

Your Job and You

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Bible Text: Titus 2:9-10

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Let me add my welcome to all of you and we trust that the word of God will be a blessing to you today. In some ways what we have to say here today will work to simplify your life and to simplify your thinking about the whole nature of living in the world in which we live. Life can be complicated in many, many ways as you know, but I'm thinking particularly today of the information and the warnings and the different things that simply bombard our minds with the great advance of technology that brings information right to our doorsteps and I find myself falling into this. It's easy to take all of the political problems and the disasters around the world and different things that are going on and they will all end up in your lap, that make demands on your thinking and then when you add well-intentioned people and some not so well-intentioned people describing different crises and problems and advocating ministry and calling for different things on what you need to do to help them do what they do, it just becomes almost overwhelming. There is just so much information at our fingertips that it starts to dominate our thinking and complicate the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

What I want to show you this morning by way of introduction is the simplicity of the devotion that Christ calls us to and we're looking at Titus 2. What we're going to see is that the realm of your faithfulness does not require you to solve all of the problems in the world, to supply all of your funds for everybody that asked for them. It's much, much simpler and it goes to things that are within the realm of your control. And your desire, your purpose must be to be faithful to the one who has been faithful to you and God has defined what that faithfulness looks like in his word and it simplifies things. So looking at Titus 2:1, I just want to read this passage that we're going to finish here today, notice how as we go through this one final time, notice how the Lord calls us to matters of character that are within our understanding and our control. He says in chapter 2, verse 1,

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. 2 Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. 3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4 so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. 6 Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; 7 in all

things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

Just a general observation about that is that the call to duty for a Christian is a call to manifest godly character. It's a call to be faithful to the relationships within the circle of our influence. That is the primary starting point of faithfulness. It simplifies things in the complexity that the world tries to impose upon us and it's very practical as well. Now, as we go into today's text, verses 9 and 10, we're going to see that the Scriptures become eminently practical in terms of what they call upon us in our daily lives. All of us that have employment of one kind or another, come under the umbrella of what the Lord says to us through his word here in verses 9 and 10 here this morning and the simplicity of it points out something that I want to kind of introduce it with this: your real challenge in your workplace environment is not the problems that you face or the conflicts that you might have from day-to-day with your employer, your real challenge, the real call of God on your life is for you to master yourself, not to master your master. You're not to exercise dominion over those who have authority over you, rather you are to master yourself, master your heart, master the response that you make and honor Christ by the way that you respond to the authority that is over you. That simplifies things. That's the starting point of living out a godly life Monday through Friday.

As I say this, as I move into this message, let me hasten to say this: I understand by direct personal experience the frustrations that can come in the workplace. I sympathize with all of you who are going through that, who are irritated and frustrated by the actions of people in authority over you and I think that part of the long-term work that God is doing in our hearts in those situations is patiently one irritating drip at a time upon our soul, washing away the hardness of the rock of our hearts so that he would conform us to his image in the terms that are expressed here in verses 9 and 10. The problem that you think you have at work is not the problem really, the problem is in terms of coming to grips with your own heart and responding as Scripture calls us to do. When we remember that we follow a Lord who knew what it was like to be persecuted, to be unjustly accused, to be nailed to a cross for sins that he did not commit, then it softens our heart, it tenders us, if I can make tender a verb, it tenderizes us so that we would be able to make the right response to those irritating circumstances. But you must understand that what God gives us here is his command for you. It's not to fix the problem as your primary goal. It's certainly not to overthrow the authority of the one over you, rather it's for you to become the person that is described here in Titus 2:9 and 10 in your workplace environment.

Look at chapter 2, verses 9 and 10 with me. The Apostle Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says,

9 Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

As a preliminary observation in terms of what we're dealing with here, not only for our own personal lives but how we can counsel and encourage one another, notice the comprehensive nature of what is written here. There are not a lot of exceptions woven into this, in fact, there aren't any that are expressed in this passage. Notice verse 9, "Urge the bond slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything." Verse 10, "not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." In everything. In every respect. This is comprehensive and I plead with you as you hear the word of God here this morning to check your heart as you're reading this and not immediately set up barriers or exceptions that apply to you. Realize that the intent of this passage is to be a comprehensive approach to how you deal with those in authority over you in the workplace. What we see in this passage and there is so much that needs to be said on this one next sentence that I'm going to say: being a Christian does not exempt you from the obligations that society has in its relationships. The fact that you are a Christian does not somehow exempt you from the responsibilities of being a good employee to your employer. Rather to the contrary, it calls you to an even higher standard than the world around you, it calls you to be faithful in that and not only to be faithful but to have an attitude that is worthy of the love that you have for Christ.

