

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** December 17, 2017

**Sermon Title:** Taking Care of the Household of God - Slaves and Masters

Sermon Series: First Timothy

Text: 1 Tim. 6:1, 2

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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### **Introduction:**

“At a meeting of the American Psychological Association, Jack Lipton, a psychologist at Union College, and R. Scott Builione, a graduate student at Columbia University, presented their findings on how members of the various sections of 11 major symphony orchestra perceived each other. The percussionists were viewed as insensitive, unintelligent, and hard-of-hearing, yet fun-loving. String players were seen as arrogant, stuffy, and non-athletic. The orchestra members overwhelmingly chose ‘loud’ as the primary adjective to describe the brass players. Woodwind players seemed to be held in the highest esteem, described as quiet and meticulous, though a bit egotistical. Interesting findings, to say the least! With such widely divergent personalities and perceptions, how could an orchestra ever come together to make such wonderful music? The answer is simple: regardless of how those musicians view each other, they subordinate their feelings and biases to the leadership of the conductor. Under his guidance, they play beautiful music.”<sup>1</sup>

How do we as a gathering of insensitive, non-athletic, loud, and meticulous people ever get along? Friends, this is what the gospel does. The gospel makes from the many one.

This text once again visits the idea of the church as a household and how those in leadership are to take care of the church. Just as a reminder, in our earlier passage concerning Elders, we read the following

- <sup>4</sup>“He must be one who **manages his own household well**, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup> (**but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?**)” (1 Tim. 3:4, 5).

The word for “taking care” occurs three times in the New Testament. Twice in the story of the GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:34, 35) and here in our text. Ministering to the slaves and masters of a church is taking care of them. What does this mean? Our text defines this for us. What does this look like in our present context?

There is a genuine need to place this text in its historical context.

“Almost one-third of people living in first century Greco-Roman society were slaves. Slavery was a deeply entrenched cultural institution. Yet many of the earliest Christian congregations took seriously the apostles’ teachings on equality and their warnings against favoritism, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they applied these principles even though it went very much against the prevailing culture.”<sup>2</sup>

“Slavery in the Roman Empire was a fact of life. Most people could not imagine a society without slaves. Some people spoke out against the mistreatment of slaves, and there were slave revolts, but no abolitionist movement existed.”<sup>3</sup>

“According to some estimates, one-third (!) of the population of Greece and Italy were slaves. Slavery was such an accepted institution in ancient times that slave rebellions were protests about conditions, never about abolishing the institution as a whole.”<sup>4</sup>

“That slaves formed a considerable portion of the first Christian Churches may be inferred from the frequency with which their duties are pressed upon them (see 1 Corinthians 7:21-22; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:11, 22; 1 Peter 2:18 (οἱ οἰκέται); see also 1 Corinthians 1:27-29). It must have been an unspeakable comfort to the poor slave, whose worldly condition was hopeless and often miserable, to secure his place as one of Christ's freemen, with the sure hope of attaining ‘the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ Perhaps the phrase contains a touch of compassion for their state (comp. Acts 15:10). How beautiful is the contrast suggested in Matthew 11:29, 30!”<sup>5</sup>

### **THE BIG PICTURE:**

It is important to remember the literary context in which these words exist. There are three cycles within Timothy and all of them unpack the melodic line found in 1 Timothy 3:14-16 concerning the common confession found inside of the local church resulting in a common conduct. Behavior matters. The relationships we have within the local church is a testimony to the unbelieving world at large. The first cycle focused on the qualifications of Elders (3:1-7) and Deacons (3:8-13). Here, the Elders and churches are to care for widows (5:1-16), leaders (5:17-25), and now slaves (6:1, 2). Here is the personal word to slaves.

