

Titus 2:9–10

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[0 : 00] Today's passage is in the book of Titus chapter 2 verses 9 to 10. Titus 2, 9 to 10.

Bond servants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything. They are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning, and let me add my word of welcome to Christ Church Chicago this morning.

We're so glad that you are here with us. As we continue this morning, our series from Paul's letter to Titus, about a church that's worth joining.

A church that's worth joining. This morning, I would just like to submit to you that a church that is worth joining has members who maintain their gospel walk at work.

[1 : 26] They maintain their gospel walk at work. It was my first job.

I was 15 this particular summer. And I was working at a fried chicken restaurant called Bojangles. They don't have one of those in Chicago, but those of you from down south, Tom Yates, my friend. Yeah. I had my little Bojangles uniform. And I was assigned to Fry's at this time.

And I was proud of it. This one Friday evening, I was anxious to get off work because there was going to be a party at one of my friend's houses that, surprisingly, my parents were going to let me go to.

I hadn't been on the job very long. And this night, I decided to ask my manager, who also happened to be a deacon at my church, what happened to the leftover chicken at the end of the night?

[2 : 42] He said, well, sometimes we actually have to end up throwing some of it away. So if you're hungry, you can have a couple of pieces before you leave.

I think all I heard was throwing away and you can have. Because I made the decision to grab several pieces of chicken and take it to the party with me.

So I show up at the party, still in my Bojangles uniform, with a bucket of chicken, handing it out and bragging how I could get it for free.

Well, obviously, I didn't bring enough chicken because a fight broke out over who did and did not get a piece.

No, I mean a literal fight. So parents were called. Police were called. Somehow, the manager at Bojangles got called.

[3 : 55] It was an absolute mess. And needless to say, that was my last day working at Bojangles.

So, so I was fired. The manager pulled me to the side and said, let me tell you why I have to let you go.

Not only did you misrepresent Bojangles in full uniform in public, you also misrepresented God at Bojangles by taking this chicken in the first place.

It was my first lesson in what it meant to maintain my gospel walk at work.

If a person spends five days a week, eight hours a day from their mid-20s until retirement age, they will spend over 90,000 hours of their life at work.

[5 : 12] And that's just a 40-hour work week, which many do much more than. And that doesn't include hours at school.

So how does all that work and the mission field of the workplace you spend so much time at tie in with God's ultimate plan and purpose?

Well, our text this morning puts before us the incredible responsibility and opportunity that we have as Christians, as those who now wear the uniform of righteousness to live out their faith through their daily work.

Whether it's full-time or part-time employment, self-employment, at school, as a student, as a stay-at-home mom or dad, or as a volunteer.

We all represent the kingdom and we should do it well. Paul gives us practical instruction on what our gospel walk should look like at work.

[6 : 21] And with that, saints, let me say it one more time, that a church that is full of Christians who walk the gospel walk, wherever they are, is a church worth joining.

If you've been following our series, particularly starting here in chapter 2 over the past few weeks, Paul has been instructing Titus about the personal character traits needed in all the various stages of life.

These character traits that are needed to set the church in order and exemplify godliness and Christian living. He speaks to older men, older women, younger women, and younger men. And now he shifts to the social, cultural ways that work takes place. And how the Christians should carry themselves within that system.

How one should maintain their gospel walk at work. Well now, as we dive further into that, we have to first stop and deal with what may be, at least initially, the alarming and challenging opening line of our text.

[7 : 46] At least it was for me. It's the top of verse 9. Bond servants, slaves, are to be submissive to their own masters in everything.

Whoa. Wait just a minute. I would be less than honest if I did not say that these opening words did not give me pause and cause me to wince just a little bit.

It also made me wonder what straw I pulled to be assigned this particular text to preach in the first place. But since I have, let's go get it.

And briefly address it head on. As an African American man, I am acutely sensitive to this language. As I am sure many of you may be for various reasons.

It evokes for me the imagery of the horrific, brutal, dehumanizing, race-based evil and abusive institution of slavery.

[9 : 05] Particularly in 18th and 19th century America. And the transatlantic slave trade. That institution has left searing scars down through generations that still ripple through our society today.

So much so that Sunday morning worship is still one of the most segregated hours in America. But let me quickly add that it's also another reason why the vision at Christ Church Chicago is so audacious and inspiring.