So the reason I say that is that it is just too common for Christians and I don't know any of you in your workplace environment and so it's easy for me to state this is a principle and whether this puts an arrow in your heart is up to the Holy Spirit or not, it is far too common for Christians to approach their workplace with a sense of entitlement, of selfish entitlement. I don't think they even think this way but I've seen it so often in so many circumstances that I'm convinced that it is a major problem in workplaces both secular and in Christian workplaces. Christians approach their work with a sense that having received grace from God, they are entitled to demand it from men. They are entitled to demand it and they think this way unconsciously but there's an expectation that, "God has been so gracious to me that I expect you to be gracious to me as well." Well, that's exactly the wrong attitude. You should think about life in precisely the opposite way. You should think about life from the perspective that having received favor from God, you should therefore be under obligation to give favor to men. It's not for you to demand it, it's for you to give it and that plays out in your workplace relationships as we will see.

Having read the passage, let me say just a brief word about slavery in the first century world that provides the backdrop for what Paul is saying. Paul is not directly addressing modern employment relationships as we know them today although the principles apply and it's important for us to realize that slavery in the first century was different than the American experience with slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries. It's a totally different situation. Legally speaking in that society, in that culture, a slave was a thing, although a person, a living human being, he was a thing without rights that could be bought or sold meaning that the slave could be bought or sold and that he had no legal rights of his own. To our American mindset, that sounds really foreign to the way that we think about ourselves but slaves in the Roman Empire by one estimate were about 20% of the population. There was 20% of the population in that great city that was without any legal rights. They were someone that their master could buy or sell at his whim and pleasure.

So, there is a difference there than what our modern employment experience is. They had it a whole lot worse than we do in our workplace experience and so as your hearing what's about to come, you have to realize that Paul was calling on people in more difficult situations with fewer rights than what you have in your workplace and calling them to this great standard. Well, if you're in a situation where you voluntarily entered into your employment relationship, you accepted the terms of your employment, the obligation for you to be like what Paul describes here is of even greater import.

Now having said that, it's easy in some circles for the conditions of slaves in the first century to be exaggerated for the sake of effect today. The truth of the matter is, there were slaves in every manner of level of society. There were those who were abused. There were those who were mine workers, for example, who by very nature of being slaves in the mine were expected not to have a long life span because they were just used like cattle and the intention was to use them until they died and then there would be the next slave up. So for those, slavery was a system of abuse. But in the first century, they were also slaves at other levels of society: there were teachers; there were doctors; there were municipal workers that were in this slave status. So their daily life was often better than their legal status would have suggested that it would be. So when Paul was talking to slaves, here's what's important for us today, he was talking to those across a broad spectrum of society with no legal rights but with different socioeconomic factors influencing their daily life but all of them sharing this one common trait: they were under the authority of a master who had absolute control over them. They owned them and sometimes it was abusive but sometimes it wasn't. The common theme in all of this as slaves were coming under the sound of the Gospel and as they were being converted, they were a large section of the society, there was a great crying need for instruction for them to know how to act in their situation; how they were to behave; how they were to live for Christ in this. The call of the Bible repeatedly as we're going to see in five different New Testament passages, the call is clear: the slaves weren't to rebel against their circumstances. Paul tells them in 1 Corinthians 7 to accept their status as a slave and pursue life in that way. If they were able to pursue freedom, okay do that but accept your status as a slave and this is common throughout the New Testament's instruction.