We need to remember the strange teaching circulating within the church. Some were seeking to apply the Law of Moses to the believer through the addition and subtraction of rules and regulations. “Because the Law of Moses (Exodus 21:2) did not allow Israelites to be made slaves for life, without their own consent, it seems the Judaizing teachers, with a view to allure slaves to their party, encouraged them in disobeying the commands, of their masters. This doctrine the apostle condemns here, as in his other epistles, (1 Corinthians 7:20-22; Colossians 3:22,) by enjoining Christian slaves to obey their masters, whether believers or unbelievers.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Outline:**

Paul views the church as a household and within this household you have widows, elders, and slaves. In fact, slaves were some of the first responders and their presence was perhaps a majority.

“Slaves worked everywhere – in private households, in mines and factories, and on farms. They also worked for city governments on engineering projects such as roads, aqueducts and buildings. As a result, they merged easily into the population. In fact, slaves looked so similar to Roman citizens that the Senate once considered a plan to make them wear special clothing so that they could be identified at a glance. The idea was rejected because the Senate feared that, if slaves saw how many of them were working in Rome, they might be tempted to join forces and rebel.”<sup>7</sup>

**“Let me just outline for you the passage so that you will be ready to look for where we're going to be going.** First of all, I want you to notice who Paul speaks to. Secondly, I want you to notice the surprising thing that he says to them to do. And then thirdly, I want you to notice why he tells them to do what he tells them to do. Because it's from that last portion, the 'why'- and there's one 'why' in verse one, and there's another 'why' in verse two. It's from the 'why' that the two great principles for all of us are discovered. Let's look to God in prayer before we read and hear His word proclaimed. Let's pray.”<sup>8</sup>

I. Paul's Audience [To whom does Paul speak? - The issue of slavery]

“Traditionally, 'servants.' Though δοῦλος (doulos) is normally translated 'servant,' the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another. BDAG notes that “'servant' for 'slave' is largely confined to Biblical transl. and early American times...in normal usage at the present time the two words are carefully distinguished” (BDAG 260 s.v.). The most accurate translation is 'bondservant' (sometimes found in the ASV for δοῦλος), in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another. But as this is archaic, few today understand its force.”<sup>9</sup>

“The metaphor 'under the yoke' indicates slavery by capture, since the captives were made to pass underneath three spears lashed together to form a doorway outline, thus requiring them to bow their heads and 'pass under the yoke.’”<sup>10</sup>

“All slaves and their families were the property of their owners, who could sell or rent them out at any time. Their lives were harsh. Slaves were often whipped, branded or cruelly mistreated. Their owners could also kill them for any reason, and would face no punishment. Although Romans accepted slavery as the norm, some people - like the poet and philosopher, Seneca - argued that slaves should at least be treated fairly.”<sup>11</sup>

“It is a little more politically correct to translate the opening word of this passage as 'servants' rather than 'slaves.' However, it doesn't change the meaning and the Greek word literally referred to a house servant or a slave. Our modern culture would be more comfortable with this text if [Paul] had said something like, 'slaves, be patient while we seek your release.' Of course that is not what [Paul] said. None of the New Testament writers condone slavery, but also none of them call for the abolition of slavery (the only text that comes close to this is the book of Philemon and it only addresses the situation of one particular slave and his owner). We don't, however, have to be embarrassed that [Paul] is giving instructions to slaves without calling for the overthrow of the institution of slavery. Slavery in Asia Minor in the first century was not all that different from the kind of slavery that was practiced in our country 150 years ago. The main difference between the two is that slavery in first century Asia Minor was not racially driven. People were sold into slavery for economic reasons rather than for issues of race. Often times a man was a slave because he incurred a large amount of debt and could not pay it off, so he sold himself into slavery. Many were, however, born as slaves. In the first century there were masters that treated their slaves with respect and there were certainly masters who ruthlessly beat and mistreated their slaves. There is nothing about slavery in the first century that was *fair*. Slavery was not and never has been fair. This makes it all the more shocking that [Paul] simply says, '[to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor].’”<sup>12</sup>

