Hard Spots

Have you ever been asked, “But isn’t that just your interpretation?”

There is a rule for interpreting the Bible that says every passage of Scripture has one proper meaning and many possible applications.

Ephesians 6:5-9 is an example. LITERALLY it refers to slaves and masters.

A familiar APPLICATION goes like this:

- Slaves = workers, employees
- Masters = bosses, employers

Sermon: “How to be a Good Boss or Worker.”

Consider ANOTHER POSSIBILITY. Let’s begin by taking a closer look at the situation of slaves in Paul’s society.
As near as we can determine, there were some 60 million slaves spread throughout the Roman Empire.

- 1 out of every 5 people you bumped into was a slave.
- 1 out of every 3 in the city of Rome.

And while it is true that "Afro-American slavery was worse than Roman, Roman than Greek, and Greek than Hebrew"—still, a slave is a slave is a slave.

And it is hard to imagine many worse conditions than slavery.

- There was cruelty
- There was indignity
- There was hopelessness

Suggest a SYLLOGISM:

- Major premise Ephesians 6:5-9 is about slaves, Christian slaves
- Minor premise Slaves = hard living
- Conclusion Ephesians 6:5-9 is about Christians. It is especially concerned to teach us how to live when life is painful, difficult, or hard.

Four Principles for Living Christianly in the Face of Difficult Circumstances.

I. GOD’S PATTERN: GOD’S NORMAL METHOD IS NOT TO REMOVE US FROM DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES BUT TO RELEASE US WITHIN THEM
“Slaves, obey your earthly masters…”
(Ephesians 6:5)

“Each one should retain the place in life the Lord has assigned him…Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so”
(1 Corinthians 7:17, 20-21)

ILLUS.: Warren Wiersbe’s “go/grow” principle.

II. GOD’S LOVE
(Ephesians 6:5-6, 9b)

Three Possible Mistakes:
A. It Is Possible to Acknowledge God’s Lordship in Your Life and Deny His Love
B. It Is Possible to Acknowledge God’s Love and Deny He Is Lord
C. It Is Possible to Deny Both that He Is Lord and that He Loves Us

Proper Response:
Acknowledge the Lordship of the Loving God in Everything You Experience

III. GOD’S FOCUS
(Ephesians 6:5-6a, 7)
Where you focus determines your ability to cope.

ILLUS: Matthew 14:22-33—Peter walking on water.

IV. GOD’S FUTURE
(Ephesians 6:8-9)

ILLUS.: Cotton Mather

“All the good that you have done
All your prayers
All your alms and the steps of your watchful walk with God
All the brave efforts of your self-denial
All the continued desires to serve God and his people and your neighbors
“They, being sprinkled by the blood of the Lamb, shall be found in the Lord’s book of remembrance.
“They shall be proclaimed in the golden streets of the city of God.”

CONCLUSION:
What do we believe that is helpful because it is true?

We believe
• In God’s Pattern: that release within our circumstances may be better than removal from them
• In God’s Love: that God not only loves us, He is Lord over everything that could ever happen to us
• In God’s Focus: that Jesus is bigger than our problems
• In God’s Future: that all of this world is a preparation for the next