They needed to know how to conduct their daily lives. The principles of the Gospel had immediate moment-by-moment effect on their lives and it's the same way for us as we enter into our jobs day-by-day. What I want you to see out of that, so many things I want you to see out of that, but what I want you to see is that the Bible is practical, not theoretical and that being a Christian brings obligations on the way that you live and it brings obligations on the attitudes that you bring to the relationships around you. There is no such thing as a truly converted person who isn't instantly changed in all of his relationships. The whole perspective changes and so there's no such thing as walking an aisle, making a verbal profession of Christ and then going back and living the exact same way that you did. Conversion, salvation, true Christianity, changes everything. And we see that expressed in verses 9 and 10 in the specific area of the workplace relationship.

I'm going to give you four points for this morning. The first point if you're going to take notes is I just want you to see the general principle in the marketplace for Christians. The

general principle. The general principle is this: God calls you to a life of submission under the authority of the one in your workplace. Look at verse 9 with me. He says, "Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything." What follows predominately in the rest of verse 9 and verse 10 is simply an application of that general principle. We need to look at this aspect of being subject to their own masters in everything. Paul is telling us that in the workplace, to be subject means that you accept your position, you recognize and honor the authority of the one of your supervisor, of your boss, whoever it is that is over there, you recognize that authority and you honor it. You bring a spirit of compliance, a spirit of obedience to that relationship and you honor that. You honor that authority as a soldier lines up under the authority of his commanding officer, so in the same way you as a human employee line up under the human authority that God has given to that boss in your workplace. It may be that that boss is unkind, is unworthy of that respect in authority but as we're going to see, that is irrelevant to you. That is irrelevant to the way that you live because this principle of obedience, this principle of submission is not predicated on the worth of your human master. It is predicated on the supreme authority and worth of the one who in Scriptures calls you to this standard. This is the command of God upon your soul. This is what God calls you to in your employment relationship, to be subject to your own masters in everything.

Now, think with me for a moment. I'm not going to turn to all of the passages that we could in this. There's just one that I would have you turn to. Turn to Titus 3:1. What you must understand is that the principle of submission in the Christian life, submission to authority, to God-ordained authority, is woven throughout the entire existence of a Christian. Here is the point, beloved, pay attention here as well as every other thing that I say today. When you say pay attention here, you kind of diminish everything else by comparison. I've got to stop doing that but this is really important: you cannot object to the principle of submission without objecting to the whole nature of what God calls Christians to be. It's in every aspect of life. Look at Titus 3:1, he says, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed." Be subject to authorities. You know, in different places in Romans 13, God calls us to be subject to the governing authorities. In Ephesians 5:21, he tells people within the church to be subject to one another. He tells wives a verse later, to be subject to their own husbands and you can go on and you can find this illustrated in many other places, this attitude, this principle of submission. We should recognize with one another and I don't know, I have no idea who needs to really hear this, but we should recognize that the self-assertive principle that operates in our culture, that spirit of rebellion that loves to flout against rules, that loves to flout against common moral standards, that proclaims their rebellion, that calls you to be your own man, be your own woman, question authority as the bumper stickers often say. We must understand and recognize that that is absolutely satanic and contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. We serve a Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, who submitted to the will of his Father. If the eternal Son of God could submit to the will of his Father and enter into human flesh in order to accomplish his mission of dying for sinners, of dying for his church, then it's only right and proper for us to adopt that same spirit of submission, that same sense of honoring authority just as Christ honored the authority of his Father even though he was coequal with him as God, then it's

right and proper for us as Christians to honor the authority that God sees fit to place over us as well.

That's what Paul is addressing here in Titus. This is a general principle. God calls Christians to a life of submission, of subjection and angry, contentious, argumentative persons eventually forfeit their right to claim to be a Christian. In the workplace, which is the passage that is in front of us, an angry, argumentative, abusive, uncooperative person is sinning against God regardless of the kind of authority that is over him. We have to be different. This is the call of God on our lives. This is the general principle that the Scriptures called us to. Recognize the authority of your master, of your boss, and obey it. That's the call of God on your life.