Why does it appear that the Bible does not dismiss slavery? “There are two good reasons why the New Testament writers never call for the overthrow of the institution of slavery. **First**, it was an institution deeply woven into the fabric of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman society and most Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century were social outcasts and did not have a strong political or social voice. Christians were considered strange at best and terrible nuisances at worst. Christians often faced persecution from Rome and slavery was too firmly fixed in Roman culture, thus Christians simply did not have a social voice loud enough to even imagine the possible abolition of the institution of slavery. The second and more important reason that [Paul] and the writers of the New Testament do not call for the abolition of slavery is that they were not social revolutionaries. [Paul’s] goal was never to become a political figure that would change the social landscape of Asia Minor. [Paul] was an apostle of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1:1; 2:7). The New Testament writers were much less concerned with making social wrongs right than they were with proclaiming the message that could make individuals in any situation right with God—namely, the gospel of Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers had much bigger issues to address than the unfair nature of slavery. They were addressing man’s rebellion against his creator and the just judgment from God that all men deserve. The New Testament writers addressed specific people in specific situations and called them to trust Christ who faced God’s wrath on the cross for all who would believe.”<sup>13</sup>

“The word *slave*, although extremely common among the grave of non-Christians is never used in inscriptions in the Christian burials in the catacombs.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, this text is to slaves and [indirectly] masters. What is even more startling is what Paul calls the slaves to do.

## II. Paul’s Audacity [What are believing slaves to give their masters? (vv. 1a, 2a)]

- “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor” (1 Tim. 6:1a).

It seems almost insulting to suggest that slaves are to honor and not disrespect their masters, but this is exactly what Paul demands [to regard – present active imperative v. 1 / not disrespect – present active imperative v. 2].

“That is always where the shoe pinches. **Our ‘despot’ is this very Greek word**, the strict correlative of slave (*doulos*), while *kurios* has a wider outlook.”<sup>15</sup> The word occurs for our Lord several times (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10). It is, however, used for the servant/master relationship.

- “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).
- “And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort” (1 Tim. 6:2).

- “Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again” (Titus 2:9).
- “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward” (1 Pet. 2:18).

“Thayer says the term ‘denoted absolute ownership and uncontrolled power.’”<sup>16</sup>

“The first part of both verses say the same thing. One says ‘honor’ and the other ‘do not disrespect.’ Each is one side of one coin. To honor is not to disrespect, “to think against” (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12). “The word means to treat without the full consideration due to the other man’s station.”<sup>17</sup>

Paul’s audacity is tempered by his apologia. There is a reason why slaves are to honor their masters.

### III. Paul’s Apologia [Why are believing slaves to give their master honor?]

#### A. So that the name of God will not be spoken against (v. 1b)

<sup>1</sup> “All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that [hina me] the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against” (1 Tim. 6:1).

The first verse addresses slaves of unbelieving masters. The second verse addresses slaves of believing masters.

#### B. Because they are brothers (v. 2b)

<sup>2</sup> “Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because [hoti] they are brethren, but [alla] must serve them all the more, because [hoti] those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved” (1 Tim. 6:2).

The descriptive is powerful. They are brothers and fellow heirs of the benefits/blessings of being “in Christ [partake of the benefit – present middle participle].” The benefit suggests benefactor. It occurs three times in the New Testament.

“What about the translation of 1 Timothy 6:2 found in the 2011 edition of the NIV? Most commentaries present two possible translations of the description of masters found toward the end of 1 Timothy 6:2. We can see the two options in English by comparing the text of the NIV (2011) and the alternative presented in the NIV footnote: (a) the masters are ‘devoted to the welfare of their slaves;’ or (b) the masters ‘benefit from the service [of the slaves].’ I have looked carefully at the Greek text and read the arguments for and against both translations; it is not an easy question. What is decisive for me is the fact that this phrase is closely associated with the words ‘believers’ and ‘beloved/dear,’ which in this context are reasons that the slaves should

work hard for their Christian masters. Paul is saying that these Christian slaves should serve their masters because their masters are believers, are loved (by God, and/or by believers), and also because their masters are devoted to the welfare of the slaves."<sup>18</sup>

"The word is intensive and indicates that the Christian master should be served more, i.e. better."<sup>19</sup>

**In reminding slaves that their believing masters are brothers, he is also reminding masters that their believing slaves are brothers!** As it relates to the church and one's standing before God there is absolute and unwavering equality. Where do we go from here?

