

The Submissive Servant

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0:00] Please open to Titus chapter 2. And as you're turning there, I'm going to say, beautiful displays up here, the red and white flowers with the sprigs of pine branches.

! Looks nice. I probably messed it all up, but it's beautiful. But it looks very good, and it's a reminder of the Advent season upon us. And you may have noticed that in your bulletin on the end page there.

Just the Sundays that we have where we do Advent, we light the candles, and the Sunday of preparation, love, joy, God's gift, all coming up.

And this season is pretty exciting because on December 8th, we have a baptismal service. We're actually going to have people getting wet in the service, or near the end of it, actually, because I want to dry off afterwards.

But Will and Henry Richards have sought this for several months now, and we finally are able to land in a spot. So Ed abandoned them by saying, hey, I want to get baptized in the summer while it's still warm.

[1:11] So we did that at the pool. But that's coming up on December 8th. We'll be praying for them. December 15th, we've got Christmas caroling after the service, so please pack a lunch and come prepared to sing.

So it's going to be, and we've got a lot going on in December. I'm really excited about it, where we can focus on giving praise and thanks to Jesus and to God for Jesus.

So it's going to be a great time. So that just made me think as I was coming up here, I was like, man, those are beautiful. They look really nice. I have nothing to do with them. I don't even know the proper terminology, but they look great.

All right, returning to Titus 2, I'd like to remind you that we're being instructed on the character of a healthy church, character possessed by older men and women and passed down to younger men and women.

And just a reminder that character is a believer's conformity to the image of Christ and is ultimately a reflection of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of an individual believer.

[2:14] And as we do this each individually, we also see it collectively as the church. As we approach the text today, we encounter a word that I think requires some explanation as we here in America have quite a sour experience with the issue of slavery.

And we come to verses 9 and 10 where you've got bond servants, or maybe some translations are slaves. And this is, for some reason, is a problematic issue for Christians to come across and to deal with and to give any explanation to as people who are critical of the Bible, of Christianity. And certainly we have a very checkered past, to say the least, as it relates to Christians who've dealt with this issue of slavery. And so it comes up in Scripture, we're like, well, what do we do with this?

I want to give you a little bit of a background and deal with that before we continue on, because Paul deals with bond servants, dealing with slaves right here. So the Greek word that's translated as bond servant or slave is the word *doulos*.

And it literally means one who is under submission or under bondage. Slavery existed in most cultures in the ancient world and in all the cultures surrounding the land of Israel during biblical times.

[3:42] So it was a very common occurrence. It was a very common happening all around in the ancient Near East. A slave could be owned by the state, such as publicly owned slaves in Athens, for instance.

Those slaves served as the police force in Athens, Greece. They could also be, of course, as we understand and know, owned by individuals.

So slaves and slavery isn't just what we know and what we've come to understand in our westernized eyes and what our experience was here in America.

It was different depending on the context. The majority of slaves were prisoners of war who were sold into slavery. And slavery could take the form of debt slavery, in which people sold themselves or their children to clear their debts.

It could be a punishment for a crime. It could be the birth of children to slaves. They then now become slaves. The enslavement of victims of piracy or war, as I've mentioned, a lot of slaves were prisoners of war.

[4:53] So it was very common in the ancient world. In the Greco-Roman world, owning slaves was not limited to the rich, but many households had at least one.

The Greeks and Romans both employed a system in which slaves could own property, earn money, and buy their freedom. Slavery provided the labor for large portions of agriculture and handicraft. Those who wanted skilled workers often used slaves rather than free men. Thus, many slaves were more economically secure than many free wage laborers.

The Old Testament seems to assume that slavery is part of the human experience and provides the Israelites with regulations for slavery. You go into the law, into the Pentateuch there, and there are regulations given to the Israelites for their treatment of individuals who are slaves.

Now, the Old Testament does not condemn slavery outright, but the Bible, as you read through it and as we go through it, consistently has a theme of being liberated from slavery.

[6:02] So it's definitely, it's not an enviable position, or not a desirable position to be a slave. In the New Testament, slavery is accepted as an institution.