Now, Paul graciously, wisely, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, goes on and explains what he means by that. He doesn't leave us to guess what that might look like and so that brings us to our second point. We've seen the general principle of submission, here in the workplace, Paul gives us the second point which is the specific application. The specific application of the point. What does submission look like in the workplace? What does it look like for one under the authority of a master? Well, first of all, as we see in verse 9, if you're taking notes you can write this down: God commands you to please your boss and don't argue with him. Please your boss and don't argue with him. This is the plain words of Scripture. Look at verse 9 with me here where he says, "Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything." "Whoa Paul, that sounds pretty serious. What do you mean by that? Can you expand on the point?" He says, "Sure, I'll be happy to. I know I'm writing this under the inspiration of God so let me tell you what I mean by that. What I mean by subjection is to be well pleasing, not argumentative." So please your boss, don't argue with him. This is a very practical outworking of what it looks like.

Here's the point: your job as a Christian employee, whether you're working for a secular company or a Christian employer, God calls you to please your boss. That's your job. It's to please your boss with what you do. Your job as a Christian worker is to make your boss happy with a good attitude and if you're going to do that, you have to abandon that sense of entitlement. I was blessed when I worked out in California and I had a little bit of supervisory responsibility, I was blessed to have many Christians who lived this way in our workplace. It made for a sweet environment in which to work. There were enough over the years, they were enough illustrations of people who sweetly come to mind who weren't like that. They stood out like a sore thumb. They wanted to be the boss. They had better ideas. They wanted to do it their way and they got angry when they didn't get their way. It happens in a Christian environment, it happens in a secular environment. What you need to make is the commitment of your heart. You've got to think about this in one sense, you've got to think about this in isolation. You've got to think about it in solitary. You've got to think about it alone in the presence of God, just thinking about how you want to live before God. Forget about your boss. Forget about your employment. Forget everything else and just realize that your primary duty of loyalty is the Lord Jesus Christ who saved you and when you start thinking about your workplace environment, you ask yourself, "Okay, Lord, what is it that you want from me?" Well, what he wants from you

is expressed right here. "I want you to be a kind of person not to generate a particular result." He wants us to be a particular kind of person in the workplace and so as you carry out your duties, you should have in your mind that you're doing this with a positive desire to please your employer. You think about your job as a Christian not primarily as the employer who has things that you might want to be a certain way or not. Your primary responsibility to Christ is to please your boss and as you please your boss, you're pleasing Christ even if there doesn't seem to be any other spiritual context to it.

Look over at Ephesians 6. This is one of the five passages that I alluded to that address this. As we go through the rest of this message, something should impress itself upon you. The Bible only has to say something one time for it to be completely authoritative and true and to engage the fullness of your intention. If the Bible says something twice, there's an emphasis there. If the Bible says it five times, God is shouting at us to pay attention that this is something that is crucial to him. Five times we see this principle repeated. We're going to look at all of them before the end of the message. And so, you are to view your work as service to Christ, not your human boss, and that means that you do it in a spirit of cooperation. Ephesians 6:5, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." You see, it's the principle that applied whether you were a slave or free. He's saying, "Be obedient to your masters. Do it with a pleasing attitude. Do it with sincerity, with fear and trembling and have the mind that you're doing this ultimately because this is what Christ calls you to, not simply purely for the horizontal perspective of your human boss."

I realize having lived through it over the course of 30 years in the workplace, I realize that that means that there's going to be times when you are submitting, where you're obeying, where you're maintaining a good attitude, when you think the dumbest things are going on around you. It is not your place when you are one under authority to substitute your judgment for that of your employer. The Bible forbids rebellious slaves. Christians should not be a back-talking, sarcastic employee. It shouldn't be a back-talking, sarcastic employer either but that's for another passage. Now let's just be real practical: if you receive a bad review in your employment, a bad performance review, if your employer tells you that your relationships are sour and you are hard to work with, that should be a time, that moment of receiving that review and hearing that news is not another opportunity for you to talk back and defend yourself, it's an opportunity for you to repent. God is speaking to you through your employer saying, "Your life is not conforming to Scripture. You need to change." Even if your job is beyond your skill level, you can still be gracious in the midst of it. You can still be kind and pleasant to work with. You can still do what you're told even if you sometimes fail at what you are asked to do.

