

Slavery and Christianity

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- [0 : 00] 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 1 through 2. Over the years I've heard atheists and other people who do not fear God attack Christianity and the Bible.
- One of their common points of attack is to say that the Bible supports slavery. And they use passages like this one to support the allegation.
- Nowadays it's an argument that many who support homosexuality use to argue that you can disregard what the Bible says about homosexuality simply because the Bible also supports slavery, something that is no longer supported.
- So they argue because the Bible supports slavery, ignore what the Bible says about being against homosexuality. But is this a true argument? Does the Bible indeed support slavery?
- Well these are some of the questions that I hope to be able to answer this morning as we consider this passage. So if you've not yet done so, please turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 6 and we will be reading verses 1 and 2.
- [1 : 23] 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 1 and 2. 1 Timothy chapter 6 and 2.
- 2 Timothy chapter 7 and 3.
- 1 Timothy chapter 6 and 3. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you this morning that we're able to gather as we're doing today.
- We thank you for the privilege that we've had to lift our voices in song and praise and adoration of your great name. And now, Lord, we ask that as we sit under the preaching of your word that you would superintend this aspect of our gathering, that you would grant us illumination, that you would open the eyes of our hearts to see and comprehend the truths in your word.
- Lord, most of all, that you would grant us the grace to apply your word. Father, I pray that you would help me to be faithful to your word and thereby being faithful to you and to be able to serve and do good for these who assemble this morning.
- [3 : 32] Lord, acknowledge once again my need for you, my utter dependence upon you. And I ask that you would provide much grace for this task of bringing your word to your people.
- Would you help us all in this moment, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Pastor and University President Dr. Philip Ryken begins his commentary on these two verses with the following statement.
- The Puritan Cotton Martha once set out to provide biblical support for the American slave trade.
- He began by collecting biblical passages which he believed supported the practice of slaveholding. Then he went on to write a set of rules for the Society of Negroes.
- Among other things, Martha argues that slaves who disobeyed their masters were to be beaten and barred from the church.
- [4 : 49] There are a number of lessons to be learned from Martha's example. The first is that the church of Jesus Christ be as part of the guilt for the sins of slavery in human history.

I think, brothers and sisters, whenever we raise this topic, this issue of slavery and slavery and Christianity in particular, this must be our starting point.

We must start at this honest point of acknowledging that the church of Jesus Christ be as part of the guilt for the sins of slavery in human history.

Now, while it is true that slavery was supported and practiced within Christianity by professing Christians, it is untrue that the Bible here in this passage, or anywhere else for that matter, supports slavery.

You can study the Bible from cover to cover, and nowhere in Scripture will you find that slavery is commended as an institution or as a social structure. Slavery is a byproduct of a sinful, fallen world.

[6 : 06] And so rather than being in support of slavery, what we find in Scripture is that Scripture regulates slavery. Again, we know there are many Christians who, including modern slave owners, who supported that practice of the forced enslavement of people, but Scripture does not support their position, even though they may have used it to try to support what they were doing.

So how are we this morning, who are far removed from slavery, to approach this controversial passage in 1 Timothy 6, verses 1-2?

And let me just say, as an aside, that this is the reason, or one of the reasons, why our approach to preaching God's Word in a systematic way through whole books of the Bible or through main sections of the Bible is useful for our good and for our edification.

If we were just choosing topics, it's not likely that we would choose this topic this morning to try to preach on. But because we come to it in our normal preachings through this book, we then have to deal with it.

And what does God's Word have to say to us from these two verses? Well, I think the first thing that we need to acknowledge when we consider these two verses is it was, in its original context, written to slaves.

[7 : 44] It was addressed to slaves. These words were written by the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son Timothy in the early 60s, around A.D. 60.

Almost 2,000 years ago when the world was ruled by the Roman Empire. So how are we to approach it this morning, about 2,000 years removed from the original audience?

I believe that a two-part approach is best. I think, first of all, we need to approach the passage historically. And we need to ask this question, what did this passage mean in Paul's day?

That's the historical question that we need to ask. And then second, we need to approach the passage biblically and ask this question, how does this passage apply in our day?

How did, what did the passage mean in Paul's day? And how does this passage apply in our day? So those are the two questions I want to seek to answer as we consider these two verses this morning.