#### IV. Paul's Admonition [Teach and preach these principles {both present active imperatives}]

"If slavery is not of God, why don't the New Testament authors speak out more forcefully against it? Christ in his First Coming did not seek to overthrow the existing social structure by force, but rather by introducing a new Spirit behind enemy lines, within the church. It is also important to recognize that the New Testament relativizes slavery; what matters more than one's social situation is one's relationship to God and to Christ's people (1 Cor. 7:17-24; 1 Tim 6:2). Thus the slave can remain a slave and work as for the Lord. Likewise, the master must recognize his accountability to God (Eph. 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1). At the same time, social situation is not meaningless, so if a slave can legally gain his freedom, the New Testament presents that as a good thing (1 Cor. 7:21; Philem. 12-14)."<sup>20</sup>

"This summary statement connects strongly with what precedes and what follows. 'These things' most likely refers to the preceding section of instruction (5:1-6:2a), though some take it to refer to all that Paul has taught up to this point in the letter. This sound teaching then provides a contrast to the false teachers (6:3-10)."<sup>21</sup>

The gospel suffers when we do not teach and preach these principles. Are we teaching and preaching slavery? Hardly! The issue is when one finds themselves in a subordinate position. What matters is not the superior's actions toward you but yours toward them. Paul says your attitude/actions toward them preaches and teaches the gospel.

Let us not think any of this is emotionally easy. We must, however, know what is true and then choose appropriately. Our emotions will always lag behind our volition and intellect.

#### V. Christ's Absurdity (Matt. 11:28-30)

- Jesus says,  
<sup>28</sup>"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Although our status in our culture or society might be different than that of a slave, as Christians our standing before God is as slaves. The issue for Paul is not whether you are or are not a slave,

but to what or to whom are you a slave (Rom. 6). The absurdity of the Christ life is what Jesus offers.

- <sup>34</sup>“And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. <sup>36</sup> For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 4:34-38).
- In losing your life, you find it.
- In dying, you live.
- In giving it all away, you gain everything.
- In your weakness, you become strong.
- In your enslavement, you are free.
- In your poverty, you are rich.

This, friend, is absurd. Yet, this is the Christian life. Rather than fight against the absurdity of the paradox, let us acknowledge that we are slaves of Jesus and serve Him from the overflow of a grace received.

“Carl Sandburg captured well the human condition: ‘There is an eagle in me that wants to soar, and there is a hippopotamus in me that wants to wallow in the mud.’ That’s a paradox. Seemingly contradictory statements that are nonetheless true. Recently paradox has become more important in preaching. A new worship attender came to see me. A believer, she vulnerably shared some of the mud in which she was currently mired. Then she blurted out: ‘I got so frustrated at the church I used to attend. Everything was five easy steps! I need to hear something more than pat answers.’ I am finding more and more people recognize that a steady diet of ‘how to’ preaching has left them spiritually anemic. What’s the alternative? For those who aren’t helped by ‘three easy steps,’ a better alternative is to preach the power of paradox. Paradox is the wild territory within which most ministers live and work.

- We see unseen things.
- We conquer by yielding.
- We find rest under a yoke.
- We reign by serving.
- We are made great by becoming small.
- We are exalted when we are humble.
- We become wise by being fools for Christ’s sake.
- We are made free by becoming bondservants.
- We gain strength when we are weak.
- We triumph through defeat.
- We find victory by glorying in our infirmities.
- We live by dying.

In a pragmatic age, persistent in finding the quickest route to whatever works, we preachers find little to do with paradox. And yet, like unusual stones found in the bottom of a prospector’s

pan, we keep discovering biblical paradoxes, rolling them over in our palms, pondering their secrets. Paradox beckons us into Mystery, and offers a wholesome reminder that God is infinitely greater than our ideas about God.”<sup>22</sup>

“Paul reminds us in today’s passage that the world is watching our behavior and that it often judges God according to how we act. It may not be fair or entirely justified, but the world makes these judgments nevertheless, and we should ever be cognizant of this fact. The apostle focuses on the behavior of servants in relation to their masters, but his principle covers every possible instance in which we relate to those in authority. Even when our political leaders go against principles of biblical ethics, we are to respect them as the duly instituted authority (Rom. 13:1-7). At work, we must respectfully address our supervisors even when we disagree with them.”

