

**Letters From My Father**  
**Week 16**  
**1 Timothy 6:1-2**  
**“The Doctrine of Submission”**

**Introduction**

**Slaves, obey your human masters in everything. Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but work wholeheartedly, fearing The LORD. Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for The LORD and not for people, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from The LORD. You serve The LORD Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.** **Colossians 3:22-25**

Many atheist who love to discredit the goodness of God will often try to make the case that The Scriptures actually support the institution of slavery. And I suppose if one has no understanding of God's plans and purposes (you have to actually know God in order to do that), then they could make the case that the “Christian God” is pro-enslavement. However, this is not the case. While it is true, that *The Bible* does not condemn slavery, per se, it does have much to say about how slaves and masters are to live together in harmony. The most important fact to know is that the message of The Word of God is how fallen men can be forgiven of their sins through the person of Jesus Christ. The Scripture wasn't given so that the fallen systems of this world could somehow be improved, but rather, the Scriptures are given so that fallen men could be redeemed.

That being said, in Paul's day, roughly half of the population of the Roman Empire was made up of slaves. They came from every race, ethnicity, and nationality. And in the day to day workings of society, it was nearly impossible to tell the slaves from the citizenry. So much so, that the Roman Senate, actually considered passing a law that would somehow “mark” those who were in slavery so that everyone could tell the difference. They decided against this, however, for fear that if the slave population were able to see just how many of them there actually were, they might rebel and overthrow the government.

Now, when faced with such overwhelming circumstances, Paul would have been foolish to try and insist that the government abolish slavery. This was not his purpose in life. He was not called to usher in a system of justice and equality in Rome, but rather, he was chosen by God to spread the gospel of Christ. And if that gospel was spread throughout the world as Christ had commanded, then it would eventually lead to the emancipation of all slavery in the end. For you see, the more people who know Christ, the more they will love their neighbors as themselves! God knows what He is doing. If you want to change a culture, my friends, then you need to change the hearts of that culture. And that can only be done by the saving grace of Jesus Christ! Salvation is the only cure for this world's evil and racism.

If you consider this fact, then you will understand why slavery has been abolished in western civilization. It is because of the influence of Christianity. In this county, we fought a great civil war and if one merely read the words of “The Battle Hymn of The Republic” you will see for yourself what caused men to lay down their lives for such a cause.

*“In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me. As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free. His truth is marching on.”*

So how does Christianity change the direction of society? It comes when people are truly transformed by the gospel, and they live in such a way as to draw others to Christ. This is why Paul commanded born-again slaves in Rome to submit to their masters. He wasn't condoning slavery, he was promoting Christ. For the charge to all of us is to demonstrate Jesus to the world. And we do that by dying to self and living for Christ as living sacrifices (**Romans 12:1**).

So as we study this passage today in *1 Timothy*, let us see why the doctrine of submission is so vital to the Believer. For it is by submission to Christ that our testimony is made effective. Paul charged that Christian slaves submit to both lost authority and especially to saved authority. And as we read these ancient texts, let us also see how they apply to us as well. Slavery may be abolished in our world, but submission to authority is still required of us.

### **Submit to Lost Authority (vs. 1)**

**All who are under the yoke as slaves should regard their masters as worthy of all respect, so that God's Name and His teaching will not be blasphemed. 1 Timothy 6:1**

Before we go too deep into the doctrine of submission, I feel that it is necessary to expound upon the institution of slavery in Biblical times. People were brought into the bondage of slavery by more than a few means. First, many were prisoners of war. In ancient times, when nations, or even tribes, went to war with one another, the citizenry of nation that was conquered were given one of two options; either death or enslavement. And those who chose the latter did so with the full understanding that in exchange for their lives, they were submitting themselves to a lifetime of servitude at the hands of their captors. These unfortunate people were considered to be the personal property of their masters and could be bought and sold at any time.

Secondly, there were many who were enslaved because of debts that they could not pay. There was no such thing as bankruptcy in the ancient world, and debts had to be repaid, one way or another. So, often times, people sold themselves into slavery in order to work off their outstanding debts. *The Bible* had clear regulations for such circumstances in the nation of Israel, His chosen people. And God commanded that all Hebrew slaves be released after six years of indentured service. Some of these people did not want to be set free, however, for they found that their lives were far less impoverished in the service of their masters than that of their previous circumstances. The Law of Moses made a provision for these slaves who would volunteer to become "slaves for life" (**see Exodus 21:2-6**).

The difference between slavery in the Biblical days and the colonial slavery of the early Americas (as well as that in European countries in centuries past) is that the slaves of this era were captured in foreign lands and sold into slavery. This has *always* been forbidden by *The Bible*. The kidnapping of foreign slaves (referred to as "man-stealing" in Scripture) was punishable by death in *The Old Testament* (**Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7**) and expressly forbidden in *The New Testament* (**1 Timothy 1:10**). So, if someone wants to argue with you about God's Word promoting slavery, then you should share these passages.

What Paul was doing in his writing to Timothy was not an endorsement as to the institution of slavery, but rather, it is a command for those who are in Christ to behave as living sacrifices, so that by their example, others would see Christ in them. And as such, they were to serve their masters with excellence, not because those masters were necessarily good or deserving, but because Christians are to serve God, rather than men. The cruel taskmaster is nothing more than a lost soul, one who Jesus also gave His life to save. And therefore, they were to be served by Christian servants who were more concerned with winning them over than any claim of personal rights and privileges.