[8 : 55] So let's consider the first one. What did this passage mean in Paul's day? Now in getting to that answer, we need to ask another question, another question that is also very important.

And that question is this, what does this passage say? What does the passage say? Now this might seem like an unnecessary question to ask, but really, it is a very important question.

It is a foundational question. We don't have a chance of correctly understanding the meaning of this passage in Paul's day, or how it applies in our day, if we misread what the passage says.

And I would say this morning that this is one of those passages in Scripture that is so easily, so easily misread. Many people easily misread this passage.

And what I'm saying this morning is not just true for this passage and for the Bible. It's really true of anything that we read. We need to carefully and accurately read what is before us in order to give us a sure foundation for accurate interpretation and for appropriate application.

[10 : 12] So we need to closely look at what does this passage say. Does this passage support slavery as some would have us to believe?

And then why would some say that it does support slavery? I think they say that because they make first this critical error. They make two critical errors.

But the first critical error they make is they make the mistake of saying that this passage says what this passage does not say but what they believe it says.

And that's the misreading part that I was getting to. They make the passage say what they believe it means. In other words they're not careful to answer that question what does the passage say.

So they carelessly read this passage and others like it and they say well the Bible supports slavery. But the truth of the matter is that God gave his written word both the Old Testament and the New Testament into contexts where slavery was already taking place it was already being practiced and what we find is that the word of God regulates slavery and it doesn't regulate slavery in general it regulates slavery that was being practiced at that time but it neither commended it nor condemned it.

[11 : 42] So at the time the scripture is written concerning the slavery that was being practiced scripture was silent in both directions didn't condemn it did not commend it.

And so what we find is that writers like the Apostle Paul simply address their readers in the situation and the context in which they lived. And here in this passage in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 1 through 2 the Apostle Paul does not comment on slavery.

He doesn't comment on it. See this is the what does it say part. You look at this and you realize Paul does not comment on slavery. He is actually silent on it.

He doesn't approve it. He doesn't denounce it. What he does is he accepts it as a reality that slavery existed and in verse 1 what he says to believing slaves believing slaves who would have been a part of the church in Ephesus he says to them regard your masters as worthy of all honor.

And see this should be the first hint to us that the kind of slavery that Paul is addressing here is not the kind of slavery that many of us think about when we hear the word slavery.

[12 : 56] These were members of the church. These were people who were free to come and assemble with the people of God and worship God together and Paul fully expected that they would be gathered in the church when Timothy would receive this letter and he would read this letter to the church.

And in the same way that Paul singled out other groups of people within the church the older men and the younger men and the widows he now singles out these slaves who were part of the church.

And he says to them that you are to regard your masters as worthy of all honor.

It is also important to see that Paul is not writing to all slaves. He is only writing to believing slaves. And that's a further hint that he's not addressing slavery as a whole.

He is simply addressing believing slaves who happened to be in the church at Ephesus in the first instance or believing slaves who would have been elsewhere and would have gotten these instructions in God's word.

[14 : 17] He's addressing them as believing slaves not advocating or condemning slavery. And why does he do this?

Why does he talk to them about honoring their masters? He doesn't do so because he considered them inferior to their masters and their masters superior to them.

He does so for the reason that is at the end of verse 1. Notice the reason that he gives at the end of verse 1. He says so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

In other words he is saying to them that you belong to Christ. You believing slaves you belong to Christ therefore distinguish yourselves from unbelieving slaves by doing more than just obeying your masters.

Instead you are to honor your masters and in doing so the name of God whom you claim to belong to and the teaching of God which you claim to follow will not be reviled.

[15 : 26] the goal of the instruction is the glory of God and the reaching of unbelievers around them not supporting slavery even as it was then practiced.

So then it is important to see that Paul is making a very narrow point. He is not commending or condemning slavery. His words are directed to believing slaves not all slaves and his purpose is to encourage them to live godly lives that honor their masters so that God's name and God's teaching are not reviled.

So that's the first critical error that those who accuse scripture of supporting slavery make. They misread passages like this and they read into it what it does not say.

The second critical error that they make is to say that passages like 1st Timothy 6 verses 1 through 2 not only support slavery but it supports modern slavery.

It supports the slavery that we know far too well. The slavery that they have in mind is not the ancient slavery of the Old and New Testament writers but it is this modern slavery that we often call the African slave trade.

