

Sunday Supplement

Ephesians 6:5–9 has been misused. Badly. For generations, these verses were lifted out of their place and used to justify chattel slavery in the Americas — a system that bore little resemblance to what Paul was addressing and that treated human beings as property rather than image-bearers. That history matters, and naming it honestly is part of reading Scripture faithfully rather than defensively.

Paul is not endorsing slavery as an institution. He's speaking pastorally into a world where it was simply the water everyone swam in — sixty million people across the Roman Empire, by some estimates, living inside it. He doesn't have the platform (yet) to dismantle it. What he does instead is something quietly radical: he tells both parties in the relationship that Christ is watching, that status doesn't determine worth, and that "there is no partiality with him" (v. 9). In a world built entirely on partiality, that sentence is a small earthquake.

For us today, this text directly speaks to the primary place where we experience power dynamics, economic reliance, and daily labor: the workplace. It addresses the relationship between the employer and the employee, and it exposes a cultural lie that many of us swallow on Monday mornings: *"My job is just a paycheck."*

Culture tells us that work is merely a tool for survival or self-advancement. It is a necessary evil to get the things we want—completely detached from our spirituality or the status of our souls. But Paul completely reframes our daily labor. Through the lens of the Gospel, any work becomes an act of worship. When you clock in, your true boss is not the person with the corner office or the impressive title. Your true boss is Christ.

- If someone watched a recording of your last full work week — your emails, your tone in meetings, how you handled the tasks nobody sees — would they conclude your work was an act of worship, or an act of survival?
- What's the version of "it's just a paycheck" you tell yourself? (It might not be about money. It could be "it's just school," "it's just chores," "it's just this season of life.")

In a Roman culture where masters held absolute power, telling the masters to practice mutual submission and treat servants with the same Christlike honor was unheard of. People have intrinsic value because they are image-bearers of God; they do not exist merely to serve our agendas.

- Think of the relationships where you currently hold more power — even small ones. Where has that power made you impatient, dismissive, or careless with people?
- Think of a relationship where you feel unseen or undervalued. How does it change things to know that God sees what your supervisor, teacher, or family doesn't?

Ask yourself the thermostat question from Sunday: *Are you a thermometer, or a thermostat?* A thermometer just reads the temperature of the room and reports it back — reflects the cynicism, the cutting corners, the gossip already present in a workplace. A thermostat SETS the temperature. It changes the room instead of just describing it.

- Who is the hardest person for you to see Christ in right now — at work, at home, or elsewhere?

- In your workplace or daily routine, are you currently a thermometer or a thermostat? Be specific about one recent example.
- What would it look like this week to do one ordinary task — the most mundane one on your list — as an offering rather than an obligation?

We are called to be ambassadors of God's kingdom in the marketplace. There is no asterisk on the Great Commission that says, "*Represent Jesus everywhere... except at your secular job.*" For those in authority, remember that earthly power is temporary. One day, all titles will be stripped away, and we will stand before the ultimate Authority who shows absolutely no partiality.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father,

We thank You that no part of our lives is hidden from Your sight, and no task we perform is too small to be used for Your glory. Forgive us for the times we have compartmentalized our faith—relegating You to our Sundays while leaving You out of our Mondays.

We ask for a renovation of our hearts. Help us to see our workplaces, our homes, and our daily responsibilities not as burdens or mere means of survival, but as altars of worship. Give us the grace to serve others wholeheartedly, with sincerity and respect, knowing that our true Master is Christ.

For those of us called to lead, grant us profound humility. Remind us daily of Your lack of partiality and the temporary nature of earthly authority. May we treat every person we encounter as a dignity-bearing reflection of Your image.

Let our work ethic become a vibrant witness. Make us thermostats, not thermometers, changing the climate of our environments with Your love, patience, and truth. We look forward to the day when we lay our earthly labors down before You, our ultimate Boss and Savior.

*In the holy name of Jesus we pray,
Amen.*