

## Paul's Epistles to Individuals

### Lesson 13 – 1 Timothy 6:1-5

#### I. Behavior of Masters and Servants (vs. 1-2)

Christians are to live with Godly behaviors as their primary duty, regardless of their station in life. Whether one administers authority or is subject to it, a Christian is to be the best example of a person in that situation they can be.

##### A. *Servants (v. 1)*

The Greek word which is translated here as “servant” is “doulos”. The word connotes slavery, whether voluntary or involuntary. Any discussion of slavery is complicated by modern perceptions of the practice. When contrasting the examples of modern slavery with the approved examples in the Bible, considerable differences are apparent. In the Old Testament, it is clear that being a slave was sometimes more circumstantial servitude, including debt bondage, than compulsory or forced slavery. In the OT, the forced slavery by the kidnapping of an Israelite by another Israelite was punishable by death (**Deut. 24:7**). Slavery of an Israelite by another was normally for a set time and they were to be freed in the seventh year except if by consent, the servitude could be permanent (**Ex. 21:1-11**). Fugitive slaves were not to be handed back to their masters and were not to be mistreated (**Deut. 23:15**). One could sell themselves into servitude (**Lev. 25:39-41**) to be returned to freedom on Jubilee (**Lev. 25:10**). As is exemplified in Paul's letter to Philemon, the fair treatment of slaves or servants is required by God. The Hebrews were familiar with the type of slavery they had endured in Egypt and it was not to be practiced in the same way by them. In the NT, Christians are expected to behave in a Godly way toward each other regardless of role or station because all are equal before God (**Gal. 3:28; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:11; Phile. 16**).

##### B. *Masters*

It should also be noted that masters have the obligation to treat slaves according to Godly principles as slaves have the obligation to be good servants. The role of slave or master is irrelevant in service to God (**1 Cor. 7:21**). As slaves are to be obedient (**Eph. 6:5-6**), even if masters are unreasonable (**1 Pet. 2:18-20**), masters are to be fair with servants (**Eph. 6:9**).

##### C. *Modern Applicability*

Though true slavery is no longer common in America, the Biblical descriptions of slavery are in many cases closely akin to our modern employment. The principles described in the Bible give us guidance as to how we should behave as employers and employees. Christians are to exemplify Godly virtues regardless of our station. As employees, we are to obey and submit to legitimate authority so long as we can do so and serve God, even if our employers are unreasonable (see again **1 Pet. 2:18-20**). As employers, we are to be fair to employees knowing we serve God first (**Eph 6:7-9** – “*With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him*”). As in all cases involving authority, we must obey God first and man only so long as doing so does not precipitate sin.

## II. Avoid Different Doctrines (vs. 3-5)

Timothy was left in Ephesus in order to preach and teach so as to disallow the progress of other “*strange doctrines*” (1 Tim. 1:3). The reference here does not only apply to those false doctrines which relate to the conduct of masters and servants but to “*whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God*” (1 Tim. 1:10). The risk of departures from the faith and the effects of deceitful spirits, and the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1) is the concern here and the theme of the entire letter. Timothy was to point out these things to the brethren and constantly fortify them with “*the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine*” he had been following (1 Tim. 4:6).

“Sound doctrine” is here defined with three points and consequently precludes all others.

### A. Sound or Wholesome Words

The word here for “sound” or “wholesome” comes from the Greek, “*hugiaino*”, meaning to be healthy, whole or uncorrupted. The English word “hygiene” comes from the same root. By contrast, to be unhealthy, diseased or corrupted is the result of unsound words. Those who took the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner are described as “weak” and “sick” (1 Cor. 11:30). James mentions the “sick” and says that those who have committed sins might be “healed” through confession and prayer (James 5:16). One must be “nourished” to be healthy and spiritual health comes for the spiritual nourishment of the Word (1 Tim. 4:6).

### B. Words of Our Lord

Here we know the source of the aforementioned nourishment. The words that are authorized by God, through Christ and delivered by those appointed to preach are sufficient and must be obeyed. As Jesus told the seventy who were sent out, “*The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me*” (Luke 10:16).

### C. Doctrine According to Godliness

This is Godly teaching. Timothy was earlier instructed specifically as to what doctrine is to be taught (1 Tim 4:13 – “*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching*”).

## III. Character of the Opposition

Those who would teach contrary to this sound doctrine are not benign in their purpose. They are hypocritical, selfish and motivated by a prideful intent position themselves as teachers (1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Tim. 1:7). As such, they expose themselves as being conceited and without true knowledge (v. 4), more interested in arguments and disputes. They are deprived of the truth and suppose there to be an earthly benefit associated with their efforts. Like the false teacher described by Peter, they seek to benefit themselves rather than doing the legitimate work of teaching the true Gospel. (2 Peter 2:1-4 – “*But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep*”). Even today, those who seek to wrangle words and position themselves as authorities and teachers for the purpose of enhancing their own reputations and influence are to be avoided. Their influence is destructive both to local churches and the legitimate efforts to teach those of the world who desperately need the Gospel. The next verses show the true gain associated with Godliness is spiritual rather than physical.