

## **THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS**

### **I. Ephesians: Nurture In Living Focused On God's Eternal Purpose For Christians**

#### **C. Nurture In Applying The Believer's Positional Truth To Life And Ministry**

#### **8. Nurture In God's Personal Spiritual Empowering For Godly Workplace Roles (Ephesians 5:18-21; 6:5-9)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. When Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon, the fact that he was in prison troubled believers, Philippians 1:12-13; Colossians 2:1-2; 4:7-8 and Philemon 22; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1672, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians."
- B. To nurture his readers, and for them to nurture others, Paul urged them in Ephesians 5:18-21 to apply their positional truths in Christ to a godly walk via God's personal spiritual empowering, and he applied this directive to godly workplace roles in Ephesians 6:5-9 as follows:

#### **II. Nurture In God's Personal Spiritual Empowering For Godly Workplace Roles, Ephesians 5:18-21; 6:5-9.**

- A. By relying on the Holy Spirit to be under His control, what we previously learned is meant by the Spirit's "filling" in Ephesians 5:18, believers are to submit to one another in godly reverence, Ephesians 5:21.
- B. Ephesians 6:5-8 reveals one *realm* of submission is an employee's submission to his overseer as follows:
  1. Though Ephesians 6:5-9 addresses slaves and masters in the institution of slavery, an illegal institution in many nations now, the *roles* of slaves and masters are *applicable* to **employees** and their **overseers** today.
  2. Accordingly, employees today are to "(lit.) hearken at the door as a slave, obey as a subordinate," (*hupakouo*, Theol. Dict. of the N. T., v. I, p. 223-224) their overseers in the workplace. That is, they are to be completely subordinate to them on the job. (Ephesians 6:5a)
  3. This submission must be genuine: employees must submit (a) with "respect" (*phobeo*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 678; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 870-871), (b) with (b) "quivering, trembling," (*tromos*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 834) and with (c) "sincerity" (*haplotes*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 85) from their hearts as unto Christ Himself (Ephesians 6:5b,c,d). In other words, an employee is really working for more than his overseer or employer, but for the Lord who is over his ultimate Overseer.
  4. This sincere form of submission is thus to avoid serving in the overseer's will only when the overseer is watching the employee perform as though he was pleasing just his human overseer, but rather as servants of Christ, performing the will of God from the "soul, inner man," (*psuche*, Ibid., p. 901-902); Eph. 6:6.
  5. The reason for this sincere submission is given in Ephesians 6:7-8: an employee must serve this way with "zeal, enthusiasm" (*eunoia*, Ibid., p. 323) as to the Lord and not to men knowing that whatever good each employee performs, that he will "receive wages" (*komizo*, Ibid., p. 443) in kind from the Lord, whether he be an employee or an overseer.
- C. However, just as employees are to rely on the Holy Spirit to submit this way to their employers, Paul implied that overseers must also rely on the Holy Spirit to relate well to their employees, Ephesians 6:9:
  1. Paul addressed [masters, and, by way of application,] employers or business overseers in Ephesians 6:9, directing that they "practice the same toward them," that is, toward their employees, Ephesians 6:9a.
  2. To clarify, he explained that workplace overseers should "give up" (*aniemi*, Ibid., p. 69) "threatening" (*apeile*, Ibid., p. 82), knowing that they also like their employees have a Lord in heaven, and that there is no "partiality" (*prosopolemphia*, Ibid., p. 728) with Him, Ephesians 6:9b.
  3. Applying the truth Paul briefly noted in addressing employees in Ephesians 6:8b that whether one is in the overseer or the subordinate role, he is **financially** paid by God for how he functions in his particular role, God teaches that He will "pay" the employer in accord with how well he treats his employees! Thus, an overseer's financial success is God's reward [in part at least] for how uprightly he treats his subordinates!

***Lesson:*** *Relying on the Holy Spirit's control, employees today must submit to their overseers in the workplace with sincere respect as unto the Lord, not doing well only when the overseer is watching, but at all times from the heart with zeal as unto the Lord, knowing the Lord will financially reimburse them. In the same way, overseers must treat their employees with respectful consideration, knowing God in heaven, the overseer's Employer, will reward them in keeping with how they cease to threaten their employees [in an abusive manner].*

***Application:*** *May we rely upon the Holy Spirit to function uprightly as unto the Lord in our workplace callings.*