



First Timothy

Slavery

Lessons for All of Us

I Timothy 6:1, 2a

Lesson Twenty-Seven

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum



First Timothy

A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

Slavery

Paul has spoken to the treatment of widows and elders, now he speaks to how slaves should behave. This is a lesson that at first reading seems to apply to people who are no longer in existence. At least in the United States, there is no slavery. But, let's remember that there are lessons to be learned that are not clear at first. Read I Timothy 6:1, 2a. We should see the last sentence in verse two as belonging with verse three and the following verses. We will discuss this in our next lesson.

The instructions here are for slaves. Slavery in the Roman Empire when Timothy's was alive was huge. It is said that there were probably as many as sixty million slaves in the empire and that at least one-third of the people in the city of Rome were slaves.

Paul was speaking to "those under the yoke of slavery." He was not justifying slavery, and he was not fighting the battle of freeing slaves. He is simply recognizing the way it was. He wanted those who were "under the yoke" to accept what they were and do the best that they could in it. This is not about whether they deserved to be slaves or not.

Many of the slaves in that day were better educated and much more skilled than their masters. It is said that one of the reasons for the growth of the Greek language and way of life among the nations of the Roman Empire was that many of the slaves were Greek and they taught the children how to write, read and understand the Greek language. They also taught them about the way Greeks looked at life, including family life.

It is with this understanding that Paul tells the slaves to be okay with where they are in life. They have much to contribute. If they respect their masters, they respect the honor that God gives to people in authority. God is the creator and giver of all authority. Does that mean that everyone in authority believes God or even gives respect to God. No, absolutely not. But, where there is authority, it reveals God because God is the great authority of the universe.

So, Paul here is saying that the slaves, by respecting their masters, make sure that no one can speak badly about God, or in Paul's words, no one will slander God's name. Sin makes people stubborn and not willing to follow orders. He said that slaves who behave like that insult God and make it so that people don't respect Christian teaching. Paul had given his life to telling the good news that Jesus was the Savior of the world. He knew how important that was and how people who didn't live like Jesus could mess up everything that he was teaching.

Then, he had to deal with a situation in which some slaves might find themselves. When people came to Jesus as Savior, they gathered together in fellowships, or churches. In those

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churches, they called one another brother and sister. So, it was not unusual to find people in the situation of calling their owner (as slaves they were owned by their masters) brother or sister. At home they were slaves, at church they were a brother or sister to their owner. What to do? Well, Paul said that Christian slaves would go the second mile to do a great job and follow the orders of their masters. It was the right thing for the slave to do his or her work very, very well.

Now, we don't live in a society where there is slavery...at least not legal slavery. So does anything in this lesson apply to us? Yes.

We must be careful not to compare slaves to persons who have a boss at work. It is different. People who work for a company where there are managers and supervisors, do that voluntarily. They can quit and work somewhere else. But there are some things that do apply:

First, though persons today may not be "under the yoke," we do submit ourselves to the rules and working conditions of employers. It is right that Christians do their best to live up to employment contracts, personnel rules and fit into the work environment. This reveals to others our Christian submission to rules of employment.

Second, bosses, or supervisors, are not slave owners, but they are persons in authority. They deserve honor, just as slave owners deserved honor. Do you have a boss who is not as smart or talented as you are? As has been said, that was true of many of the slaves to whom Paul was writing here. However, that didn't give the slave permission to disrespect his owner, and it doesn't give modern day Christian employees that permission either, regarding their boss.

Third, Christians give testimony to their faith by the way they serve. If you are a truck driver, you will not, as a Christian, doctor the log, or treat your truck badly. If you work at Arby's, you won't talk back to the shift boss and you won't bad-mouth him or her to other employees. You will obey your supervisor just as you would obey Christ. (Ephesians 6:5, 6)

Fourth, as a Christian you will understand that everything you do at work will be a testimony of your faith in God, as revealed in Jesus, and will encourage others to have that kind of faith. It doesn't matter how you are treated, (I Peter 2:18), you should always be on your best behavior.

Paul had much to say about how Christians should represent Jesus well in everything we do. The only picture some people have of Christianity is the one you paint with your life.

*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

Lesson Goal: To encourage students to live like Christ in their workplace.

Scripture Memory: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ." Ephesians 6:5

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Student Worksheet—Following Through

Slavery—I Timothy 6:1, 2a

>What four things can we learn from Paul’s discussion about slaves obeying their masters?

1.

2.

3.

4.

>The only picture some people have of _____ is the one you paint with your _____.

For Memory: “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.” Ephesians 6:5

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.