### **Shepherding the Sheep:** (What is the NEXT STEP?)

“There is nothing fair about slavery. The Bible never promises us that life will be fair. Thus there is a challenge in the New Testament’s teaching on slavery and it is this – see Christ as so precious that you would be willing to suffer anything if it would magnify Jesus. Set your hope completely on Jesus and not on your circumstances. In fact, unfair circumstances are a huge opportunity to proclaim the gospel. We face unfair circumstances all the time. It would be easy to just look at [Paul’s] teaching on slavery here and just think it doesn’t apply to us because we are not slaves. But this text does apply to us because we are not called to fix every social evil in the world but rather we are called to proclaim the gospel in everything we do. Unfair circumstances provide a prime opportunity to share the gospel – a message that addresses the really big problems of life such as sin and separation from God for eternity. The gospel is a message about true freedom – freedom from the wrath of God, freedom to delight in Jesus!”<sup>23</sup>

“We live in a very different situation, so what should we take away from 1 Timothy 6:1-2 today? Two things:

- (1) even where your role in society is challenging, live with integrity and upright behavior so that people will not be able to use your lifestyle as a reason to mock Christian teaching.
- (2) Even where your status in the eyes of society is very different from that of another Christian (whether lower or higher), treat that person with all respect as your brother/sister in Christ.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.sermonsearch.com/sermon-illustrations/6293/how-members-of-the-symphony-orchestra-viewed-each-other/> Today in the Word, June 22, 1992

<sup>2</sup> <http://margmowczko.com/the-early-church-and-slavery/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/passages/related-articles/slavery-in-the-new-testament>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.trinitysyr.org/2015/08/22/q-a-regarding-1-timothy-61-2-and-1st-century-slavery/>

<sup>5</sup> Pulpit Commentary on 1 Timothy 6:1.

<sup>6</sup> Benson Commentary on 1 Timothy 6:1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/slaves\\_freemen.html](http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/slaves_freemen.html)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/doctrine-and-practice-as-witness>

<sup>9</sup> <https://net.bible.org/#!bible/1+Timothy+6>

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- <sup>10</sup> *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT* on 1 Tim. 6:1.
- <sup>11</sup> [http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/slaves\\_freemen.html](http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/slaves_freemen.html)
- <sup>12</sup> <https://electexiles.wordpress.com/2007/10/24/slavery-and-the-new-testament/>
- <sup>13</sup> <https://electexiles.wordpress.com/2007/10/24/slavery-and-the-new-testament/>
- <sup>14</sup> <http://margmowczko.com/the-early-church-and-slavery/>
- <sup>15</sup> *A.T. Robertson's NT Word Pictures* on 1 Tim. 6:1.
- <sup>16</sup> *Word Meanings in the New Testament*, Ralph Earle on 1 Tim. 6:2.
- <sup>17</sup> *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT* on 1 Tim. 6:2.
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.trinitysyr.org/2015/08/22/q-a-regarding-1-timothy-61-2-and-1st-century-slavery/>
- <sup>19</sup> *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT* on 1 Tim. 6:2.
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.trinitysyr.org/2015/08/22/q-a-regarding-1-timothy-61-2-and-1st-century-slavery/>
- <sup>21</sup> ESV Study Bible on 1 Tim. 6:2b.
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.preachingtoday.com/skills/2005/august/117--hansen.html>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://electexiles.wordpress.com/2007/10/24/slavery-and-the-new-testament/>
- <sup>24</sup> <http://www.trinitysyr.org/2015/08/22/q-a-regarding-1-timothy-61-2-and-1st-century-slavery/>