It's not endorsed, but it is accepted. And just as in the Old Testament, slavery is taken for granted and is not explicitly condemned. In fact, you see, both Jesus and Paul use slave imagery as metaphors with positive connotations.

Jesus, for instance, in Mark 10, verses 42 through 44, portrays a true follower, a true follower of his as a slave. I'll read that for you.

Mark 10, verses 42 through 44, Jesus called them to him and said to them, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lorded over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, but shall not be so among you.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. So as followers of Christ, he calls his disciples to be slaves of all people.

[7:16] Again, just using slavery as the imagery there. Jesus, in Matthew 10, 24 and 25, a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.

If they've called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household? So again, the master-slave relationship in relation to our relationship with Jesus and God.

We are slaves, we are servants, and if they've mistreated him, how much more can we expect that as his servants? In Romans 6, verses 16 through 18, one of my favorite passages in Scripture, Paul equates the condition of a believer to slavery.

Where he says, Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness.

But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

[8:29] So the reality is that slavery in and of itself was an institution that existed in the ancient world, existed at the time of Paul, and nowhere in his writings do you see him saying, well, you've got to rise up against the system, you've got to change the laws and all that stuff.

Rather, it was understood to have existed, and now what we're going to see in Titus is the behavior and character of those who were Christians and slaves and what that was expected of them.

And then the greater reality in Romans 6, as I just read, the fact that all believers recognize that we are slaves to righteousness. No, everyone is a slave to somebody in reality, or into something in

reality, either of sin, which leads to death, or no, we are obedient, and we've become slaves of righteousness, and we're living out godly character.

So slavery is a touchy subject and issue to talk about in our culture and our world because of America's history with that, but we cannot ignore it.

And certainly as you come across it in Scripture, you cannot ignore the reality that it existed. And to be honest, in the ancient world, they didn't have a country like the United States of America where you could actively stand against it and petition against it.

[9:55] Typically, if you took that stand against your government, you lost your life. So America is a very unique system and experiment where we have the opportunity to stand against what we feel is an injustice and wrong and petition to see right done.

So that's a little bit of background on slavery that it existed, and Paul never advocated for, you know, rise up against the government to change it because that just was not an option for them back then.

All right. Now, picking up in Titus 2, we come to this fifth and surprising group of believers to be addressed as these bond servants and these slaves. So we'll read verses 9 and 10.

I'm sorry, 2 through 10. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, and love in steadfastness. Older women, likewise, are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine.

They are to teach what is good. And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

[11:13] Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

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.

Father, thank you for the reading of your word. Please give us understanding as we move forward. In Jesus' name, amen. Matthew Henry, in addressing this text, says that servants must not think that their mean and low state puts them beneath God's notice or the obligations of His laws, that because they are servants of men, they are thereby discharged from serving God.

No. Servants must know and do their duty to their earthly masters, but with an eye to their heavenly one. And Titus must not only instruct and warn earthly masters of their duties, but servants also of theirs, both in His public preaching and private admonitions.

So Matthew Henry recognized that servants, bond servants, slaves in His society were not well, they weren't looked upon very well.

[12:50] They weren't given much status or value. And the fact that Paul is addressing them here in Titus is shocking, but also shows the fact that God values men and God values women because they are image bearers of His.

That Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, including those who may not have been looked upon or is not looked upon favorably. The reality is that in Christ, there is no social superiority. There is no social distinction. There's no social classes and hierarchy. Galatians 3.28 says, there is neither Jew nor Greek. There's neither slave nor free.

There's no male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And again, it's not that all that is eliminated. We've got to be careful, especially in our day and age today, when we're saying there's no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female.

There are those distinctions. There are those differences. But the fact is that when you come to Christ, the social status and differences that exist because of that are wiped out and wiped clean.

[14:11] That we come equally to Christ in need of salvation. And we call on Him for it, and He offers it to us, no matter who we are, where we're at, socially speaking.