But let me also add that this is even more challenging when you consider how this particular text and others like it were weaponized and used to justify this wicked and abusive system of modern slavery.

But don't let anyone confuse you. The Bible is very clear about its condemnation of the kidnapping, sale, and enslavement of people.

This same Paul speaks against it in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 9 and 10. And even in the Mosaic law of the Old Testament, Exodus 21 expressly forbids it.

[10 : 34] It was wrong then. It was wrong in 18th, 19th century America. And it is wrong now as millions still all over the world are the victims of human trafficking and the sex slave trade.

Look, be clear. The modern slave trade was and is antithetical to biblical justice and righteousness. So then as we look at it at the opening of our text, it is important to understand the context of first century servitude and how it differed from our modern interpretation of slavery.

Slavery in the first century Greco-Roman world, which encompassed literally over a third of the population at that time, was often more like an economic situation and agreement where people may have given themselves into slavery to pay off a debt, becoming what we would call indentured servants.

Or perhaps they became slaves as a consequence of war, reparations. However they came to be, they were not, as Paul condemns in 1 Timothy chapter 1, stolen men.

[12 : 04] He is not here supporting the stealing, kidnapping, and forcing people into servitude against their will in this way. Let me give you just a couple of differences.

Unlike modern slavery, where the entire system was predicated upon the idea that one group of people, based on their race or perceived physical appearance, was somehow more suited for enslavement in ways that others are not, this type of servitude was not race-based.

Slaves looked and lived like everyone else and were never segregated from the rest of society. The fact that Paul even included this section in this letter is an indication that first there were obviously many slaves in the church.

And then that Christians probably shocked the larger culture by mixing slaves and masters in the same social setting of the church service.

Many had various kinds of rights and privileges that could be defended in court, including marriage and the ownership of property.

[13:19] Financially, some servants made the same wages as free laborers, with some even becoming quite wealthy, often acquiring enough personal capital to buy themselves out.

Additionally, many were extremely educated, with many being great teachers who had great reputations and status being attached to well-known and powerful families.

Still others managed large concerns for their masters, just like we learned a few weeks ago about Joseph in the Old Testament, who was second in command but was yet a slave.

So as you can see, though there were abuses, and Paul later directs his message to masters and how they should treat those in their employ, and though it had to be at times extremely difficult, this system was much different than what we know of modern slavery today.

As we look at this word slave or bondservant in verse 9, it's translated in the Greek to the noun *doulos*, which refers to one in a servile state, or more specifically, one who gives himself up to another's will.

[14:50] And with that, let me say that no one in this room escapes it. As the great evangelist Bob Dylan once wrote, you've got to serve somebody.

You young people can look him up later. Paul, in fact, uses this same *doulos* language in describing himself in Titus 1, verse 1, as Paul, a servant of God.

People of Paul's day would not be so struck by the fact that he was calling himself a slave as they would be amazed by who it was he said he was serving. There it is, church.

There it is. This is what binds all of us together. Every race, every color, every creed, every culture, every background, we are all servants of the Most High God.

Whatever he says goes. Wherever he leads, we follow. Whatever he commands, we obey. So then understanding this first century context, this word *doulos* might be more broadly defined for us today as those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men.

[16:21] It's this definition that makes this text most applicable to us and probably more analogous to employment in our society, the employee-employer relationship.

You must think today as we walk through this text of what God is saying to you through his word about how you carry out your work, wherever, whatever, and however difficult at times that may be. It's also about how you maintain your walk while doing your work because ultimately you are doing it as unto the Lord, which really gets to the heart of our text today.

Now, because Crete obviously had some issues, Paul now gives practical advice as he has throughout this chapter with five character qualities that should mark every Christian and their gospel walk as they carry out their work.

It was not only for them then, it is instructive for us now. They are to be submissive, pleasing, harmonious, honest, and faithful.

[17:40] It starts, as we just discussed at the top of verse 9, with them being submissive. This really is about submission to authority.

I know that's a bad word in our culture today where it seems to be cool to defy authority. But submission is a virtue that reflects humility, obedience, and trust in God's divine plan.

