

“CONTENTED SLAVES”

I TIMOTHY 6:1-2

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INTRODUCTION

“It is not all about you!” What you do in life and how you do it must not be based on what pleases you and fulfills all of your desires. Yet, that is how most people live.

There are far more important issues—the most important of which is **God’s name and His Doctrine.**

We must be far more concerned about God’s reputation than about our own.

Can you think of a more despicable institution than slavery? If you were a slave, how would you feel?

- Yet, Paul does not crusade against slavery.
- Early Christians did not try to abolish it.
- Paul tells believers who were slaves to honor their masters—whether unsaved or saved—and to work hard and do their very best with the right attitude!

As a Christian, you must submit to all your authorities for the Lord’s sake; you must have the right attitude toward them and must do your best to honor them and work hard to please them.

YOU MUST PROTECT THE HONOR OF GOD’S NAME AND REPUTATION AND THAT OF HIS DOCTRINE BY BEING THE BEST EMPLOYEE YOU CAN BE.

I. THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY

A. The Extent of Slavery in the Roman Empire

B. The ways persons could become slaves

- Prisoners of war—Rome conquered many territories
- Captured by pirates, who, until later suppressed by Rome, raided many coastal cities and took thousands captive, whom they later sold as slaves. Often these were people who were educated and cultured. Many of these “slaves” were above their masters in “culture and learning” (Neal, BV, 46).
- Condemned persons
- Debtors
- Kidnapped
- Sold by parents
- Born to parents who were slaves

C. The condition of slaves—no rights; not much better than cattle—esp. to unsaved masters.

D. The way to freedom

- Outright release by a kind and generous master
- Purchase of freedom through funds accumulated over time through liberality of the master or even through “extra services” rendered
- The master’s last will and testament

Why didn’t Christians try to stop slavery; why not lead a revolt against it?

E. The attitude of Christ and the Apostles toward slavery

- Paul took an indirect approach, teaching the slave to honor his master and the master to treat his slave kindly.
- Christianity did not take a direct frontal assault on slavery; otherwise, Christianity would have gained the reputation as an antithesis to Roman society and culture—an attempt to undermine the social order.
- Christianity was called to leaven, not wholly displace civilization.

- Paul did not advocate slave revolt; nor did he advocate the status quo. Indirectly he attacked the very essence of slavery by inculcating principles that would eventually lead to slavery's demise.
1. Slaves would banish ill-will toward their masters, as well as laziness and dishonesty and replace them with "willing service, integrity, and industry."
 2. Masters would do away with "cruelty and brutality" and would substitute "kindness and love."
 3. The grace of God would work from within both slave and master and would lead to outward results. Such grace became "the penetrating leaven, tending to transform the whole lump" (H. 192).

II. THE RESPONSE OF THE CHRISTIAN SLAVE [principles applied today to the worker for his boss]

A. To the Unsaved Master/Boss (1)

1. Under the "yoke"—like an Ox!—**slaves**.
2. Regard—have right attitude—your own master as "worthy of **all HONOR**."
 - Due to his position, even if not his character or person
 - The word for "master" is despotes—from which we get our word despot—one who has absolute authority or control. Masters often were not reasonable or kind! They could be demanding and cruel!
 - The work demanded could be very difficult and taxing.
3. Protect the Honor of **God's name**—his character and nature as He has revealed Himself.
4. Protect the Honor of **the doctrine**—Christian truth must not be open to mockery due to the poor behavior and bad attitude of a Christian slave/worker.
 - See Rom. 2:24—quoting Is. 52:5 where Isaiah accused Israel of causing God's name to be blasphemed among the Gentiles due to their bad behavior.
 - Israel, instead of attracting the unsaved heathen to Judaism through respectful and godly behavior, behaved so poorly that many Gentiles had no respect for them—and even worse turned on their God—blaspheming Him.

B. To the Saved Master/Boss (2)

1. Don't disrespect them because they are brothers.
 - Literally "think down upon them."
 - Since in Christ there is no slave or free and all are equal (Gal. 3:28).
 - There were even some cases where slaves became pastors and masters church members!
 - Cf. this same verb used of Timothy in 4:12—"let no one despise your youth."
2. Rather serve them as a slave **all the more**.
 - a. They are "believers"—those who have trusted Christ and have become faithful.
 - b. They are "beloved"—by God and by other believers.
 - c. They partake of the "benefit"—good deed—of your hard and loving labor.
 - d. In this context "the benefit" cannot refer to the redemptive work of Christ!

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TEACH AND EXHORT/PREACH THESE PRINCIPLES (2b)

CONCLUSION

So you don't like your job and you don't like your boss! **So what!** That gives you no excuse for not working hard, doing your best, and showing honor and respect to your boss/es.

It matters not whether they are unsaved or saved—except you ought even more work hard and do your best for one who is a believer and who is beloved in Christ.

The principle here is clear:

YOU MUST PROTECT THE HONOR OF GOD'S NAME AND REPUTATION AND THAT OF HIS DOCTRINE BY BEING THE BEST EMPLOYEE YOU CAN BE.