

Ephesians 6:5-9 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 6:5-9:
THE SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER IN THE WORK PLACE
by Dr. Wayne Barber

NEXT

I want to entitle this "The Spirit-filled Believer in the Work Place."

You have to ask the question,

"What kind of work ethic does the Spirit-filled believer have?"

Now notice, I am making a distinction here. I didn't say "a believer." There are many believers today who are not under the control of the Spirit of God in the sense that they are not surrendered to Him. There is a difference in a person saying, "I am a believer" and a person under the influence of the Spirit of God working in his life moment by moment. What kind of work ethic does the person who is being filled with the Spirit of God moment by moment have?

Chuck Colson has co-authored a book entitled "*Why America Doesn't Work*". In this book he talks about the fact that we are missing, especially in the 20th century, the work ethic that was so much a part of our forefathers. It is incredible to me how it is missing. People think the world owes them something today. People say,

"Listen, I am here, aren't I? Do something for me."

It is never,

"What can I do for you?"

Rather it is,

"What can you do for me?"

THE SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER

One of the things that we have discovered in Scripture is that this attitude of "give me, give me, give me" is not found in the vocabulary of a Spirit-filled believer. He is caught up, filled up, motivated by the Holy Spirit of God Who lives within him. (click message)

We have already seen how our family is affected when we have been filled with the Spirit of God. You see, being filled by the Spirit of God is moment by moment. Again, it is not a glass of water being filled up and you drink it, emptying it, then filling it again. That is not it. The resource is already there. The fountain of living water is within all of us. The Lord Jesus lives in the person of His Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is taking the glass, knocking the bottom out of it, putting the glass in the water and letting the river flow through the glass. The key is to stay out of the way of the flow of the river. That is where **confession** and **repentance** comes in. If I am in the way, it dams up the flow and there is no life and light and love flowing out of me. That means wherever we go we are to wear the garment. Wherever we go we are to be filled with the Spirit of God. Wherever we go it somehow affects the world that we have been assigned to.

Now let's move into the work place. Understand what I am going to be doing with the text is not necessarily an interpretation. It is going to be an application. You will understand what I am talking about in a moment. In their day they had something in their culture that we do not have—slavery. As a matter of fact, at the time the book of Ephesians was written there were probably six million slaves in the Roman Empire. It was tolerated. It was accepted and it was a part of their labor force. They had masters and they had slaves. So we need to understand that.

Let's read together Ephesians 6:5-8:

"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; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."

Ephesians 6:9 covers the masters. We will look at that later. Paul is talking about slaves: how they are to act with their masters, how they are to behave.

I believe in the context of the 20th (and 21st) century, since we do not have slavery, there are some principles here that could tremendously effect the world that we live in and how an employee treats his employer in the work place. I don't think we are hurting the text at all to make that application. Obviously, the interpretation is slaves, but understand with me as we walk through it, the similarities are hard to miss. I think it would be very, very helpful to see what would magnify our witness in the work place if we would adhere to the same principles found here in Ephesians 6:5-8.

So we have a Spirit-filled employee, a Spirit-filled worker. I want to remind you one more time, that garment you put on in [Ephesians 4:24](#) is the garment of Christ (click message). You don't wear it to church on Sunday, take it off and wear another garment on Monday. If you are not wearing it to work, then you are obviously not wearing it at any other time because it is something that is consistent in your life. You are willing to let Jesus be Jesus in your life, no matter what area of your life it effects.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER

Number one, there is the attitude of the Spirit-filled employee.

Ephesians 6:5 says:

"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh as to Christ."

This is what you have to hold on to. Some of you are already saying,

"You don't know who I work for."

Now hold on. It is not as if you are obeying them alone. No, you are doing what you are doing to them as unto the Lord. There is a special attitude that permeates the life of a person who has been broken, who is being broken, who is daily confessing, who is daily repenting, who is daily seeking after the Lord Jesus. There is a special attitude in their heart. What is that attitude? Whatever they do, whether at home, recreation or work, they do it as to the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 says,

"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men."