Now, with all of that said, let me say this which applies to family relationships as well as to this work situation: it is proper within that spirit of submission, it is proper within that

spirit of obedience for an employee to make an appeal to his boss. It's proper to say, "But boss, have you considered this? Have you thought about this? Can I explain something to you that might affect your decision?" That is all perfectly appropriate. Submission does not mean simply blind obedience and an absolutely shut mouth, it does mean that you're always seeking the best interest of your employer and if you're making an appeal like that, your boss should have a sense that you're seeking his interest and not your own in what is said. So you can make an appeal, "Boss, have you considered this? Could I tell you this? Could we reconsider this?" That's all proper and appropriate within the sphere of employment and I would go on to say that the longer that you have been in your job, the more responsibility that you have, the more that you are established in the position, the greater the liberty is to make those kinds of appeals. But if you're new, if you're the low man on the totem pole, you need to realize that the chief executive officer probably isn't looking for you to redraft the marketing plan for the \$50 million company that you work with. Understand your position and just deal with your boss in a gracious way that is looking to put his interest first. But if you appeal, and he says no, then you need to comply even if you think it's incorrect because Christ does not call you to substitute your judgment for the one that has authority over you otherwise submission would be meaningless. There is no need to submit, in one sense, with people you agree with. The call to submit comes when it seems unfair, when it seems like you're being taken advantage of, when you differ in judgment. Once the person in authority has declared and made their will known, that's when you as a Christian say, "Okay, I'm with you. I'll follow." That's what it means to be well-pleasing and not argumentative.

Turn back to Titus 2 as we see the specific application that you should please your boss, not argue with him and remembering the context of what we saw in Ephesians that this is a sincere pleasing as unto Christ. There is another aspect to it here, one that reminded me of something in my past. The specific application includes this principle: don't steal, but serve. Don't steal, but serve. Look at verse 10 with me. Paul said, "be well pleasing, not argumentative," he continues to expand his understanding of the application that he wants Christians to make and he says, "not pilfering, but showing all good faith." Not pilfering, but showing all good faith. You submit in part by giving your best to your job day-by-day and consciously not taking what does not belong to you. That word for pilfering has the idea of petty theft and in the context of first century slavery, this is why that statement was important: slaves often had supervisory control over their master's possessions. They often had access to his goods or his money. Not all of them did, of course, but some of the slaves did and it wasn't uncommon just as it is not uncommon today to skim just a little bit off the top and stick it in your pocket on the assumption that your master is not going to miss it anyway. You take something for yourself that's actually been entrusted to your care for someone else's good. That's just not only thievery, that's a gross violation of trust and so Paul is saying, "Don't be like that. Don't take things that don't belong to you." This sounds so elementary, doesn't it? But we know that this is a problem, that even the smallest things that are not things that we're too appropriate for ourselves when they belong to our masters.

That principle, I don't even know if I had this passage in mind. Many, many years ago but this principle affected me as a new Christian. Before I was a Christian, I worked at a

drugstore for many years, a couple of different locations. And I was a cashier at the drugstore and as a cashier in front of us were all kinds of things to eat, chips and candy and all that stuff and I wasn't a Christian at the time but it wasn't uncommon for me to just go over and say, "There's plenty here for everybody else, I think I'll just have one while things are slow." So you eat some chips, eat some candy. Over a while that starts to accumulate. Well, no one ever challenged me on it but I was a thief. I had stolen from my employer. So when I became a Christian, years later after the fact, after I was out of the employment of that drugstore and doing something else, I was under conviction of that. I had pilfered and so I wrote to my former boss and I said, the spirit of my letter was, "Hey boss, when I used to work for you I took things. I ate food off the counter without paying for it and I've become a Christian now and I'm sorry. Here's a check in a rough estimate to try to compensate the company for what I took." I never heard back from him except that I know he deposited the check because the check came back through.

