

Ephesians 6:5-9

Study 11: The Submissive Church Part 2



Why is Paul writing this?

Central features that distinguish 1st century slavery from that later practiced in the New World are the following: racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

Bartchy, S. S. (1992). Slavery: New Testament. In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 6, p. 66). New York: Doubleday.

1. Knowing a little about the background of slaves, how does this help us understand why Paul includes them in these instructions?
2. Paul urges slaves to obey their masters with 'fear'? What does he mean by this?
3. What does he outline in v. 6 and why?
4. v. 8 seems to suggest reward from God for this type of service. How should we understand this?
5. How might v. 9 resonate with those who *owned* slaves?

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How does this apply to or influence us today?

1. Clearly, none of us serve as actual slaves, but how do these instruction relate to us either as employees or employers?

2. What makes it difficult for us to submit to our leaders or managers?

3. Can you think of a time when your obedience or willing spirit particularly impressed your boss?

4. What is the impact on our colleagues, when they see how we behave?

5. Where do trade unions (or similar) fit into this picture? When should we humbly submit, and when should we stand up for our rights?

6. How can we best reflect the character of Christ in our workplaces?