

Christian Manner of Justice

Deut 24:14-21; Eph 6:5-9; 1 Tim 6:17-19

SS Lesson for 05/17/2026

Devotional Scriptures: Matt 18:23-35

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Deut 24:19

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

GENEROSITY IN WORK (DEUT 24:14-21)

Fair wages (14-15)

- Fair wages by not defrauding the workers (Lev 19:13)
- Fair wages by not withholding pay when it is available (Prov 3:27-28)
- Fair wages by following the agreed upon amount (Matt 20:8-15)
- Fair wages because God is aware of failure to pay (James 5:4)

Individual accountability (16)

- Accountable at work (Eph 6:5)
- Accountable to not love money because it is meaningless (Eccl 5:10)
- Accountable to leaders (Heb 13:17)
- Accountable for how we treat others (Matt 18:32-34)

Past justice (17-18)

- Past unjust judgment (Ps 82:2)
- Past violent injustice (Ps 58:2-3)
- Past being unconcerned about justice (Prov 29:7)
- Past oppressed justice (Eccl 5:8)

Share with the poor (19-21)

- Sharing with the widows and orphans (James 1:27)
- Sharing by being generous (Prov 22:9)
- Sharing by feeding the hungry (Prov 25:21)
- Sharing by practicing hospitality (Rom 12:13)
- Sharing by entertaining stranger (Heb 13:2)

MUTUAL RESPECT IN WORK (EPH 6:5-9)

Obedience as to the Lord (5-7)

- Obedience to authorities because God established them (Rom 13:1)
- Obedience to authorities because it is a command of God (Titus 3:1)
- Obedience to authorities out of reverence for Jesus (Eph 5:21)
- Obedience to authorities because they are there to administer justice (1 Peter 2:13-14)

Reward for obedience (8)

- Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)
- Obedience that proves the reality of ourselves (2 Cor 9:13)
- Obedience that leads to submission (Heb 5:7-9)
- Obedience that leads to being seen as righteous (Rom 2:13)
- Obedience that leads to the knowledge of God (1 John 2:3)

No partiality (9)

- No partiality because God sees it (1 Tim 5:21)
- No partiality because it causes humiliation (Mal 2:9)
- No partiality because of being a Christian (James 2:1)
- No partiality because it does not reflect godly wisdom (James 3:17)

FUTURE REWARDS OF WORK (1 TIM 6:17-19)

Trust the living God (17)

- Trust God and don't worry (Matt 6:25-27)
- Trust God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)
- Trust God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)
- Trust God to provide overflowing hope (Rom 15:13)
- Trust God by being convinced of His ability (2 Tim 1:12)

Be willing to share (18-19)

- Share by giving to those in need (Rom 12:13)
- Share with instructor the good things in God's word (Gal 6:6)
- Share by working to be able to give to others (Eph 4:28)
- Share because God is pleased with His people who share (Heb 13:16)
- Share by supporting the weak (Acts 20:35)
- Share to help others in the Church (Acts 2:44-46)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM BOB DEFFINBAUGH

Conclusion

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY

Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The first Scripture text from today's lesson comes from Moses' second speech in Deuteronomy to the people of Israel. The speech begins by setting forth a general set of rules for God's covenant people (Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32). The second part of the speech focuses on specific rules within God's order for a new society (12:1-26:19). Israel's identity as God's covenant people was supposed to shape their treatment of poor and marginalized people. Moses had already reminded the Israelites that poor people would always be part of the population (Deuteronomy 15:11). As a result, he commanded an openhanded policy toward these people, requiring generous giving without resentment (15:10). The second Scripture text comes from the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. In Ephesians 5:21-6:9, Paul includes a "household code," a common form of social teaching in that day. These codes consisted of a list of obligations and duties in household relationships (compare Colossians 3:8-14; 1 Peter 2:18-3:7). He discusses each of the common roles in a household of his time, including family members and servants. Far from simply affirming the culturally accepted social order, Paul infuses every household role with the revolutionary story of Jesus. The final Scripture text comes from the first letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. Timothy was likely dealing with false teachers who arose in the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-4). These false teachers glorified wealth (6:5-10). Paul outlines steps the community members can take to ensure they are not overcome by "love of money" (6:10).

Key Verse: Deut 24:19

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Generosity in Work (Deut 24:14-21)

14 "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates.

15 Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you.

16 "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

17 "You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge.

18 But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

19 "When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

Fair wages (14-15)

Fair wages by not defrauding the workers (Lev 19:13)

13 "Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

Fair wages by not withholding pay when it is available (Prov 3:27-28)

27 Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" — when you now have it with you.