[17 : 01] We all know that modern slavery was based on race. It was based on the enslavement of black people. Whereas on the other hand, ancient slavery, the slavery in Paul's day, was not based on race.

Slaves came from all races of people. No one race was enslaved. Modern slavery was based on kidnapping African men and women and children by kidnappers who traded in human cargo and they sold them to slave traders from Europe and from America.

However, kidnapping was prohibited in Bible times. It was prohibited. You could not, it was against the law to kidnap people for the purpose of enslaving them.

And Paul makes that point in this very letter that we're in. In chapter 1, verses 8 through 10, here's what he says. You may flip back there if you want to do that.

Chapter 1, verses 8 through 10. Now we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

[18 : 43] Now those of you who have the English Standard version of the Bible would notice that there's a footnote, or footnote number two, after the word enslavers, and at the bottom of the page, it gives a definition.

The definition is those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery. Those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery.

If you have the King James version, instead of enslavers, the word men-stealers is used. But it's the same thing. If you have the New International Version, the word is slave traders.

And if you have the New American Standard Bible, the word is kidnappers. So in biblical times, there was kidnapping of people for the purpose of forced slavery, but scripture didn't support it.

Scripture condemns it. It was against the law. Paul condemns it here in 1 Timothy 1, verses 8 through 10. The law was laid down against it.

[19 : 54] So this modern activity that we know about the African slave trade, which was based on kidnapping people, stealing human beings, and trading them as cargo, is prohibited in scripture.

And it's prohibited right in this letter. So Paul is not talking on both sides of his mouth and supporting in 1 Timothy chapter 6 verses 1 through 2 what he condemns in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 8 through 10.

He's not doing that. He's talking about two different situations. Obviously in those days, some people did kidnap people and sell them into slavery into foreign lands.

That happened. Joseph was sold into slavery. But that was wrong. And that's not supported by scripture. And we see that the law was clearly against this.

So we can say that while the Bible supported ancient slavery that existed at the time in which the Bible was written, the Bible prohibits modern slavery because modern slavery is based on the kidnapping of people and forcing them into slavery against their will.

[21 : 10] There's another difference between modern slavery and ancient slavery. that people often miss when they come to a passage like this that deals with ancient slavery.

Modern slavery was eternal slavery. Ancient slavery was not. In most cases it was not. Except in very rare cases in modern slavery where a slave owner may free a slave for whatever reason generally speaking if you were a slave in modern slavery you were going to die as a slave.

You were caught as a slave or born as a slave you were going to die as a slave. And even in situations where that slave was set free in slave societies if you saw a black person who was free you automatically assume the person ran away so they would quickly be put back into slavery or they would sometimes lose their lives.

But on the other hand ancient slavery was not eternal slavery. Some people were born as slaves and died as slaves in ancient slavery but the vast majority of people were only slaves for a specified period of time until some condition was met.

Sometimes they went into slavery because they couldn't pay their debts and when those debts were sweated off they were able to go free. In the nation of Israel for example the law was that a Jew could only be a slave for up to six years.

[22 : 51] You had to let them go free after that and then in the year of Jubilee it didn't matter how long you were a slave if you were a slave for a year and you were supposed to work off your debt or serve that person for ten years when the year of Jubilee came all slaves went free.

So slavery in ancient times was not eternal slavery. Here's some very important facts to consider about slavery in Paul's day.

First of all in Paul's day about 25% of the Roman Empire was comprised of slaves. About 25%. And in those days people largely became slaves by being captured in war.

A practice that was recognized in the Mosaic Law. By being born slaves in a slaveholding household. Or by selling themselves into slavery for a season in order to survive economic hardship by paying their debts off that they could not pay.

And I'll say this about being made a slave as a result of war. So we look at that and we may think, well boy, that's kind of cruel and bad.

[24 : 12] Well, when you think about the options that people had, I think slavery is not a bad choice. Be killed or come and be our slave.

And I think most people would say, let me be a slave instead of dying. So while we look upon that and frown on it, the reality was that's what happens in war.

Now, obviously, some were made slaves by kidnapping and that's why there was a law against it because it happened. Laws don't come in a vacuum. They come because of certain realities.

So people were kidnapped but that was not the norm. And another thing is that the experience of slaves during ancient slavery varied greatly.