And as I've already mentioned, Paul does not address the condition of slavery. He offers no judgment about its basic fairness or morality. He simply recognizes that it exists and deals with the attitude that Christian bond slaves should have toward their own masters.

And whether those masters were believers or not. And one application to today, because in America, praise the Lord, we don't have slavery, at least not in the way in which we understand it

and see it in this text or in history and in our history.

No, we don't have people owning slaves in that regard, so praise God for that. But one application we have today is that people equate this and use this passage to talk about the relationship between employers and employees.

And employees being seen as the servant and the employer as the master in that sense, the one who's giving instruction and direction. So I think it's an appropriate application.

[15:33] And so maybe where you're sitting at, that's what you need to look at it as, as, okay, this is an employer-employee type of situation that I need to take from. And so what does Paul give?

What's he say to these bond servants? First, he tells them to be submissive. To be submissive. The Greek word is *hupotasso*, and it's often used in a military sense.

So those of you military folk may have a clear understanding of this, of a soldier's relationship to a superior officer. Literally, it means to get into rank, to fall in line.

Like you've got your officer, that's ahead of you. You don't butt heads. I can't imagine what that would look like in the Marines, Eric, if you butt heads with your superior officer. Maybe nothing would happen.

I have no idea, but I'd imagine you probably don't want to do that. And that's what Paul's getting at here. He's telling these bond servants, he's saying, be submissive. Fall in line.

[16:34] Recognize they have that superior rank. They have control and authority over you. And the reality is that submission is the key to the order in all social structure that we see.

So in marriage, you have the wife who's to submit herself to her husband as to the Lord. In the family, you have the children submitting to the authority of their parents. In the government, you have citizens who are to honor the king and all those who are in authority over them.

And so it is as well in the economic environment that wherever there is work going on, those who are the employees are to be submissive to those who are over them. They're employers.

So we need to keep in keeping that in mind that we recognize that we work for somebody.

Now there are people out there, you own your own business, maybe you don't work for anybody. I don't know how that works out here. Other than you've got, you know, you still have to answer, right? You still have paperwork to submit, you answer the government regulations and officials and all that stuff.

[17:41] There's always somebody over you, right? That's always going to happen. So you just recognize that you've got to submit to their expectations. The word *masters* translates the Greek word from which we get, the Greek word is *despotes*.

Hear that word *despotes*. It sounds like a familiar English word. *Despot*. So the word *masters*, it literally means a person with absolute authority and power.

Despotes. So if bond slaves are obligated to submit to their absolute and often cruel and arbitrary masters, how much more are free believers obligated to submit to an employer, even one who is mean, unreasonable, and overbearing?

We've had those, I've had those instances. I don't want to assume on you. I've had those instances where I didn't really care much for my boss. I didn't, we didn't see eye to eye and it was just a terribly hard situation.

Not as hard as some people have had it, I'm sure. But it's, I didn't like it. It made going into work very hard each day. I was happy to leave and wasn't so pleased to return.

[18:58] I don't know if you've ever had that experience or understand what that's like, but it's tough. But the reality is, they're the one over me.

They're the, they're the one that I was under and that I had to listen to, that I had to follow their orders and do as they, they were insisting that I needed to do even though they were wrong.

I will stand by that, Janie. They were wrong, but I did what they told me to do and then secretly rejoiced when they realized they were wrong.

But 1 Peter 2, 18 and 19 says, servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.

For this is a gracious thing. When mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. Realizing in that situation that your attitude, your character can make a difference in the life of another individual.

[20:07] They may be, they may be the worst boss ever. Right? And you just, you just grit your teeth, you go about doing what you need to do and you also do it, honestly, you should be doing it

with thankfulness.

And to be thankful for the opportunities that God is giving you to impact this individual. Returning to that workplace, that work environment.

One of my bosses wasn't so bad, but being one of the only believers in the joint there, it was very difficult as I sought to live with good character.

and their decision making and their line of conversation and everything was always, well, questionable. One thing that was, was, that I was informed of by my direct boss was that he appreciated my attitude towards things.