Fair wages by following the agreed upon amount (Matt 20:8-15)

8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 9 "The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each received a denarius. 10 So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. 11 When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 12 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'

13 "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? 14 Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. 15 Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'

Fair wages because God is aware of failure to pay (James 5:4)

4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

Individual accountability (16)

Accountable at work (Eph 6:5)

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

Accountable to not love money because it is meaningless (Eccl 5:10)

10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Accountable to leaders (Heb 13:17)

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Accountable for how we treat others (Matt 18:32-34)

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Past justice (17-18)

Past unjust judgment (Ps 82:2)

2 "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah

Past violent injustice (Ps 58:2-3)

2 No, in your heart you devise injustice, and your hands mete out violence on the earth. 3 Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.

Past being unconcerned about justice (Prov 29:7)

7 The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.

Past oppressed justice (Eccl 5:8)

8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

Share with the poor (19-21)

Sharing with the widows and orphans (James 1:27)

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Sharing by being generous (Prov 22:9)

9 A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.

Sharing by feeding the hungry (Prov 25:21)

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

Sharing by practicing hospitality (Rom 12:13)

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Sharing by entertaining stranger (Heb 13:2)

2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Mutual Respect in Work (Eph 6:5-9)

5 Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;

6 not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

7 with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

9 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Obedience as to the Lord (5-7)

Obedience to authorities because God established them (Rom 13:1)

13 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Obedience to authorities because it is a command of God (Titus 3:1)

3 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,

Obedience to authorities out of reverence for Jesus (Eph 5:21)

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Obedience to authorities because they are there to administer justice (1 Peter 2:13-14)

13 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Reward for obedience (8)

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience that proves the reality of ourselves (2 Cor 9:13)

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Obedience that leads to submission (Heb 5:7-9)

7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

Obedience that leads to being seen as righteous (Rom 2:13)

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Obedience that leads to the knowledge of God (1 John 2:3)

3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.

No partiality (9)

No partiality because God sees it (1 Tim 5:21)

21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

No partiality because it causes humiliation (Mal 2:9)

9 "So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."

No partiality because of being a Christian (James 2:1)

2 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.

No partiality because it does not reflect godly wisdom (James 3:17)

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Future Rewards of Work (1 Tim 6:17-19)

17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Trust the living God (17)

Trust God and don't worry (Matt 6:25-27)

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

Trust God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)

29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Trust God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Trust God to provide overflowing hope (Rom 15:13)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Trust God by being convinced of His ability (2 Tim 1:12)

12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Be willing to share (18-19)

Share by giving to those in need (Rom 12:13)

13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Share with instructor the good things in God's word (Gal 6:6)

6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Share by working to be able to give to others (Eph 4:28)

28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

Share because God is pleased with His people who share (Heb 13:16)

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Share by supporting the weak (Acts 20:35)

35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Share to help others in the Church (Acts 2:44-46)

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

Conclusion

As we come to the conclusion of this lesson, let us pause to reflect on what Paul has taught us in this text.

First, we learn that submission to higher authorities is rooted in our submission to God. In every case in Ephesians 5:21–6:9, the submission for which Paul calls is “unto the Lord.” In a very practical way, our submission should be based upon the assurance that God is in complete control, and that the authorities to which we are instructed to submit are those whose authority God has placed us under. While a Christian slave may not understand God’s purposes for his calling as a slave, he must be convinced that this is his calling. Jesus submitted to the authority of the Roman government and to the cross of Calvary, knowing that this was His Father’s will, and that the Father was in complete control, even as He was sentenced to death (see John 19:10-11; Acts 2:23).

Our text informs us that the slave’s obedience to his master is the will of God. Submission to those in authority over us is the will of God. A slave need not agonize so much about what God’s will for him is as he does over his obedience to the will of God. A child, likewise, can find the lion’s share of God’s will for his life summed up in this one command, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Christians often agonize about “knowing God’s will” when the greater portion of His will for our lives has already been revealed in Scripture. We may focus on the process of discovering God’s will because we don’t like what He has revealed to us about His will in His word. God does guide individually and personally, but it is most often through His word, and never contrary to it.

Submission and obedience goes beyond the surface level of appearances. Submission is not just giving the impression of pleasing, even to the one whom we are seeking to please. It goes much deeper, to the goal of seeking the benefit and blessing of the one we are subject to, to their good and God’s glory. Head-coverings for women do not prove they are submissive to their husbands, her actions do. Let us be careful that our submission goes much deeper than mere appearances.

The glory of God and not our happiness is the chief end of our salvation. The gospel is often represented in terms of our happiness or fulfillment or contentment, as though God’s primary purpose for saving us was our own pleasure. God saved us for His own pleasure, and to bring glory to Himself. God’s glory is also our good, and so we do benefit from His grace in salvation. The error is to see man as the chief end of God’s purposes rather than God.