But here's what I want you to see as you're thinking about your own life and you're thinking about things as a Christian, it's not about my story, it's simply this: if you've been guilty of that, it's more than appropriate for you to make restitution. You shouldn't continue to live with the fruits of what you've taken. It's appropriate for you to make restitution and to return the fruit, the benefit of your wrongdoing. It gets that practical. We act on these things and not only do we act on them and kind of settle things horizontally, it has an effect of cleansing your conscience that, "Oh, I made that right. Do you know why I made that right? I made it right because I love Christ and this would please him. That is an indication that I have new life. That I have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ and so I am just so happy and I don't even care about that check I just sent. I'm just so glad that I belong to Christ and he set his love upon me and what a privilege it is for me to take such a simple step of obedience." You remember Zacchaeus in Luke 19? Chief tax collector? He told the Lord, he said, "If I've defrauded anybody, I'll pay them back four times as much." He repented a whole lot better than I did. I just sent a little check that I thought would cover it. I should have sent four times that. This principle of restitution. It's not just going forward, beloved, where you say, "Okay, I'm not going to take advantage of my employer. I'm not going to appropriate things that don't belong to me." You look back and if the Lord is convicting you of something, something is clear in your mind right now, "Oh, I did that?" If you can, make it right. I realize you can't always do that. You know, the boss is dead. The place is out of business or whatever. At that point, you just trust the grace of the Lord. But if you can make a right, it would honor Christ for you to do so. You see, going back to what we said earlier, thinking of it vertically, thinking about this as an audience of one, thinking about it in the presence of God rather than what men see: you see, the issue is your integrity not whether your boss missed it or not, not whether your boss would ask for it back or not. The issue is your integrity and you can't put a price on that. So don't steal.

But on the positive, serve. Look at verse 10 where it says, "but showing all good faith." Being faithful. Being trustworthy. Your boss should learn if you're a Christian, your boss should learn over time that you are one that he can trust. That your faithfulness is good. That he can rely on you. And let me say this: I'm just increasingly convinced as there is just this incredible rapid moral collapse all around us, the power of our testimony is not

going to be rising up in political retribution against our opponents. The power of our testimony is not going to be seen in us reversing the whole tide of all of the rotten things that have been going on and seeing public vindication of it, the power of our testimony as believers in Christ is going to be our quiet, individual, godly lives that are increasingly going to stand out by contrast. Because we're conditioned by a world and media that just thinks in terms of big, public things happening, we're conditioned to think that way and we define success by that. We're thinking utterly wrongly when we think that way. Focus on your own godliness. Focus on your own godly walk with Christ and we'll trust the Lord to use our humble obedience to accomplish his will even if the results aren't visible to those around us. There is power in that. There is power in a godly life that has more eternal significance than the power of political action committees that join together with unbelievers and don't have any love for Christ at the heart of what they do. They may get more donations, they may have visible things going on but if you silence the voice of the Gospel for the sake of a political agenda, you've completely missed the point of being a Christian.

So, my point here this morning is: be godly. Simplify things. I get so concerned as I see people so wrapped up in everything that's going on around us and it's just obviously stealing their joy. Well, if you want to make that stuff your secondary focus, go for it. Make your primary focus the godliness that God calls you to in passages like this. And in your employment, Christ calls you to be trustworthy, to be loyal. Look over at Colossians 3 as we look at another one of these passages. Colossians 3. I am just so grateful to the Lord that he lets us gather together week-by-week to do this. Colossians 3:22, "Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." Then Paul adds a word of warning, not against the boss but against the slave, the Christian slave who rejects that instruction. He says, "For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality." Yes, you please your boss but your ultimate goal is that you're pleasing Christ and living according to the way that he's called us to do, calling you to live after the pattern, after the example that he left us behind.

Now, go back to Titus 2 for our third point this morning. Why bother with all of this? Why bother? Why bother? It's because you love Christ. It's because you love the truth that saved you and you want it to look as good as possible in the eyes of those who see. That's why. That brings us to point 3: the compelling motivation. Why would you do this? Why would you live this way? Why would you not assert your rights every chance that you can? Why not engage arguments with your employer? Why? Here is why. Verse 10. It's really not about you. Verse 10, "so that," there it is again. We talked about that last week, didn't we? So that. So that. So that. Here's why: understand the greater principle at stake that transcends your individual situation, "so that they," these Christian slaves who are submitting to their masters, "so that," teach them to do do this, Titus, "so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." That word "adorn" is the same word from which we get the English word "cosmetics." It makes the Gospel

look good when we live this way. Your respectful attitude, your faithful service demonstrates that the Gospel brings blessing. With an unsaved boss, a faithful Christian employee loving, serving, being faithful, being skilled, doing it well, showing up on time, being trustworthy, that makes the Gospel look good to him especially when it's hard to find somebody that can read and write and fill out an appropriate application. You start to stand out. And the unspoken assumption is here that you are recognized as a Christian and you carry the Gospel with you where you go and when you do well, and when you bring blessing to others, there is a connection that says the Gospel brings blessing and produces positive results. The Gospel is credible. "The doctrine which I believe has power and makes a difference and is to be believed." Not because you're arguing theology but because you're being the kind of employee that God calls you to be.