Listen to what Bible scholar Tom Schreiner says describing ancient slavery in Paul's day. Here's what he says. Many slaves lived miserably, particularly those who served in the mines.

[25 : 16] Other slaves, however, served as doctors, teachers, managers, musicians, artisans, and could even own slaves.

It would not be unusual for a slave to be better educated than his master, than the master. That was the situation of slavery in the Roman Empire where about 25% of the population were slaves.

And 25% is a large number. And Dr. Schreiner makes the point that it would not have been unusual for a slave to be better educated than his master.

So you can see that the slavery in that day wasn't based on color. It was not based on race. It was more circumstantial and it was a mixed situation that they had.

He goes on and he says this, those who are familiar with slavery from the history of the United States must be aware of imposing historical experience on New Testament times since slavery in the Greco-Roman world was not based on race and American slave owners discouraged education of slaves.

[26 : 41] Still, slaves in the Greco-Roman world were under the control of their masters and hence they had no independent existence. They could suffer brutal treatment at the hands of their owners and children born in slavery belonged to masters rather than the parents who gave them birth.

Slaves had no legal rights. Masters could beat them, brand them, and abuse them physically and sexually. So slavery in ancient times was quite a mixed bag.

You had different races, different sets of circumstances that brought them into slavery. Some was temporary, some were permanent slaves, some were well-educated professionals, some were generally well treated, others were menial workers and they were regularly mistreated and abused.

So it is a misinterpretation to read passages like 1 Timothy 6 verses 1 through 2 and think about modern slavery.

These passages are not about modern slavery. They are actually not about any kind of slavery. These passages simply address believing slaves in ancient slavery and cause them to live godly lives for the glory of God's name and for evangelizing unbelievers.

[28 : 15] And really this is what all Christians are called to do. This is what all believers in Christ are called to do. But we find that the New Testament writers do not overlook this category of believers who were called to serve Christ under very difficult situations.

Christians. And it was not a cruelty that they were being addressed as they were. It was the kindness of God to recognize them and to speak to them in a very specific way in the congregation.

Now I know I've labored over this this morning. I've labored to make the point that this passage is not supporting, not condemning slavery because I think it is so important.

It is so easily, as I said before, overlooked. Paul is not concerning himself with slavery. He is concerning himself with how believers are to live their lives even as slaves.

So here's the point about that. Paul is not so much addressing slaves, he is addressing believers who happen to be slaves.

[29 : 42] And there's a big distinction. He's addressing believers who happen to be slaves. And I want you to notice that Paul is calling them in verse 1 to go beyond mere obedience.

obedience. He is calling them to go beyond mere obedience. If a slave obeyed his master, that master was happy. Just do what I say, happy master and safe slave.

But Paul says go further. He says, I want you to honor him. I want you to consider him, consider your master worthy of all honor. And not only that, he's saying, he's saying if he's a believer, you should not use that as occasion to try to do less and say, well, he's my brother, you know, and you can think about it.

Your brother in Christ, he's your master. You're a Christian, he's a Christian. You figure, well, I can get away with stuff and he'll just let me slide. No, Paul says no. He says you should use that not as reason to disrespect him, but you should instead serve him all the better because you know that a believer who is beloved is benefiting from your labor.

Now, as you can imagine, this would have been difficult if you had an abusive master. Paul says you to consider your master as worthy of all honor.

[31 : 07] He doesn't make a distinction first, whether he's a believer or not. And for a slave who had an abusive, unjust master, this would be very, very difficult.

but here's the point. Paul was calling them to do what God would provide the grace to do. God never calls us to do what he doesn't give us grace to do.

And that is why Paul was calling them in this way. So here's how I would summarize what this passage meant in Paul's day. This is the way I would summarize it in terms of what it meant in Paul's day.

mindful of God's name and Christian teaching, believing slaves were called to honor their masters, especially believing masters.

That's what the passage meant in Paul's day in the hearing of ancient slaves at that time. That they were to be mindful of God's name, the name they claimed to belong to, mindful of Christian teaching, the teaching they claimed to follow, and they were to honor their masters, especially if they had believing masters.

[32 : 33] So that's what the passage meant in Paul's day. Now let's consider how does this passage apply in our day? A day when we don't have institutional slavery.

A day when we don't have any kind of slavery, and I use the word institutional intentionally because even though slavery today is not officially recognized, we know that slavery is still practiced around the world.