God often chooses to glorify Himself through suffering. God was glorified by the innocent suffering of His Son. He is also glorified by the innocent suffering of slaves (see 1 Peter 2:18-25). We will never understand or obey Paul’s instructions to us as slaves of Christ until we grasp the fact that our calling in life is to glorify God, and that suffering for us not only leads to glory, it is glory. It is not that we should live our life without joy, but rather than we should experience joy in suffering for the glory of God:

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2).

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance (James 1:2-3).

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you (1 Peter 4:12-14).

The Gospel of our Lord does not call on us to overthrow evil institutions as much as it does to be lights in this world by response to them. There are some Christians who think we should try to bring about heaven on earth by transforming society and its institutions. The Scriptures do not urge us to overthrow institutions, but to submit to them, and by living our lives to the glory of God, showing how the Christian faith can endure and even thrive in the worst circumstances.

Christians are to live in their small little world in the light of the eternal plans and purposes of God for His creation. The “world” of the slave may be small, but the plan of God is immense. Glimpses of that cosmic plan have been revealed by Paul in chapters 1-3. The conduct of the slave toward his master is governed by God’s purposes for history. We are to live out our lives in the light of the bigger picture, which we find only in the Scriptures.

Trusting in Jesus Christ is inseparably tied to the matter of our submission and obedience to His authority. The same word is used for “masters” in verse 5 as is translated “Master” in verse 9. Submission is the appropriate response of the Christian to divinely appointed authority. Why is it, then, that some try to separate saving faith from submission to the authority of Jesus Christ. Paul insists that every Christian submit to the authorities God has placed over them. He bases this submission and obedience on our submission to Jesus Christ. How, then, can some speak of being saved without submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord. In Paul’s mind, to be saved is to be subject, not only to Christ, but to all divinely ordained authority. Salvation is not only about the atonement of Christ, it is also about His authority. Salvation is about His death for us and His dominion over us.

And so I must close by asking one simple question: “Whose slave are you?” You are either a slave to sin and thus to Satan, or you are the bond-servant of Jesus Christ. Salvation begins when we recognize God’s authority over us, and our failure to live up to His standards. It begins when we cease to trust in our own efforts and receive the death of Christ on our behalf. It is by trusting in His death, burial, and resurrection that our sins are forgiven, and that we become His slaves by the bonds of love and gratitude. If you are not His slave by faith in Christ, do so today. He in whom we are instructed to trust for our eternal salvation is the very one who became a servant for our salvation.

“He does not tell them to rebel; he tells them to be Christian where they are. The great message of Christianity to every man is that it is where God has set us that we must live out the Christian life. The circumstances may be all against us, but that only makes the challenge greater. Christianity does not offer us escape from circumstances; it offers us conquest of circumstances.”

“He tells the slaves that work must not be done well only when the overseer’s eye is on them; it must be done in the awareness that God’s eye is on them. Every single piece of work the Christian produces must be good enough to show to God. The problem that the world has always faced and that it faces acutely today is basically not economic but religious. We will never make men good workmen by bettering conditions or heightening rewards. It is a Christian duty to see to these things; but in themselves they will never produce good work. Still less will we produce good work by increasing oversight and multiplying punishments. The secret of good workmanship is to do it for God.”

“Paul has a word for the master of men, too. He must remember that although he is master of men, he is still the servant of God. He too must remember that all he does is done in the sight of God. Above all he must remember that the day comes when he and those over whom he is set will stand before God; and then the ranks of the world will no longer be relevant.”

“The problem of work would be solved if men and masters alike would take their orders from God.”

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/25-submission-and-slavery-ephesians-65-9>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

These three texts teach that God's people must display generosity, mutual respect, and rightly ordered hope. Deuteronomy 24 identifies the generosity and justice God commanded of the ancient Israelites. We ought to show generosity and act justly in our homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces. When we do so, we reflect God's character to everyone around us, including the most vulnerable. Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminds us of the "level playing field" on which we stand before Christ. His authority governs all earthly relationships. Our faith demands that we treat others with respect, recognizing that we are all equal in Christ. Finally, Paul's letter to Timothy encourages us to order our hopes rightly. The truth that our security comes from God, not our material possessions, remains especially relevant in the twenty-first century. As we place our hope in God, we should be openhanded and generous with our resources. Lives that do not prioritize the world's measures of money, status, and power are living testimonies to God's life-transforming grace. Because our lives have been transformed by God, we seek to practice justice, respect all people, and share generously.