You see, there's something implied here that's worth looking at. Unbelievers have a remnant sense of right and wrong. They apply it selectively. They almost never apply it to themselves but they recognize right and wrong when they see it. They can appreciate a good godly worker even if they don't say so and so we do this to make the Gospel look good to the people in our workplace, to honor Christ and his doctrine by the way that we live. Now listen to me, I'll use third person this time: if an unbelieving boss disciplines a Christian worker for being a bad worker, let's get something clear in our minds, that Christian is not being persecuted. He's being disciplined because he's a bad worker and it is not a justification to say, "Oh, my boss is an unbeliever and I'm a Christian. This is all about that." You can't think that way. You have to bring yourself under submission and if you're not doing the job, if you're not fulfilling the four corners of your job description and beyond and you get disciplined for that, that has nothing to do with you being a Christian. It has everything with you being a bad worker so don't try to spiritualize your bad job performance and in a sense, blame it on Christ and say, "Oh, I'm being persecuted for being a Christian." No, you're lucky to have a job when you're such a bad worker.

So that goes back to what I kind of opened with. We don't use the Gospel, we don't use Christ to excuse our bad behavior and demand favors and understanding when we're bad employees. To the contrary, we say, "I can't be like that. I must be good, faithful, trustworthy, dependable because that's what makes Christ look good." A lazy worker makes Christ look bad, a lazy Christian worker, a lazy professing Christian worker. And so our collective sense here in this room this morning as the rain pounds down on the ceiling. I like that sound. Our collective commitment should be that, "You know what? We're going to be a people that are marked out by faithful excellence in what we do," and I thank God that so many of you are already like that. All I can do and say to you is excel still more because that's what God calls us to.

Now, let's close with considering a couple of challenging situations. Point 4: the challenging situations. The challenging situations. Question one: "What if my boss is really unfair? He's just really unkind. He is just a pain in the neck. I agree with everything you said but if you knew what I was living with, you might say something different." 1 Peter 2. What if your boss is unfair? 1 Peter 2:18, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person

bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." Yeah, you may be being treated unjustly but that doesn't change the response. If you're suffering unjustly, you look to Christ. Look at verse 19, "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly." Verse 20, "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?" If you sin and are harshly treated, you're merely receiving the just desserts of your behavior is his point but he goes on and says in verse 20, "But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

Look, I understand that you have a sense of right and wrong. You have a sense that this is really unfair. This really is unjust. What's happening here isn't right. You're still called to submit to that as long as you're in that employment and you trust God to bless you for being submissive and obedient to him in the midst of that injustice and you trust that in time he'll settle the score and make it right. But you don't raise up in rebellion against your boss. You do what's right and if you suffer, you trust God for it and know that he'll bless you in the end. You say, "I don't know. I don't like that." Well, keep reading in verse 21. You see, when you have a Christological focus in life, it does a lot to silence your objections and quiet your heart. Verse 21, it's a shame in some ways that there's sometimes a paragraph break between verses 20 and 21 because he's continuing to talk about the workplace relationship. Verse 21, "For," this builds on what he just said, "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threat, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." That's all a statement about, illustrating, responding to an unfair boss. He goes on to talk and says Christ "bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed."