He appreciated, you know, that I did things as I was asked to do to the best of my effort, to the best of my ability. And he said, even though he's not a Christian, he could see that I was.

[21 : 25] So, it just shows that no matter how difficult of a relationship you might have or a scenario you might find yourself in, your character matters. And I'll even bring it down to say that, you know, kids in school, you have that teacher, you got that teacher, right?

You know that teacher, the one that no one wanted because they're just the meanest teacher you could have. They're just so, well, I mean, parents would look at it and realize, you know, buy the book, you know, good, disciplined teacher.

But you got them and you're like, I don't like this one bit. We can't have any fun. You need to, in your scenario, in your situation, be mindful to be respectful and loving and kind toward that teacher or towards those students.

whatever the situation, I'll keep it with the teacher, student because we're talking about master slaves and employer, employee. Your character matters and is a direct reflection of your relationship with God and the goodness of God.

So, be submissive, Paul says, to their own masters and everything. They're to be well-pleasing. To be well-pleasing is to be committed to excellence in one's work.

[22 : 46] It's not doing just enough to get by. I will now bring in the teacher-student relationship once more to the podium here. As a teacher, it drove me nuts, the kids who did just enough to get by.

Just, like, just answer the question just enough. Like, man, there's more. Just give me more. Give me more. And they're like, no, the question asked this, that's all you get, man. Oh, it drives me nuts. I don't know what that's like. I don't know if that really plays into part in math. Like, I think math is just straightforward. Here's the question, there's the answer, that's it. Although, I was always told, show your work.

So, maybe there's something there too, or more. Right, Donovan? We show your work. Donovan shows his work, right? I knew it.

I knew it. It's always those ones that do well in math that don't show their work. But we get it right. It doesn't matter, does it? But it does. It does. So, you're not doing just enough to get by.

[23 : 47] You're putting in a hundred percent effort. It's putting forth the very best effort in all you do, remembering for whom you are doing it. And this is where, as believers, we have a different perspective.

We have a different ambition about us. In Colossians 3, verses 23 and 24, 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, you are serving the Lord Christ. When we do our work, whatever it is, whether it's school work, math homework, it's science, it's going into that job you don't like to go to, it's sitting under that oppressive, mean boss or whatever.

Wherever you are, you're doing your work a hundred percent effort realizing that it's not for that person you're working, it's for the Lord. And we want to do, we want to give it all to God because He gave His all for us.

We work heartily as for the Lord and not for men. We're respectful to men because of our relationship to God. Our well-pleasing efforts ought to be an overflow of our spiritual worship to the Lord.

[25 : 03] Romans 12 verses 1 and 2, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. And so through testing, through trials, through hardships, through uncomfortable situations, you are proving what is the will of God, you're showing it forth, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

And you're doing it because you're giving yourself fully to God and you're putting yourself on the altar saying, Lord, I'm yours 100% and you're being transformed by the renewing of your mind, you're being in the Word of God, you're memorizing it and you're committing yourself to it and you're committing yourself to living by it and you're recognizing that everything you're doing then in life is an act of worship to God.

So whatever your situation is and that's what Paul ultimately is getting at here with bond servants and slaves, he says, look, you have a horrible situation and I wouldn't want that on anybody but the reality is you're in that situation and now you need to be submissive, you need to be well-pleasing, you need to be working, you need to be working hard and doing the best you can in all that you do because it is your act of worship to God in this situation.

[26:32] The believer recognizes that our purpose is to bring glory to the Lord in all we do. 1 Corinthians 10.31, if you haven't memorized it, you better memorize it. Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

We do everything to the glory of God and that whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. 2 Corinthians 5.9, wherever we are, we make it our aim to please God and it's pleasing to God when we are respectful and loving and compassionate toward those who don't deserve it in our eyes.

A believer cannot be well-pleasing if they're argumentative. That brings us back to the text here where Paul says they're to be well-pleasing, not argumentative. They're not mouthing off.

