apostle is cautioning this class of his readers. ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

**Expositor's Greek Testament** adds that this addition of '**but of the soul**' "is not superfluous, for to true to the character of the bond-servant of Christ requires not merely the doing of God's will, but the doing of that will *ex animo* (Latin "from the heart"). ([Ephesians 6 Commentary](#))

**Ray Stedman** has the following thoughts on this verse in his devotional entitled **Bringing Christ To Work...**

Several times the idea is put forth: never work for men, you Christians; work only for God. You can work under a person's direction, but remember that you are working unto the Lord, that your daily task is work that He has given you to do, and you do it unto Him. What a glory this gives to every task. If you approach your work like this, you will never have another dull day. You will never be bored stiff with the routine and humdrum of what you have to do if you recognize that you are doing it with the eye of the Lord upon you and with the recognition that one day it will be made open and clear to all whether you did it as unto the Lord or unto men. What are the signs of the failure to do this?

The first sign is eyeservice, which means working only when the boss is watching. When the boss is not there to observe, you quit working. Some years ago I read an account of a foreman and some primitive workers

under him. He found that they were afflicted with this disease of eyeservice; they worked only when he watched them. But this particular foreman was the proud possessor of a glass eye, and he found that he could take his eye out of the socket and lay it on a stump where it could "watch" the men, and they would go right on working, whether he was there or not. But one day he came back to find them all lounging around. He had placed the eye on the stump, but one of the men had found a way to sneak around, come up behind the eye, and put his hat over it so that it no longer "saw" them. It is that attitude that so widely pervades our society today, the idea of working only when the boss is watching. If you are a Christian, this is forbidden if you want to be faithful to your Lord. Remember, the eye that watches you is not a human eye.

The second sign of failure in this respect is to be men-pleasing. Notice how the apostle is putting his finger on the attitudes that he found so frequently in this relationship of labor and capital. What is being men-pleasing? It is falsely flattering the boss, apple polishing, or playing office politics. It reveals a double heart, the lack of a single eye. It reveals that we are trying to get on by making other people happy but disregarding what God thinks. These are the signs of failure.

Christians are called away from these things. They have no business engaging in these types of activity if they want to be faithful to their Lord. They do not accomplish a thing. They seem to accomplish something, but in the end they do not. Christians are saved from all this if they remember that what they do is the will of God. Paul says that we are to obey our earthly masters in singleness of heart, "doing the will of God from the heart." What is the will of God? Your work! The very work you are doing, where you are doing it, with your co-workers, under the present circumstances and conditions under which you have to work-that is God's choice for you, that is the will of God.

Father, I live before You. There is no area of my life that is not subject to Your gaze and to Your judgment. Grant to me that I correct what is wrong in my own work in the light of this word. ([Bringing Christ To Work Daily Devotion from Ephesians 6:5-9 RayStedman.org](#))

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## [George Mueller's Guide to Finding the Will of God](#) (see also [Mueller and Prayer](#))

### **1. Surrender your own will.**

I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

### **2. Do not depend on feelings.**

Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great elusions.

### **3. Seek, the Spirit's will through God's Word.**

I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusion also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

### **4. Note providential circumstances.**

Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

### **5. Pray.**

I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

### **6. Wait.**

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**Vital Relationship Between Knowing and Obeying** - God's will is best discerned from God's Word as taught by God's Spirit. And so to know God's Will obey God's Word. John explains the basic principle that "obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge" writing that ""If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. (John



**Illustration of how not to discern the will of God.**..A middle-aged farmer who had been desiring for years to be an evangelist was out working in the field one day when he decided to rest under a tree. As he looked into the sky he saw that the clouds seemed to form into the letters P and C. Immediately he hopped up, sold his farm, and went out to P-reach C-hrist, which he felt was God's leading. Unfortunately, he was a horrible preacher. After one of his sermons a neighbor came forward and whispered in his ear, "Are you sure God wasn't just trying to tell you to P-lant C-orn."

## SHORT EXCURSUS ON SOUL-PSUCHE

**The heart** (5590) (**psuche** or **psyche** from **psucho** = to breathe, blow, English = psychology, "study of the soul") (Click word study on **psuche**) is the breath, then that which breathes, the individual, animated creature. Dichotomists view man as consisting of two parts (or substances), material and immaterial, with spirit and soul denoting the immaterial and bearing only a functional and not a metaphysical difference. Trichotomists also view man as consisting of two parts (or substances), but with spirit and soul representing in some contexts a real subdivision of the immaterial. The latter view is favored by this author. In this view the soul is the seat of the senses, desires, affections, appetites, passions, the lower aspect of one's nature.

**Psuche** - 92v in the NT - everyone\*(1), heart(2), heartily(1), life(36), lives(7), mind(1), minds(1), person(1), persons(3), soul(33), souls(14), suspense(1), thing(1).