It's not a sign of weakness. It's actually a sign of a mature Christian and an essential part of our gospel walk. As employees, we should commit ourselves to the mission and vision of our employer. Now, I'm not talking about submitting yourself to anything that is abusive or in direct opposition to God's word. No. I'm saying we should, to the best of our ability, follow the guidance and instructions given by our employer, and willingly yield our preferences with an attitude of humility and respect. Growing up, we didn't have a grievance or suggestion box on our counter that we could anonymously slip recommendations into.

[19:04] And on the rare occasion when we dared to question some directive that came from our parents, the best answer we got was, because I said so.

Now, in my mind, notice I said in my mind, that was a totally insufficient answer.

But I learned over the years, sometimes the hard way, to work with it and submit myself to those directives.

I know, I know, I know, some of you might work in difficult workplaces. I know some of you have difficult bosses.

I mean, you all should meet the guy I work for. Yeah. Woo! But the ability to submit, even when it's hard, even when it's challenging, even when it seems unfair, serves as a living testimony of our faith in the transformative power of the gospel in our lives.

[20 : 14] And if you have yet to experience that power, that changes lives. Today can be your day, because God has already provided the way for salvation by sending his son to sacrifice himself for us.

All you have to do is just give him your life today and you can have free forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope.

He goes on to say that they should be, Christians should be, at work well-pleasing. What is your attitude at work?

Have you ever gone somewhere to have someone serve you who obviously hated their job? And waiting on you was the last thing they seemed to want to be doing.

You pull up to the drive-thru and you hear, ah, yeah. May I help you?

[21 : 24] Well, first, yes, you could explain to me why they let you work at this window. Because with that attitude, you can't help anybody.

And now I'm kind of concerned that your attitude may have somehow impacted the way you fried my chicken in the back. So I think I'm good.

Do people on your job at your school actually want to work with you? Or do they hate to see you coming? This adjective, well-pleasing, is usually used in Scripture to refer to man's relationship to God.

But essentially, that's still what this is. What would your attitude be like? What kind of work would you produce if the Lord Jesus Christ himself were your employer?

Well, he is. That's the point. Colossians chapter 3 says, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you'll receive the inheritance as your reward.

[22 : 42] You are serving the Lord, not just your boss. And when glorifying Jesus is your primary motivation at work, it reflects on your face, it reflects in your attitude, and the work itself becomes an act of worship.

The text goes on to say that you're not supposed to be argumentative. Be harmonious. You know the one. Always a complaint.

Always a counterpoint. Always a disagreement. Always an opposition to any directive, advice, or requirement. This does not represent godly character or humility, and it will destroy your Christian witness in the workplace.

Whether it be your boss or professor or teacher or client, we are called to show respect and deference to those in authority over us.

It's what my wife and I would regularly teach our kids especially those girls of ours. I know you may think it should be done differently.

[23 : 57] I know you may even have a valid point, but everything you think you don't have to say, everything that is true is not always necessary.

You're the child. That's the teacher. Do what you've been told to do and maintain your gospel walk. The text then goes on to say, don't pilfer.

Be honest. Don't steal. Don't be a thief. Don't take what isn't yours. I won't spend a lot of time here. Paul is pretty straightforward in his instruction, but let me just give you a couple of statistics real quick. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says, employee dishonesty costs American businesses over \$50 billion a year.

They estimate that 75% of all employees steal at least once and half of those steal over and over again.

[25 : 04] The Chamber also reports that one out of every three business failures is a direct result of employee theft.

It doesn't matter if it's pencils, paper clips, petty cash, or fried chicken from Bojangles. Perhaps it's not something physical at all.

Maybe it's you leaving early when you should be staying late. Maybe it's calling in sick when the only thing you're actually sick of is your job. whatever it is, rationalizations like they owe it to me. Well, I've earned it. They won't miss it. It's inexcusable. And stealing can never be justified. Luke 12 says, a person who cannot be trusted with small matters must not be trusted with large ones.

A life of integrity, even at work, is a life where your actions match your beliefs. And if you don't have that, you have nothing. And now your gospel walk is on crutches.

[26 : 22] Lastly, Paul uses this final characteristic, faithfulness, faithfulness, words, Thank you.

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[29 : 09] Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[32 : 03] Thank you.

Thank you. don't know you, don't believe you, don't even like you. God, let us stand tall and be what you've called us to be and walk out our gospel walk even at work.

In your son's name we pray, amen.