That's not well-pleasing to God or to your boss or to your teacher, to your authority. In our day of self-centeredness and self-elevation, being argumentative is almost a way of life for some people, including unfortunately some Christians.

We thrive on being argumentative and getting our point out there and winning our battles that way. But being argumentative is the opposite of being submissive and well-pleasing.

[27:48] Now, if you disagree with your boss on a matter, then you privately bring it up to them or you've got HR that you go to. There are means in which to deal with those matters.

If a teacher is being unjust and unright, it's not right what they're doing. And I'm not talking about giving you homework to do, like other stuff that's taken place.

You go through the proper channels. You talk to them, you talk to your parents, you talk to them, you talk to the assistant principal, whatever the channels are in your school, to get that taken care of in order to let your disagreement be known.

You don't do it at the expense of your testimony. You're not argumentative with people and saying not nice things and that's all I'm going to say about that.

But you go through the proper channels. Philippians 2, verses 14 and 15, Paul writes, do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

[29:00] That's a great passage. I mean, you pull so much into it, especially that, among whom you shine as lights in the world. That sounds a lot like what Jesus told his disciples to do, that you are the light of the world.

And so, you know, go do good things and people will glorify your Father in heaven because of what you have done that is good and right and acceptable.

But we have a good attitude and we have a good reputation of working hard so that it brings glory to God. We're children of God and we're in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation and that feels like an understatement today.

But I would say that Paul, what Paul experienced in his day would be very similar to what we experience in our day today. The experiences themselves may be different as far as scale, but the experience is the same because of sin.

What else does Paul say to the bond servants? They're to be well-pleasing, not argumentative. And he goes on to say, he reverses it, he says, he has a positive and then a negative.

[30:16] Like, well-pleasing, not argumentative. Now he goes, not pilfering, but showing all good faith. So it's like, you know, positive, negative, negative, positive. It's just a construction of the text, but it happens often in Paul's writings.

So, I want to take showing good faith. Not pilfering is part of it, but showing good, all good faith. And the believer shows good faith or faithfulness by proving themselves to be trustworthy.

Are you a trustworthy person? Put yourself on the other side. Would you consider yourself a trustworthy employee or worker? Would you consider yourself a trustworthy student?

What do you do behind the back of your authority? That goes into the integrity issue we talked about a little bit last week. So what takes place?

Are you a trustworthy person with what you're given? And that takes time to establish through consistent God-honoring behavior and integrity.

[31:24] A Christian worker is to show honesty by not pilfering. Pilfering means to put aside for oneself or to misappropriate something. Usually you think of it in lines of money.

You know, your misappropriation of money or putting it aside for your own benefits and all that. And one example of this in Scripture is in Acts 5 with Ananias and Sapphira.

Right? After selling a piece of property they gave only part of the proceeds to the church after claiming they gave the full amount. And they were not obligated to sell their property. They didn't have to do that.

They didn't have to give any of the proceeds to the church. But by giving less than they claimed they lied to men and to God. That amounted to, that basically is pilfering.

Right? You're like, okay, this is how much is actually there but I'm going to keep a little bit for myself. and that was so detestable in the eyes of God that he killed them on the spot.

[32:28] That's how big of a deal it is to God. Now, they could have sold their property and said, hey, we're bringing 15% of the proceeds. Be honest about it.

But they lied. They lied to men. They lied to the Holy Spirit and they were punished for it. Cost them their lives. The Christian employee is not to leave his loyalty in doubt but is to give ample evidence of it.

Are you a trustworthy individual in what you are given to do? As a student, are you a trustworthy individual? And this is something, like, with the amount that we have at our fingertips through the internet, you could just not do the work yourself.

yourself and just look things up and it will do it for you in different ways and such. But are you being a trustworthy student by doing the hard work yourself? I had a student, they made no bones about it.

They used to go, so the curriculum that I was using for history, like, it was online through Quizlet. You could get, like, literally all the questions that were asked for the tests or reviews and all that.

[33:46] Man, they go on there, oh, they're already here, there's the question, there's the answer. They were up front with me about that. They said, that's what I do. I'm like, really? So I started changing the questions.