That is the attitude of the Spirit-filled believer. The context of the verse, of course, is Christian masters and slaves. You have a lot of Christian workers out in the work place with non-Christian bosses and non-Christian co-workers. But they have one attitude and one attitude alone. That attitude is to do whatever they do as unto Christ.

Now the Spirit-filled believer has two things that he understands. One is specifically mentioned, and one is implied, which is very helpful to us. One is that their boss, called a master in the verse, is an authority God has placed into their life, a human authority.

Ephesians 6:5 says,

"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters [earthly masters] according to the flesh."

Now, "according to the flesh" simply means that they are human. They are imperfect, but they are in a position that God has put them into over your life. They know that their boss is only human, but they are willing to obey him.

The word for obey there is the word *hupakouo*. That word is not used for wives to their husbands. It is only used for Christians to God, children to parents and slaves to their masters. It means to obey. It means not to gripe every time the boss tells you to do something. It means to obey. It doesn't mean to ask him 10,000 questions about everything he asks you to do. It means to respond and to respond quickly. As a matter of fact, if we could stretch this, it says in verse 5,

"with fear and trembling."

Paul is not saying with fear and trembling of the boss, but fear and trembling of the Lord Jesus Christ. What you are doing unto Him is a reflection of how we love Him. There is an urgency to respond and to respond correctly when asked or assigned to do anything by a person who has been put in a position over you.

Now why in the world would a Spirit-filled believer do that? This is not the world's way of doing anything. The world says if you don't like what you are doing, get a sign and stand out front and strike. That is not the biblical way. The biblical way is we have one boss and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are His bond-servant. He is our Father. He is our friend, yes, but He is still our Master and our Lord. He is caring, compassionate, yes, but deserving to be obeyed. Therefore, when we go to work, we are obeying Him by obeying them. So we move quickly. We respond even sometimes with fear and trembling.

Why would they do that? Well, the second truth that a Spirit-filled believer knows is implied here. It is found in Proverbs 21:1. A Spirit-filled believer knows who really is in control. You must understand that we serve a sovereign God. He is omnipresent,

omniscient, omnipotent and in control. He is not sitting on the back porch with a long beard wondering what is happening on earth. He knows exactly. As a matter of the fact, Psalms says He doesn't slumber and He doesn't sleep. He is always busy. He knows what is going on. He is in control.

It says in [Proverbs 21:1](#):

"The king's heart [Now who is the king? Whoever is in authority] is *like* channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes."

That is good to know. I have worked in the work place. I worked for the telephone company at one time. But one of things that I never had the luxury of working with was a Christian boss or a Christian foreman. One of the things I understand from this is that even though I was working for somebody who was worldly and had no clue about Christianity, God was sovereignly in control of that boss. So in effect, even though I was doing what he was telling me to do, I was really pleasing the Lord by being obedient.

That is what Paul is saying here. The context is of slaves to masters. Paul says,

"Hey, guys, you are not a slave to them. You are a slave to Him."

Paul says that in Ephesians 3:1:

"I am a prisoner of Jesus."

In Ephesians 4:1 he says,

"I am a prisoner of Jesus. I am not a t a prisoner of Rome. He is the one who controls my life."

So I have to have those two things in my mind.

One—the boss is the authority who God has placed over me.

Two—I have to understand that God is in charge of the authority.

Whatever I do is as unto the Lord. These two things frame the attitude of the Spirit-filled worker. That is found in Ephesians 6:5 in one little word. He says,

"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."

The word "**sincerity**," *haplotēs*, is the word that speaks of the virtue of someone who is free from any pretense.