Matt. 2:20; 6:25; 10:28, 39; 11:29; 12:18; 16:25f; 20:28; 22:37; 26:38; Mk. 3:4; 8:35ff; 10:45; 12:30; 14:34; Lk. 1:46; 2:35; 6:9; 9:24, 56; 10:27; 12:19f, 22f; 14:26; 17:33; 21:19; Jn. 10:11, 15, 17, 24; 12:25, 27; 13:37f; 15:13; Acts 2:27, 41, 43; 3:23; 4:32; 7:14; 14:2, 22; 15:24, 26; 20:10, 24; 27:10, 22, 37; Rom. 2:9; 11:3; 13:1; 16:4; 1 Co. 15:45; 2 Co. 1:23; 12:15; Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:27; 2:30; Col. 3:23; 1 Thess. 2:8; 5:23; Heb. 4:12; 6:19; 10:38f; 12:3; 13:17; Jas. 1:21; 5:20; 1 Pet. 1:9, 22; 2:11, 25; 3:20; 4:19; 2 Pet. 2:8, 14; 1 Jn. 3:16; 3 Jn. 1:2; Rev. 6:9; 8:9; 12:11; 16:3; 18:13; 20:4

However the discerning reader must understand that **psuche** is one of those Greek words that can have several meanings, the exact nuance being determined by the context. It follows that one cannot simply select of the three main meanings of **psuche** and insert it in a given passage for it may not be appropriate to the given context. The meaning of **psuche** is also contingent upon whether one is a dichotomist or trichotomist. Consult Greek lexicons for more lengthy definitions of **psuche** as this definition is only a brief overview. (Click an excellent article on [Soul](#) in the Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology; see also ISBE article on [Soul](#))

**BDAG** makes the point that "It is often impossible to draw hard and fast lines in the use of this multivalent word. Generally it is used in reference to dematerialized existence or being... Without **psuche** a being, whether human or animal, consists merely of flesh and bones and without functioning capability. Speculations and views respecting the fortunes of **psuche** and its relation to the body find varied expression in our literature. ([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

**Lawrence Richards** - As with many biblical terms, the basic meaning of **psyche** is established by its OT counterpart, rather than by its meaning in Greek culture. "Soul" refers to personal life, the inner person. Of its over one hundred NT uses, **psyche** is rendered by the NIV as "soul(s)" only twenty-five times... While there is much overlap in the NT uses of **psyche** and **pneuma** (spirit), there seems to be some areas of distinction as well. Often the focus of contexts in which these terms appear overlaps. Thus, both are used in speaking of personal existence, of life after death, emotions, purpose, and the self. But **psyche** is also used of one's physical life and of spiritual growth, while **pneuma** is associated distinctively with breath, worship, understanding, one's attitude or disposition, and spiritual power ([Richards, L O: Expository Dictionary of Bible Words: Regency](#))

(1) **One meaning** is reference to the principle of life generally, the vital force which animates the body which shows itself in breathing, the "life principle" (the breath of life) as found even with animals (cf Luke 12:20 "... *this very night your **soul** is required of you...* ", Acts 3:23 "*every **soul** that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed*") . To the Greeks the **psuche** was the principle of physical life. Everything which had physical life had **psuche**. Everything which is alive has **psuche**; a dog, a cat, any animal has **psuche**, but it has not got

**pneuma** or spirit. Psyche is that physical life which a man shares with every living thing; but pneuma or spirit is that which makes a man different from the rest of creation and kin to God.

(2) A **second** meaning refers to the earthly, natural life in contrast to supernatural existence (Mt 6:25 *'do not be anxious for your life...*', Ro 11:3 (note) *'... they are seeking my life...*'). This refers to So that the word denotes "life in the distinctness of individual existence" (Cremer).

(3) A **third** meaning of **psyche** is in reference to the inner nonmaterial life of man for which the physical body serves as the dwelling place often with focus on various aspects of feeling, thinking, etc and thus can refer primarily to the mind, to the heart, to desire (Lu 10:27 *'love the Lord... with all your soul'*, Mk 14:34 *'My soul is deeply grieved...*', Eph 6:6 *'doing the will of God from the heart [psyche]'*, Heb 12:3 *'so that you may not grow weary and lose heart'*). One might say this meaning refers to the inner self, the essence of life in terms of thinking, willing, and feeling. Here psyche describes the seat and center of the inner human life in its many and varied aspects.

It should be noted that there is an additional meaning of a derivative of psyche (**psuchikos**) which is used to describe a "soulish" person, one who is still unregenerate and in Adam, and thus a person whose life is dominated by the unredeemed nature (1Co 2:14, 15:44, 46, James 3:15, Jude 1:19)

**Vincent** offers the follows thoughts on **psyche** - The **soul (psyche)** is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions. It has a side in contact with both the material and the spiritual element of humanity, and is thus the mediating organ between body and spirit. Its meaning, therefore, constantly rises above life or the living individual, and takes color from its relation to either the emotional or the spiritual side of life, from the fact of its being the seat of the feelings, desires, affections, aversions, and the bearer and manifester of the divine life-principle (pneuma). Consequently **psyche** is often used in our sense of heart (Lk 1:46; Lk 2:35; Jn 10:24; Acts 14:2); and the meanings of **psyche**, **soul**, and **pneuma**, **spirit**, occasionally approach each other very closely. Compare Jn 12:27 and Jn 9:33; Mt 11:29 and 1Co 16:18. Also both words in Lk 1:47. In this passage **psyche**, soul, expresses the soul regarded as a moral being designed for everlasting life. See Heb 6:19; Heb 10:39; Heb 13:17; 1Pe 2:11; 1Pe 4:19. John commonly uses the word to denote the principle of the natural life. See Jn 10:11, 15; Jn 13:37; Jn 15:13; 1Jn 3:16" (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament. Vol. 2, Page 1-400).