We, as Christians, have been crucified with Christ, and therefore, we live to serve Him in all things (**Galatians 2:20**). Dead people have no rights. That is the very essence of being dead. If we are dead to self and alive in Christ, then we are more concerned with what Christ wants over any of our own fleshly desires. This concept is completely foreign to this world, but it is crystal clear to the Believer. We are called to love our enemies, **for God so loved the world (John 3:16)**. And as such, the slave was to honor his unbelieving master and to treat him with respect, even when he didn't deserve it. For we have been shown mercy and grace from God, and we did not deserve them either.

Bear in mind that the man who wrote this epistle had been falsely imprisoned by Nero for his preaching. Did he demand social change or to be somehow recompensed for his false incarceration? NO! He wanted to go to Rome so that he could preach the gospel to Nero, even though it was Nero who despised and mistreated all Christians (**Acts 9:15; 25:12; 27:24**). Paul held no ill will against Caesar, but rather, he wanted to see him come to Christ and be saved. Pretty much says it all doesn't it?

### **Submit to Saved Authority (vs. 2)**

**Let those who have believing masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brothers, but serve them even better, since those who benefit from their service are believers and deeply loved.** **1 Timothy 6:2**

Paul not only commanded that born-again slaves diligently serve their unbelieving masters, but to serve their believing masters all the more. In those days, because of the large numbers of slaves in Rome, it was quite common for aristocratic masters, who came to faith in Christ, to share the gospel message with all who were in their household, including their bond-servants. Therefore, it was quite common for slaves who were born again to be sitting in a worship service alongside their owners! And while it is possible that over time many of these masters would feel convicted and free their slaves, years of culture doesn't always change overnight! And sanctification is a process.

Paul insisted that those who were enslaved to born-again masters should always remember that those masters were now brothers in Christ, and as such, they should serve them all the more. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female (**Galatians 3:28**). To be born-again is to be reborn into the family of God. And as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are all required to put the needs of our fellow Believers ahead of our own. So the slave who was in Christ would not look to his own interests, but rather, he would choose to look out for the interest of others ahead of his own. Although in the eyes of The LORD he was an equal to his saved master, his focus would not be on his own personal rights, but rather, he would focus upon being an even better servant.

This world is only temporary, and therefore, we are to be much more concerned with laying up our treasure in heaven than we are with getting all we want out of this life on earth (**Mathew 6:19-20**). Life down here is not often fair. And we do not always get what we want, or even deserve, but God will reward those who earnestly desire to serve Him above all else (**Colossians 3:24**). *The Bible* clearly teaches that God Himself will reward those who have been treated unfairly here on earth. Remember the story of Lazarus (**Luke 16:19-31**). This life is not fair, but God is good! So serve Him in all things and know that He sees all, and the reward for your faithfulness will not be withheld.

### **Submission (Life Application)**

So as we read this passage together today, one might say, "But how does this apply to me? We no longer even have slavery in this country." This is not simply a matter of slavery, my friends, but also, it is a matter of doctrine. The doctrine of submission to authority to be exact. We may not have owners or "masters" to the extent of those in Biblical times. But most of us have employers, teachers, or many others who exercise authority over us. Each of us has to answer to someone. It is just the way life is.

All of us have someone that we are required to serve. On your job, sometimes those who are in authority over you are godly and kind. But often times they are not. So how, as a Believer, are you to serve these people? Answer: you serve them as if you are serving Christ Himself! It makes no difference whether they deserve it or not, for we are called to be servants of The Living God. And this is why The Scripture says:

**Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Corinthians 5:9-10**

So there you have it, in the end we do not answer to these earthly masters to whom we serve, we will stand before The King of Kings to give an account. And the very purpose of our existence here in this world is that we are witnesses and ambassadors for Him.

So ask yourself these questions today: "Does the way I do my job reflect a complete devotion to the cause of Christ?" "Does my work ethic reveal my desire to serve The LORD in everything I do?" "Do the things I say, and the way I treat my employers show that I have a genuine love for them, and the desire to see them saved?" Pretty convicting is it not? But if God requires this level of devotion from a slave to his master, how much more does he require this kind of submission from us?

There is a very famous proverb that you often see on the bumpers of cars along the highway; it reads "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." This is sadly the case for many in this world today, who view their occupations as merely a means to finance their own personal greed for the things of this world. But work was never intended to be just a four letter word and thus avoided at all cost. We were created for work. Adam was not placed in the Garden of Eden merely as a place of recreation and perpetual indulgence. God knew that people needed to work in order to have fulfilling and productive lives. And as we work, we do so for the glory of God. Over seventy percent of Americans say that they do not like their jobs. We no longer view work as a privilege, but rather, as an unwelcome necessity. What a sad commentary of life in the modern age.

Many in the workplace today only put forth enough effort in order to barely get by. And they wonder why they are overlooked for promotion or advancement. But God has ALWAYS frowned upon laziness. He expects us to work diligently at whatever our hands find to do (**Ecclesiastes 9:10; Colossians 3:17, 23**). To do otherwise is a terrible witness for the glory of God. Laziness has no place in the character of a follower of Christ.

**The son who gathers during the summer is prudent, the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful. Proverbs 10:5**

To be lazy, to put forth only enough effort to get by, is disgraceful in the eyes of The LORD. Remember that in all you say and do, you represent The LORD Jesus Christ, and make no mistake, the lost world is watching. They love to be able to claim that Christians do not live out what they claim to believe. They do this so that they can freely blaspheme the Name of our God. So do not give them license to do so. Serve your earthly masters with diligence and love, for in so doing you may just win them Christ. To work is an honor, and to do so for the glory of God is our duty and privilege. So just how good is your work witness?

**Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us. For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; we did not eat anyone's food free of charge, instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. It is not that we don't have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat."** **2 Thessalonians 3:6-10**

Truth!!!