But that was not a trustworthy individual. Even though they were honest with me about it because I called them out on it, they were still not being trustworthy. Are you being trustworthy with what you're given to do?

Or are you just taking the shortcuts and trying to get out from doing the hard work? And finally, verse 10, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

This word adorn, all right, so I've given you different words today. One of them, despotase, you heard the despot in it. I'm going to give you this one. Cosmeo.

Cosmeo. What does that sound like? What? Cosmetics. Yes. And I know enough from my time working at Target that cosmetics is what you put it on to make yourself look different than you actually are.

[34:55] And I don't know who goes into the cosmetics section these days, but in those days, women, that's what they did. It was the common area where there was people going and steal things.

And it was also one of our higher grossing areas because of just how many people go in for cosmetic purposes. And so what do you do when you're applying cosmetics? You're changing the look.

You're making yourself look a certain way. Now Paul was not speaking, obviously, of physical, superficial adornment, right? This cosmeo here.

But he's saying, what are you to put on? It's the doctrine of God our Savior. What makes the church attractive and influential in the world for the Lord is not its strategies, it's not its programs, but it's the virtue and holiness of its people.

It's the trustworthiness of its people. It's the character of the people in the church. We can never outdo the world in what the world does. We have some really gifted musicians in the church and we have gifted musicians that are Christians in culture, went to concert a few weeks ago, absolutely loved it.

[36:08] Zach Williams, Toby Mack, Mercy Me, gifted musicians, loved what they brought to the table. But in the end, they ultimately could never outdo the world in that type of entertainment because the world has its own attractiveness.

But what makes them different from secular entertainers is that they seek to honor God in their lives and through what they do. And they live lives that are honoring and glorifying to God and they work hard at what they do and they're not pilfering, they're not argumentative, but they're doing good, they're well pleasing, they're showing all good faith and they are adorning the doctrine of God.

God's people are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior by their submissiveness, by our excellence of our work, by our respectful attitude, our honesty, our loyal service to our employers or those who have authority over us.

And our supreme message to the unsaved about God is that He is our Savior and He desires to be their Savior as well because He is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. So our character matters no matter if you're old, young, male, female, bond slave, free, it all applies when it comes to being in Christ, who you are, the life you live and what you say and what you do and what you put forward.

[37:37] It all matters because it ultimately points to God and it points people who don't know God to Him. And they can say, what's different about you? Why are you this way? Why aren't you more upset about this?

Why aren't you out there being, you know, like, picketing or whatever? That's the only word that comes to mind in the moment. Not the word I was looking for. But why aren't you being more aggressive in your fight over these injustices?

And why aren't you, you know, destroying buildings and setting things on fire and all that stuff to be a disruption and to express your displeasure with all this?

And it's because as believers we have a different purpose and reason. It's not about pleasing man, but it's about pleasing God. And we're to let them know by what we say, by what we do, and by the way we work at our job that God is a rewarder of those who seek him.

And so our life is about him and not us. It's about him and not you. And it's not about what we perceive as injustice, though it may be, but it's about glorifying God.

[38:45] And so, yeah, if we need to go and deal with an issue, we do it, but we do it the right way. In a different way, and we do it to glorify his name. So, we need to be the submissive servant, the well-pleasing servant, the servant who's showing all good faith, the servant who's adorning the doctrine of God.

We live it. We show it in what we do. Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word. Lord, I thank you that Paul dealt with not just older men and older women and younger men and younger women in the church, but he dealt with this, a group of believers who were known as slaves.

And Lord, we don't look highly on slavery. We don't approve of it, certainly. But Father, we understand that at this time, in Paul's context, it existed, and he didn't ignore it.

And he realized there were people in the church who were slaves. And he encouraged them in the character that they carried out, in the life that they lived. And Lord, I just pray that as we seek to be slaves of righteousness, Lord, that you would draw us near to yourself, Father, that we could bring honor and glory to your name.

And that, Lord, through what we say and how we act, we can point people to you and your love for them. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.