Let me explain that. In other words, the employee is not working hard for his boss with a hypocritical motive. You have a lot of people who go into the work place that are self-seeking. They are self-serving. What they do may look good to you and to the boss, but they have a hypocritical motive. Their motive is somehow to get something out of it for themselves. But the word here for "sincerity of heart" totally discredits that. You cannot have that kind of motive in your heart if you are a person who is doing it unto the Lord. He is working for the Lord, and he wants his labor to be pleasing to Him.

The second definition is that he is someone who is not self-seeking. We have already said that.

Then thirdly, it speaks of one who has such a pure heart that it will manifest itself by that individual being willing to go above and beyond what is assigned him, not to impress his boss, but to please his Lord and to leave a witness that is living and real to the people who work around him. He comes in and says,

"Hey, I am a believer. I love Jesus Christ. I am going to treat you as an authority God has put into my life. But I want to warn you, God is in control of you. I am going to do whatever I do as unto the Lord. There's no hidden agenda. Whatever I do over and above is not for you alone. It is for Him and by serving Him I am gladly willing to serve you."

So we see the attitude.

Do you realize America is crying for Spirit-filled workers, not just believers who go to the work place and gripe like everybody else but Spirit-filled believers with an attitude of pleasing God in everything that they do. It would turn our country around economically. It effects everything we do when we put on the garment of Jesus Christ.

THE INTEGRITY OF THE SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER

Secondly there is the integrity of the Spirit-filled worker in verse 6:

"not by way of eye service, as men pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

Now, the integrity comes out very clearly here. The way a Spirit-filled person works in comparison to the way the world works is like night and day. Look at the difference. He says, "not by way of eye service."

Eye service means when the boss walks in everybody gets to work. The boss walks out and they put their feet up on the table and say,

"Well, he's gone. The cat's away the mice will play."

Paul says that is not the way a Spirit-filled worker works. He is not an eye service kind of person. He doesn't get busy because the boss is around. Let me tell you something, when you have Spirit-filled workers, people who are really controlled by the Spirit of God, there is a trust factor. You don't have to check up on everybody all the time. They have proven that they don't have to be watched by you. They are being watched by Him. He knows what is going on when the boss is out of the office. There is integrity to a Spirit-filled worker.

Not only that, Paul says,

"not as men-pleasers."

They are the people who are always trying to butter up to somebody. Boy, they like the attention of the boss. Do you know why? Because there are more perks when you have the attention of the boss. When you get the boss's favor, he will do for you what he won't do for other people. They are always next to the boss. They will stay as close to him as they can. They are men pleasers. They are not doing what they are doing for the Lord. As a matter of fact, to test them, watch the boss walk out of the room and listen to what they say behind his back. They are not trying to do this for him. They are doing it for themselves. They are certainly not doing it for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The person who is filled with the Spirit of God has no hidden agenda. He is not a man-pleaser. He is a person who knows God is watching him moment by moment and will do what God tells him to do regardless. The attitude of a Spirit-filled worker means he does it out of the sincerity of his heart with no hidden agenda.

"I am serving Jesus. I don't care if you are a pagan boss. I am going to obey you as long as it doesn't go against the Word of God. I am going to do it in the Spirit of God and the power of God. I am doing it not only to please you but I am especially doing it to serve Him and to please Him."

Integrity means he doesn't go behind your back, cut you down and say other things to other workers that bring dissension. He is not a man who does it by eye service. He is a man who, when he is on the job, is not there for that company. He is there for his Lord.

THE REWARD OF THE SPIRIT FILLED BELIEVER

Thirdly, there is the reward of the Spirit-filled worker. Look in verses 7 and 8. Paul gives us three things in verse 7 as he sort of sums the whole thing up and then verse 8 brings out that reward that a believer can look forward to when he does it right at the work place. Verse 7 says,

"With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

Alright, the first thing in verse 7 he talks about is his service. The word "service" comes from the word that means slave. In other words, all that he does in being an attendant to the one over him should be done with good will.

