

Sermon Outline

BAPTIZED NATION

AS TO THE LORD:
BAPTIZED JOBS
(EPHESIANS 6:5-8)

I. From Baptized Vocation to Baptized Job

Assuming that our main vocation is to be God's holy priests in this sinful and broken world, how does our priesthood show itself in our daily work?

II. Back in the Day: Some Facts about Slaves

- A. Due to the mention of slaves, we may feel that we are in other world when we come to Ephesians 6:5-8.
- B. In the Greco-Roman world of Paul, slaves assumed diverse forms of work. —They were manual laborers, doctors, teachers, accountants, administrators, and managers.
- C. Differences aside, slaves are very much like modern day employees. —Like the slaves of the ancient world, we ourselves are subjected to, and accountable to, and sometimes even bonded to the organizations for whom we work.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where slaves only manual laborers? What sorts of work did slaves do? (2) How are modern day employees unlike the slavers of yesterday? How are we still like them?

III. Slaves, Obey Your Earthly Masters (Ephesians 6:5)

- A. Paul tells slaves: “obey your earthly masters.”
- B. This sentence has a few important features that are worth considering.
- C. First, consider the phrase “earthly masters.”
 - 1. The “masters” in Greek is *kurioi*, which is the plural of *kurios*, “Lord.”
 - 2. While God is the ultimate Lord of all, God is not the only lord.
 - 3. God has allowed for the existence of earthly lords in the world.

- D. Second, consider the verb “obey.”
1. To obey is simply to do as one is told.
 2. “Obey” here to have some qualifications. Paul does not mean...
 - a. that the slave must obey sinful requirements.
 - b. that the slave is not free to question the morality of the orders that he has been given.
 3. Paul is not addressing *Christian* slaves who are filled with the Spirit and the knowledge of God’s Word (see Eph 5:17-18).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the significance of the title “masters” (*kurioi*)? (2) Considering Ephesians 5:17-18, what kinds of slaves is Paul addressing? (3) When may a slave not obey his earthly master? (4) Why must a slave obey his master?

IV. The How and Why of Obedience (Ephesians 6:5-7)

- A. But Paul also talks about *how* obedience is to be done.
- B. In talking about *how* obedience is done, Paul gets into the deeper issue of *why* obedience is to be rendered.
- C. God is not just interested in any external form of compliance. The very attitude with which we obey matters to God as well.
- D. We see these adverbial phrases added to the initial call to obey:
1. Obedience must come “with fear and trembling.”
 2. Obedience must come “with a sincere heart.”
 3. Obedience to the earthly lord must be directed “as you would Christ.”
 4. Obedience is “not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers...” (v 6).
 5. Obedience is to be done “as servants of Christ, doing the will of God...” (v 6)
 6. Obedience is “rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man...”
 7. Obedience must be practiced, “knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free” (v 7).
- E. There are two main instructions that seem to come through to us.
1. The subordinate must obey his superior from the heart.

2. The Christian employee obeys his boss as a way of serving his greater Lord, Jesus Christ.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does God want us to obey our earthly lords?
(2) What are two key lessons that emerge from 6:5-7?

V. Priesthood on the Job

- A. Given that our main vocation is to be God's holy priests in this world, how does our priesthood show itself in our daily work?
—Our priesthood manifests itself in our jobs when we serve the Lord Jesus Christ by obeying our bosses. Therefore, Christ calls us to obey our bosses and seek their good, for God's glory.
- B. How can we have the mindset of serving the Lord Jesus at work?
 1. We must realize that this doesn't come naturally, without conscious effort.
 2. The way we bring Christ into our work is by prayer (1 Tim 4:4-5).
 - a. We ask God to make our work pleasing to him.
 - b. We ask the Lord Jesus to help us work in such a way that our corner of the massive organization is filled with order and excellence.
 - c. We ask the Holy Spirit to use our work to give strength to others, to help us build a more Christian culture in our corner of the company.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does our priesthood show while we are on the job? (2) How can we have a mindset of serving Christ while at work?

VI. Some Related Issues

- A. But there are some issues that need to be addressed in conjunction with our passage. As we were listening to God's Word, a few questions may have arisen in our minds. And answering them may help us to appreciate God's instruction to obey even more.
- B. Q: Why does God share his authority with weak and sinful mortals?
 1. Scripture shows us that God has always wanted to rule the earth through man.

2. The Fall does not change this—God continues to exercise his rule through sinful men, even unbelievers.
 3. God puts both believers and unbelievers in charge of...
 - a. Earthly territories: Kings, queens, dukes, duchesses, presidents, prime ministers, congressmen, members of parliament, mayors, and those who sit on local councils.
 - b. Realms of specialization: Technicians, software programmers, military commanders, bankers, doctors, pastors, lawyers, chefs, etc.
 4. God has chosen to diffuse his rule across the whole spectrum of humanity.
—Our earthly lords knowingly or unknowingly share in God’s rule over the earth.
- C. Q: While we can agree that we must serve God in our work, what great Kingdom objective does obeying our earthly bosses achieve?
1. All jobs that are moral are means by which God rules the earth.
 2. Your obeying your boss and doing what you are told is a small way by which you share in God’s present rule over creation.
- D. Q: Given that God calls us to serve him by obeying our bosses, can I ever change my job if I want to?
1. The simple answer is yes—but within certain moral boundaries.
 2. Here are some valid reasons to consider switching jobs.
 - a. Your job actually requires you to do evil.
 - b. Your company is not conducive for service to Christ.
 - i. Some jobs and companies require us to work with clients who are immersed in evil. We may not be strong enough for the challenge.
 - ii. While some jobs are morally good, the culture of our company is toxic (backbiting, over-competitiveness, etc.)
 - c. Sometimes our greater gifts have no space to be used in our present jobs. We can better and more joyfully serve Christ in another job.
 3. It would take prayer, wisdom, and consultation with godly friends to decide when to make a career switch.
 4. More importantly, we should not switch jobs just for the sake of furthering our careers.
 - a. Careerism is often fueled by greed which violates the Law of God.
 - b. Careerism also leads to more stress.
 5. Within the boundaries of God’s commandments as well as existing obligations we owe to others, God gives us freedom to do what we enjoy.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Why does God share his authority with humans? (2) What great Kingdom objective does obeying our bosses achieve? (3) Under what circumstances can we change jobs? (4) Why should not switch jobs just for the sake of furthering our careers?

VII. Every Christian, a Priest Everywhere

Are you a priest for God at work? Or are you off-duty?
Do your job for Christ—and know the joy of your true Lord (Mt 25:21).