In some places it is illegal, but it happens, and men, women, and children are subjected to some of the most degrading and cruel forms of slavery at the hands of fellow human beings.

I want to suggest this morning two natural applications for us from these two verses. And the first one is difficult situations.

I think this passage can be applied when we who are followers of Christ find ourselves in difficult or unjust situations, under the authority of others.

[33 : 49] As believers, being mindful not to do anything that will cause God's name and God's gospel to be reviled, we are called to live lives in an honorable way and to relate to those individuals who are in authority over us in an honorable way, in a way that honors them, in a way that ultimately honors the Lord.

And this is especially true of those individuals are believers. I know the circumstances could vary, but let me suggest just a few of them.

You might be a believing wife whose husband is an unbeliever, yet Scripture calls you to respect him and to submit to his authority. And so like the slaves in Paul's day, you're being called to be mindful of God's name, mindful of the Christian teaching that you claim to follow, and you are to consider your husband worthy, not just of your obedience, not just of your respect, not just of your submission to him, but you are to consider him worthy of all honor.

And I think we would agree that honor goes beyond obedience. That's a given. It's a given that you would submit. It's a given that you would respect your husband. But Scripture calls you, as a believing wife, to consider your husband worthy of all honor.

This is especially true if your husband is a believer. And I think we all know that being a believer does not exempt us from sinful conduct. And so you may be a believing wife, your husband is a professing believer as well, even more so what this Scripture will be saying to us as we apply it, is even more so you are to consider him worthy of honor.

[35 : 51] You see, an unbelieving wife may feel more obligated to be an example, sorry, a believing wife may be obligated to be an example to her unbelieving husband.

But a believing wife may feel, well, he's a believer, so I don't have to feel compelled to act and conduct myself in a certain way.

And it's the same mentality that Paul is addressing among believing slaves who had believing masters. He says, no, you need to think about that differently. Even more so, you need to consider him worthy of honor.

Perhaps you're a child with unbelieving parents. You're called to go beyond obedience. You're called to honor them.

You're called to consider them worthy of all honor for the sake of God's name and for the sake of the teaching that you profess to follow. Why? So that God's name, so that God's teaching are not reviled.

[37 : 00] Again, this would be especially true if your parents are believers. In addition to difficult situations, though, I believe that this passage can be most appropriately applied in work situations.

Work situations perhaps are the best application for this passage in our day. And where we see bond servants in verse 1, we can apply that word to workers.

And where we see masters in verse 1, we can apply that word to bosses. So today we can think of the Apostle Paul addressing us as workers instead of slaves.

And I know someone would comment, I am a slave, even though they pay me something. Well, that's not a good analogy, not a good comparison. It's no comparison to say you're a slave today compared to what slaves really experienced in those days.

You know, as a pastor, I got a front row seat to see the best and the worst of people.

[38 : 19] I get to see sin, I get to see injustice, and I get to see it in an up-close and in a regular kind of way.

I'm aware that a large percentage of the workforce in our country labor under unfair conditions and for unjust bosses. I'm aware that some in our congregation face those circumstances.

I'm aware that the Employment Act that governs how employers and employees are to relate to one another, I'm aware that that act is in favor of employers.

I'm aware that that act is against employees. I'm aware that when you read that act that it is clear that the interests of employers were represented and the interests of employees were not represented.

I can prove that by going through several important sections of the act. I don't have time to do that this morning. Just take me at my word that that is the way that act is written. It's not written for the workers.

[39 : 30] It is written for the employers. workers. And I'm aware that some of you this morning are right now being unjustly treated in your work situation.

I want to say to you this morning that these words before us, these words that were originally written to slaves, these words can be received by you and if they are received, can bring great perspective and great comfort to you in your particular situation of work difficulty.

Now if you're an unbeliever this morning, these words really don't apply to you because these were written to believers. These were written to believing slaves.

They were called to do something that was great and difficult. And you can imagine that if this was difficult for believers to do, imagine how much more difficult and I would say even impossible it is for unbelievers to do it.

Because believers could only do it with God's help and with God's grace. That's the only way that they could do it. So if you're a believer this morning, as you apply these words to yourself in your work situation, you're being called to consider your boss, whoever he or she may be, worthy of honor, worthy of all honor.