That word "**good will**" is an interesting word. It comes from two words. One means the mind of understanding and the other word means well or good. So it means with a good understanding, with a good perception. It is used to describe a person whose whole character at work is honorable and peaceable. If you have a person who is Spirit-filled, what he does will be out of good will. He will be peaceable and honorable about everything he does. You will never find a Spirit-filled person at work bringing dissension. They will never be a part of anything that somehow undermines the unity of the work place because he realizes he has got to stay one with God. He is always one with people who are around him. You see, his main relationship is with Christ, therefore, he can deal with people around him and has a well-intentioned, honorable and peaceable spirit.

People who bring contention in the work place may be believers, but they are believers not under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. They have lost sight of something. They have lost sight of the fact that it is God to whom they owe their allegiance. They won't talk about a fellow workman, thereby devastating the morale of the whole team. They won't work in any way except to build up what the work place is seeking to do. Their heart is never to be involved in any kind of thing that would bring about deception or weaken the strength of the work unit.

Secondly he says in verse 7 that his serving is not to be to men, but

"as to the Lord, and not to men"

Now there are two words for "**not**" in the Greek language. One is used with a command and means absolutely not. This is the word that is always used for absolutely never. Paul is saying,

"Never is he to think that his service is just to men. His service is always to God."

Now wait a minute. That doesn't push men out of the way. It involves them. He loves them and treats them right, but his service is not to them. His service is to Christ. Now why in the world would he say that? Unless he keeps us single minded of the fact that we have one master and everything we do must be under His control, then what happens is, a man gets fragmented in his thinking and his theology. He thinks what he does at work is for them and what he does at church is for Him and he misses the whole point. Everything we do is for Him! If it is in the family, the job, or wherever we are, we do it for Him. His serving is unto the Lord. You see, when everything is unto Him, there is no room for griping or for complaining because everything is to God who has saved us. We don't deserve salvation any more than we deserve anything.

Thirdly, in verse 8 we find the reward:

"knowing [intuitive knowledge] that whatever good thing each one does [in the eyes of God] this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free."

Now certainly down here there will be many rewards for this, but I think he is talking about the rewards when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We are going to be judged for the deeds done in our body. The idea is on reward. Suppose I had five children, and I give one of them one dollar. Will he enjoy the one dollar? I suppose. If I give another one five dollars, will he enjoy the five? I suppose. If I give another one ten, twenty and go on up. Listen, the one with one dollar is going to enjoy it, but not as much as the one with twenty dollars.

If it is all measured on the fact that I am submissive to Christ down here and what Christ does through me is accounted as good works, that is what is going to be judged one day. The reward for that is something I will have to put at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have said it over and over again. If we are not enjoying Jesus down here, what in the world makes us think we are going to enjoy him there? We don't understand that we are determining moment by moment by our choices the degree of enjoyment that we will have of Him one day when we see Him face to face.

So, I would think that if that is correct, as believers we need to immediately get the right garment on. Get under the control of the Spirit of God. When we go to work we are not going to work for whoever it is that employed us. We are going for Him. Everything we do is in His name and the way we act has to reflect His character. When it doesn't, we confess, make it right, run back to Him and repent and go on.

Many of you have people working under you. What does God expect from the masters, as the text would say? What does God expect from the people who are in charge of the work force? Well, verse 9 is dedicated to these folks:

"And, masters, do the same things to them."

In that one little phrase, Paul just summed up the previous two verses. The same kind of attitude, the same kind of integrity that is expected in the employee is expected in the employer. In other words, his whole heart is to do what is best for his workers. If you want a person who is a believer filled with the Spirit of God to do what is best for you and for the company that you are working for, then the Spirit-filled employer also is commanded and commissioned to put his best into the employees. In other words, in a sense, the employees are serving him as they serve the Lord, but he is also serving his employees as he serves the Lord. Both are looking out for each other.