Yeah, it's unjust. Okay. You're a Christian. You're following one who was, in a sense, I'm using this word figuratively obviously, who was baptized into injustice. Christ was completely immersed into injustice. It was totally wrong for him to be spat upon. It was totally wrong for him to be crucified. That was the ultimate act of injustice that will ever be seen in the world. The creatures crucified their Creator. Their sinless Creator. That's unjust. And you and I need to put our own little injustices that we suffer in that perspective. "Christ, the injustice that you suffered was so far greater than mine and you're the one who calls me to submit to it just like you did it without reviling, without threatening, saying I'm going to do this or that if this continues on." No. No. No. You cry out to God and you say, "God, this is hard but I submit to you and therefore as your word says, I'll submit to my boss and I'll just trust you to work it out in time." Don't be surprised if he leaves you there for years in that condition, 10, 15, 20 years maybe. That's okay. Trust him to work it out in the long term. Maybe, maybe it takes you and me that much time to learn the lesson. Maybe we're slower students than we think we are. Maybe we're not as righteous and godly as we think we are and we need the pressure of adversity to cause the sinfulness to squirt out so that it can be wiped away. Maybe. Do you think that's possible? Do you think it's possible that maybe you're more sinful than you realize

and that God is using that adversity to shape you into who he wants you to be? It's possible. Be patient. Remember Christ and submit.

You see, your goal in your injustice, I've got to say this, beloved: the goal for you, the goal for your heart, the aim of the desires should be not to get what you want in your situation, rather your goal should be to develop the patient endurance in your character that's described here in this passage. The goal is for you to become a patient, enduring Christian, not to get instant relief from the thing that you want. I know that's hard. I've been there a long time but the Lord is faithful and Christ is worthy of this preeminent act of sacrifice from you.

Second challenging situation. It's a different kind of temptation: what if my boss is unfair? We answered that from 1 Peter 2. Here's a second one: what if my boss is a Christian? That actually brings a different kind of temptation that you need to be aware of and avoid. You're tempted to slack off because you know that your boss is not as likely to crack down on you. He's a Christian. You've seen him be gracious and you're tempted to slack off. Scripture says that if you have a Christian boss, you should work all the harder and treat him with even greater respect. Look at 1 Timothy 6 and we'll close with this. Verse 1, "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as," what? "Worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against." Do you see it again? Bad Christian employees discredit the Gospel. They bring shame on the Gospel with the way they conduct themselves. He goes on in verse 2 and addresses this question: what about a Christian boss? He says, "Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles."

Here's the bottom line, beloved. I'm closing with this: we believe in the providence of God here. We believe that God orchestrates our circumstances to accomplish his purposes in our lives. Just like he orchestrates the entire universe and moves it all to accomplish his end, so he does it in the lives of individual Christians as well. Beloved, the starting point for your difficult work situation is to realize that God in his providence has orchestrated this for you. This is what God has for you in life right now and he has given you enough in the Scriptures from what he wants from you in the way of response to it. It's a challenge. It was a challenge for those martyrs to spill their blood over the Bibles they were trying to protect. There are all kinds of challenges. We're not going to have perfection. We expect difficulties in this life. "Man is born for trouble as the sparks fly upward," Job 5 says. When you see this coming into your life especially in the workplace, don't be bitter about it. Don't rebel against it. Just realize, "Oh, the providential stage on which I'm to glorify Christ. Oh, another example that the life to come is going to be better than the life here. Oh, yeah, Christ already did this in a greater sense and he did it on my behalf. Lord, I humble myself before you and give you my heart in this situation and I will live as you have told me to do as a grateful recipient of the benefits of your shed blood."

That's our challenge. That's our call. Let's rise up and meet it.

Pray with me.

Father, I thank you for the clarity of your word. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who forged the path long before us of not reviling and not threatening even when he was suffering unjustly. Lord, I know, you know more importantly, you know that there are people here that are greatly frustrated in their work and suffering unjustly even. I ask you for an added measure of grace that would help them move forward and even that you would show your grace in a way of bringing relief to the conflict that engages their consternation. Father, for those of us that have enjoyed over the years Christian bosses, Christian work environments, thank you for that blessing. For those that have authority over others, Father, may they realize that they exercise that authority as one themselves under the authority of Christ. Help us, Father, in our daily lives. Help us to accept this stage of daily obedience upon which to live out our lives and to glorify you. Help us to do it the way that you call us to do it and we trust you that as we do that, the doctrine of God will be adorned, that you will be pleased and that you will use our lives in a way that pleases you. Help us to that end we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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