[41 : 07] This doesn't mean that if they tell you to do what you know is wrong that you are to obey. No, you can respectfully disobey. But what this passage is saying to us as we apply it this morning is that we should be mindful that we are believers first, that we represent God first, that we want to be concerned about God's name, we want to be concerned about the Christian teaching that we claim to follow, and we want to consider the implications of our actions and our attitudes on the name of God and the teaching of God as we serve in the workplace.

We don't want God's name reviled, we don't want the teaching to be reviled. We don't want people to say that's what a Christian is, well, I don't need to be one or I don't want to be one.

Again, this is a smash truth, your boss is a believer. And here again, we face the same dynamic where it can be a temptation if you have a boss who is handling you in an unfair or unjust manner and he or she is a believer.

the temptation is to disrespect them. Paul says, no, you don't do that. He says, even more so, you are to honor them and you are to work in a diligent way because they benefit from your diligent work.

So how can we do this? We can only do this by God's grace. we can only do this with God's help. And I think we do it when we lay aside this lie that we so easily accept that when we are mistreated, that we have a right to respond in kind.

[43 : 04] That when we are unjustly handled, that we can respond in and act in wrong ways. And when we do that, we forget that what Scripture tells us is that suffering is one of the occupational hazards of following Christ.

It is a part of the Christian life and there is no way to get around that. In our fallen world, workplaces are not exempt.

Workplaces are places where injustices happen. Sometimes deserving people are passed over for promotions that they should receive.

Sometimes those who deserve more compensation experience that compensation withheld from them. And perhaps some of you have faced this. If you've worked in any situation long enough, you generally will experience some kind of injustice.

And some of you have experienced it as unbelievers. And my question to you this morning is how have you responded to your bosses who are responsible for making these kinds of decisions about you giving you a promotion or giving you an increase and you didn't get it?

[44 : 24] What was your attitude? How did you respond to them? And perhaps for some of you this morning this is a live issue. Maybe you're going through some kind of mistreatment, some kind of injustice right now at work.

What is your attitude? What is your attitude towards your bosses? What is your attitude around your co-workers? Is it one that keeps God's name in view and keeps in view that you belong to Christ and that you subscribe to a body of teachings that mark the Christian faith?

Or is it just very narrow-minded and focus on your situation and insisting upon your rights? See, if it's that way, then what is the difference between you and the unbelievers that you work with?

And this is the point that Paul is making to these slaves. He's saying distinguish yourself. It's not just obedience. Obedience is not enough. Go beyond that. Consider them worthy of honor.

Honor. A more important question is not just what is your attitude towards your boss, but really, what is your attitude towards God?

[45 : 44] Because ultimately this instruction is about God, about God's name, about this body of teaching that we have as believers and the implications of how we live our lives in light of it.

I don't want you to think this morning that I'm trying to minimize the difficulty of this. I know full well how difficult this is, especially when you have to face this particular situation day in and day out and week in and week out and perhaps for years because you're committed maybe to being in the same place where you are in terms of work.

But again, God does not call us to do what he does and give us the grace to do. And so this is not an instruction in a vacuum. This is an instruction that is empowered by the grace of God that God calls us to live this way and he will empower us to live this way.

By God's grace we can bear up under unjust treatment. By God's grace we can honor bosses who mistreat us and who unfairly handle us. We can even do it for unbelieving bosses which becomes even harder because we say they should know better because they know Christ.

Again, I'm not saying that you don't speak up for your rights. I'm not saying that you are to just roll over and not try to claim the rights that you actually have. But do that in a respectful manner.

[47 : 25] make your case known. But do that in a respectful manner. And the difference would be when you make your case known in that respectful manner and someone believer makes his or her case known in a less than respectful manner the difference will be seen.

You can speak up with honor and with respect. As I was preparing yesterday I went online to the Guardian just to look at the news and online there was this photo of workers at Malia Resort and they were picketing.

They had a peaceful demonstration. They had placards and if you follow the news you'll hear some of the things that are going on at Malia. And I don't have all the facts but I would say some of the things I have heard lead me to the conclusion that Malia is unjustly handling its employees.

And the caption said that the workers had a peaceful demonstration. They just had placards and they walked around the compound.

And as I thought about that and I thought about us applying this passage in our context, in our work situations, the question came up, you know, in my mind, can Christians participate in such demonstrations?