One of the greatest things a Christian employer can do is set the standard in how he pays the wages of the people who work under him. Some of the things I have heard of how people are paid by Christians bothers me deeply in my spirit. There was a man who was very, very wealthy. He owned a huge company. He had over 100 employees in his company. They told me about this man. He will give generously to the church, but he will not take care of the people who work for him. As a result of that, he has damaged and killed his testimony before the Lord.

Listen, it doesn't matter what the world is paying. Christians take care of Christians. They meet needs. Whatever needs are there, the employer is to be looking out for the best of the people who are working for him. Just as the employees give above and beyond to please the Lord Jesus, the employer gives to please the Lord who is above. He takes care of them. He sets the standard. The world is not the standard. He is the standard. It was given in the law in [Leviticus 19:13](#). They said,

"You pay the man on the day he works for you. Don't even let the sun go down until you have paid the man for what he has done."

Why? Because they had a need and they needed it now. Don't wait two days. Don't wait two weeks.

The application of that is, meet the needs of the people who are working for you. Meet them on time. I believe Christians ought to be the ones determining what the salaries ought to be, not the secular world who are only out for themselves.

So they are servants to their employees just like the employees are servants to them. But it is all as unto the Lord.

Verse 9 adds something else:

"and give up threatening."

In other words, if you are going to motivate the work force, if you are going to motivate them to work, don't go around threatening to fire them if they don't work. That is not the way it goes. You see, there are a lot of people who live that way.

The penalty for a slave not obeying his master could be death. Now very rarely did the people kill them, but they would constantly hold over their heads the threat. "You don't work, you die." A man would get up, go to work and do a good job. Why? Because he didn't want to get killed by his master. Now, if the Christian masters were forbidden to use that kind of threat, what do you think it means in the Christian community today when we don't even have slavery and you are the employer over some employees? You never, ever, ever threaten people that you are going to somehow get rid of them.

The word "**threatening**" kind of caught my attention. It doesn't mean that you have actually done anything. You are threatening to do something. It is used over in [Matthew 16:3](#). It talks about a violent storm that was brewing. It says,

"The skies were threatening."

That is the exact same word. You see it in their face. You hear it in their voice. They haven't done it yet, but you had better run and take cover because the storm is about to come. They are threatening you with what they want you to do. It is amazing how this principle applies in a lot of places, but here we are told you are not to do that.

A parent sometimes thinks that is the way they are to rule over their children. It is not. And it is not the way an employer rules over employees. Well, it goes on to say in verse 9,

"knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven."

In other words, a Christian employer has no option but to be constantly filled with the Spirit of God. He has a Master. He is under authority. As a matter of fact, the way God treats him is the way he is supposed to treat the people who are under him. Daily he is to come to work filled with the Spirit of God.

How many of you who are Spirit-filled employees would love to have an employer who was constantly, moment by moment, filled with the Spirit of God? If we are going to be Christians, it has to get into the work place. It has to get out there where we are Monday through Saturday. That is what Paul is trying to tell them. When you are filled with the Spirit of God, you are going to see your world influenced and your world potentially changed.

Verse 9 goes on to say,

"and there is no partiality with Him."

In other words, the Christian employer, filled with the Spirit of God, is never to show favoritism. He is never to show in any way that he is particular to one person or to another. This is very, very important. If you are a person running a company, your people watch you all the time. You know, this principle again just fits so many areas of life. I want to tell you something, folks. When you start singling out individuals as your friends, what you have just done is excluded everybody else who is around. So this is a very important point here. There is no partiality. There is no way in which you can just identify with certain ones. You don't show favors. You don't give perks to certain people in your office without giving them to everybody in your office. It ought to spread from the top all the way down.

One verse is all he gives to the Spirit-filled employer.

"And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

What are they required to do? The very same thing that the employees are required to do. They are to have the attitude of Christ. They are to have the integrity of Christ. They are not to show any favoritism. They are to take care of their people. They are not to threaten them in any way. And they are to model in front of them the Spirit-filled life every day, moment by moment. You see, our whole focus is Jesus Christ and He covers every single area of our life.