**John MacArthur** offer the following discussion on **dichotomist** versus **trichotomist** view - There has been a significant debate over the years about the definition and usage of the terms spirit and soul. Some (historically called **trichotomists**) believe Paul was identifying two different, distinct categories of the nonmaterial essence of man. Those parts, along with the body, make man a three-part being. Others (historically called **dichotomists**) believe spirit and soul are interchangeable words denoting man's indivisible inner nature. Those interpreters therefore view man as a two-part being, composed simply of a nonmaterial nature (spirit and soul) and a material nature (body).

No Scripture text ascribes different, distinct substance and functions to the spirit and soul. Trichotomists nevertheless usually propose that spirit is man's Godward consciousness and soul is his earthward consciousness; however, neither the Greek usage of spirit (pneuma) nor of soul (psyche) sustains that proposition. The nonmaterial part of man does have myriad capacities to respond to God, Satan, and the world's many stimuli, but it is untenable to arbitrarily separate the spirit from the soul. The two terms are used interchangeably in Scripture (He 6:19, 10:39, 1Pe 2:11, 2Pe 2:8-see notes He 6:19; 10:39; 1Pe2:11; 2Pe 2:8). Spirit and soul are familiar and common synonyms that Paul used to emphasize the depth and scope of sanctification. Some suggest that an acceptable translation of this portion of Paul's prayer could be, "May your spirit, even soul and body," in which case "spirit" would refer to the whole person, and "soul and body" to the person's nonmaterial and material parts. References from Paul's other epistles provide clear evidence that he was a dichotomist (Ro 8:10-note; 1Co 2:11; 5:3, 5; 7:34; 2Co. 7:1 [note](#); Gal. 6:18; Col 2:5-note; 2Ti 4:22-note).

Some claim Hebrews 4:12 (note), "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart," supports a trichotomist view of man's essence because it suggests splitting soul and spirit. But a careful look at the verse's language refutes that contention. The writer did not say the sword of the Word penetrates a person's inner being and separates his soul from his spirit. He said only that the sword cuts open the soul and the spirit of the person. He used a second metaphorical expression "piercing ... both joints and marrow" to further depict the deep penetration God's Word makes into the inner person. This verse poses no special difficulty for the dichotomist position. ([MacArthur, J. 1 & 2 Thessalonians.](#)

**The Smallest Place-** One of England's most admired heroes, General Charles Gordon (1833-1885), was a devout Christian. Unconcerned about status and wealth, he was passionately ambitious to do God's will. Gordon desired to serve the Lord faithfully, whether it was a big responsibility or a small, unnoticed task.

In a letter to a friend, he said that "governing huge countries, or ... occupying the smallest place are the same in reality, for Christ rules events as much with respect to ... government as He does in ... little affairs."

Do we believe, as Gordon did, that Jesus Christ is the omnipotent ruler of everything? Do we remember that He is Lord over our own "little affairs," as well as over the governments of "huge countries"? Do we recognize that everything, big or small, is to be done "as to the Lord and not to men"? (Colossians 3:23-note).

If we recognize these truths, we will not grumble because God assigns us the "smallest place" rather than a position of prominence and great responsibility. Even if our situation in life is considered lowly by some, we can do all things as to the Lord and for His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Father, by Your Spirit, enable me to serve and glorify You, no matter where You've placed me. Amen! —Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Does the place you're called to labor  
Seem so small and little known?  
It is great if God is in it,  
And He'll not forget His own.  
—Suffield

**Little is much when God is in it.**

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**Glad Service-** As a boy, I never shared my father's enthusiasm for the soil. For several summers he had a little plot of ground in the country where he planted a garden. It provided physical therapy and relaxation for him, as well as a bountifully laden table for family and friends.

Back then, a hand-pushed plow was used to break up the ground, and the initial plowing, therefore, was often difficult. I remember helping my dad load his cultivator into the trunk one day and going with him to his garden. When we arrived, he prepared to make the first furrow while I took the lunch basket and picked a comfortable seat under the shade of an apple tree.

I was totally unsuspecting as I observed my father attach a rope to both handles of the cultivator and make a harness. Soon an unwilling boy was in front of that plow. Dad pushed and I pulled—and grumbled. Up one row and down another—over and over again. How miserable I was doing my duty!

Sometimes when we're asked to serve the Lord in a particular way, we reluctantly accept, but we do so only out of a sense of obligation. When that happens, we need to pray for a willing spirit so that we can "serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2-note). —Paul Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I am happy in the service of the King,  
I am happy, oh, so happy;  
Through the sunshine and the shadow I can sing,  
In the service of the King. —Ackley  
© 1912, The Rodeheaver Co.

**A willing spirit  
changes the drudgery of duty into a labor of love.**