[48 : 50] Is that okay for a Christian? Would it have been okay for a Christian to have found him or herself at Malia? And actually a couple of the signs were of a Christian nature invoking scripture and justice and other things.

Is that okay for a Christian to do? Absolutely. Absolutely. The newspaper said it was peaceful. There wasn't anything that seemed like they were sabotaging or they were being disruptive to guests.

They were simply demonstrating. And that's okay. But sadly, that is not the typical representation that we see about unions.

I found it interesting that the newspapers seemed to be commending what they were doing. Normally when we read about unions in our country, we hear about unions in our country, we don't hear those kinds of things.

We hear about sabotaging property. We hear about threatening workers who want to go to work when they're striking and they will block the entrance and they will fight if you try to go to work.

[49 : 54] We hear about taking the employers' vehicles and blocking the streets or taking their own vehicles and blocking the streets and doing all manner of lawless things.

Even the wildcat strikes just the other day in Grand Bahama, because of some outstanding matters with the government, the air traffic controllers walked off the job, just left the job.

It was illegal, they had no basis to do that, and so they had to divert a major flight into New Providence because there was no one to land them in Grand Bahama.

It would be a shame if a believer was a part of that. That is not what God calls us to. He calls us to be mindful of his name, we bear his name, and to be mindful of the teaching that we subscribe to, so that his name, so that his teaching is not reviled.

So those kinds of illegal acts, they are wrong, and there's no way to support them no matter what the grievance is. Your grievance may be correct, you may have a right against the government or a right against your employer, but you are to do those things in a way that is lawful, and not just lawful, you do it in a way that honors the Lord.

[51 : 17] So if you're part of a union, I want to encourage you to remember that you are a believer first, and then a union member, and you're to conduct yourself only in ways that will honor the Lord.

Some things you may have to back out of, but where you can legitimately support, the constitution allows for that, and you're the right of association.

So considering this passage in the workplace application, here's how I would summarize how it applies to us today.

Here's how I would say it. Mindful of God's name and Christian teaching, believing workers are called to honor their bosses, especially believing bosses.

If you think this is hard this morning, imagine how hard it probably was when Paul gave it in his day to some believing slaves who had hard masters, who had masters who would have treated them like we heard Dr.

[52 : 43] Schreiner say, who could physically abuse them and sexually abuse them and own their children when they had children. They would have been hearing this hard word, honor these masters, consider them worthy of all honor.

And I believe this is the reason that Paul says to Timothy as he concludes in verse 2, teach and urge these things. And as difficult as it is for us this morning where we may be in an unjust situation at work, it's why I say it this morning because I am called to teach and urge these things, not in a vacuum, not in a vacuum, but with God's name and the teachings that we subscribe to in view, that they are not to be reviled, that we are to do nothing that will cause them to be reviled.

And we can again only do this by the grace of God that he makes available to us. And so brothers and sisters, this passage is not about slavery, slavery, even though it was initially written to slaves.

It wasn't about slavery then and it is certainly not about slavery now. Ultimately, it is about how believers are to respond in difficult and sometimes unjust situations, being mindful of God for the glory of God and for the good of unbelievers around them.

and the truth this morning is only the transforming work of God through Jesus Christ can enable us to truly respond in this way.

[54 : 43] And I think he would agree with that. There's nothing in us that naturally wants to do this. Nothing. And therefore, even when we have the desire to do this, even if we may fall short from doing this as we should, even the desire to want to do this is an evidence of God's grace in our lives.

That he has transformed us. That we would be willing to consider our bosses in this fallen world, in this unjust world, in difficult circumstances at work, to be worthy of all honor.

God's love. And especially if they are believers. And so as we consider these things this morning, I want to encourage us to let us look to our Redeemer.

Let us look to God, our shepherd. God, our overseer, is the only one to help us to respond in this way.

And if you hear as a unbeliever this morning, as noble as this may seem, as desirable as this may seem to reach towards, in your strength you can reach for it.

[55 : 56] In your strength you can do it. You can only do it when God transforms your heart by the grace of God through Jesus Christ. And he gives you a motivation to serve him and to love him, to do all that you do for him.

That is the only way this becomes possible. So I want to encourage you this morning to turn to Jesus. He says if you come to him, he will never turn you away.

If you confess your sins to him, you will find grace, you will find forgiveness. And I pray that you would do that even today. Let's stand together.