

Set in order – Sermon 12 – A Witness in the Workplace – Titus 2:9,10

Intro:

1) Word picture – work attire

- a. Why am I dressed this way?
 - i. This is my normal workwear when I am welding/on the job
- b. Many of you can relate – you also have a specific attire you wear to work

2) What does this have to do with the passage we are looking at today?

- a. Paul has addressed a variety of different groups of people in the church
 - i. How to live “set in order”, grow spiritually, and live according to sound doctrine
- b. In the passage we are looking at today Paul moves on to the final group of people he addresses who he classifies by their occupation
 - i. “servants” = workers
- c. The address in this portion of the passage is dealing with laborer, the worker, the servant-slave
- d. Although there are vast differences between a 1st century servant and a 21st century employee, the emphasis is still the same – here’s how you live Godly as a worker

3) You might not think your job has much to do with your spiritual growth, your walk with Jesus, or your effectiveness as a witness – but the reality is – it DOES

- a. As we look into the passage today we are going to see how you and I are called to be a “witness in the workplace”
 - i. We are going to learn that the way we carry ourselves in our labor has much to say about our Savior
- b. Sermon – A Witness in the Workplace
- c. Text: Titus 2:9,10
- d. Sentence – the attire we should be concerned about when it comes to our jobs is whether we have put on Jesus or not

A Subject of Sensitivity

1) As Paul closes his instructions on discipleship and Godly living, he sees fit to encourage one more group of people – V8a “Exhort servants”

- a. You’ll notice – this group of people differ from the previous groups
 - i. This group is not addressed by age or gender
 - ii. This group is addressed by occupation
- b. By giving instructions to this group – Paul as essentially addressed every group of people in the church
 - i. Old and young
 - ii. Man and women
 - iii. Child
 - iv. Workers

2) What Paul does in these closing thoughts is give the church a relevant strategy of servant evangelism

- a. He sets before the church the truth that everyone under authority must see the fertile and open field of evangelism before them
- b. This is a relevant instruction
 - i. Crete was under Roman rule
 - ii. Estimated – 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 people in the Roman Empire were servants
- c. Therefore – the question of how a servant should live, conduct themselves, and be set in order as a believer was a very real question for these Cretan believers
 - i. The fact that Paul addresses it here tells us that it applied to people in the Cretan congregations

3) Now – speaking on such a subject in the 21st century western world can be challenging

- a. We’ve seen the horrors of slavery and oppression and what happens when good people live idly with that type of evil
- b. Dealing with such a sensitive subject biblically requires us to not be ignorant of what is being addressed, how and why

4) Term – Servant – Doulos

- a. Means – servant/slave
 - i. Refers to the low position in the Roman world of someone who was a slave to another
 - ii. Denotes people who were legally “owned” by another person and basically considered the property of that person
- b. However – this term needs some understanding
 - i. Although it does include people who were under miserable conditions, the term also refers to those in apprentice or indentured relationships, domestic workers, and some servants who held high government office
 - ii. Given our text – we see the term includes those who were members of a religious community along side of freemen

- c. Although this term does refer to a person who was legally owned by another – it did not always indicate a low occupation
 - i. Servants in the Roman Empire were often household managers, teachers, accountants, farm managers, business managers, skilled laborers
 - 1. Not just field workers
- d. When thinking of this term it's important to remember "how" people often became servants during this time
 - i. A person could become a servant as a result of:
 - 1. Being captured during war
 - 2. Default on a debt – debtors prison
 - 3. Inability to support oneself and therefore enter into a "voluntary" selling of oneself to another for stability
 - 4. Being sold off as a child by destitute parents wanting a better life for you
 - 5. Loan of money seeking to repay
- e. Without attempting to beautify an ugly reality – what this historical understanding tells us is – a vast array of servants held significant jobs because they were deemed capable
 - i. Explain – a person captured at war may have been well educated, competent, skilled, etc.
 - ii. "Those who were captured in war – were highly educated and cultured, in many cases having superior education to that of their owners." – J Mac
- f. The term "servant" – although descriptive of the lowest in society – had much significance attached to it

5) Times

- a. One of the struggles people have in the 21st century when it comes to how the Bible addresses the evils of slavery is a failure to understand the differences between 1st century and modern century slavery
- b. While both systems of slavery involved the loss of freedoms – there is a vast difference in basis, legality, and social mobility
- c. Difference in Basis
 - i. Roman Empire servanthood
 - 1. Not race-based.
 - 2. Slaves came from war captives, piracy, debt, abandonment, or birth to enslaved parents.
 - 3. Enslaved people were ethnically diverse (Gauls, Greeks, Syrians, North Africans, etc.).
 - 4. A Roman slave could look identical to a Roman citizen
 - ii. American Chattel Slavery
 - 1. Explicitly race-based.
 - 2. Codified in law that Africans and their descendants were permanent property.
 - 3. Slavery became hereditary and tied to skin color.
 - 4. Developed into a rigid racial caste system.

- iii. Major Difference:
 1. Roman slavery was status-based and fluid; American slavery was racialized and permanent.
- d. Difference in Legality
 - i. Roman Slaves
 1. Considered property, but Roman law allowed:
 2. Some to earn and manage money (peculium).
 3. Some to purchase freedom.
 4. Manumission (formal release) was common.
 5. Freed slaves could become Roman citizens (though with limits).
 - ii. American Slaves
 1. Considered lifelong chattel property.
 2. No legal standing in most colonies/states.
 3. Strict anti-literacy laws in many regions.
- e. Social Mobility
 - i. Rome
 1. Freed slaves (liberti) could:
 - a. Run businesses
 - b. Gain wealth
 - c. Have children who were full Roman citizens
 - d. Some became quite influential.
 - ii. America
 1. Even freed Black Americans faced:
 - a. Legal discrimination
 - b. Social segregation
 - c. Severe restrictions

6) Truth

- a. Pressing Question – Why didn't Paul just instruct the total revolt and abolition of slavery in the text?
 - i. Wrong motive in becoming Christian – people would come to be free from slavery not sin
 - ii. The Bible does not advocate for bloodshed or rebellion as the primary manner in overturning evil structures of society
 1. Rather it encourages us to get involved, be the difference, lead through Gospel-changed life
 2. This is exactly what led to the abolition of slavery in Europe and US
 3. Fact – “Only where there was a Christian impulse did slavery come to an end. To this day slavery continues its reign of terror in many parts of the world where the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ has not yet taken hold.”
– D. Akin

- iii. NT does not focus on the reforming and restructuring of human systems
 - 1. Human systems are not the root cause of human problems
 - a. The issue is and always has been sin in the human heart
 - 2. You cannot legislate or reform heart change – that’s a Gospel thing
 - 3. “If men’s sinful hearts are not changed, they will find ways to oppress others regardless of whether or not there is actual slavery.” – J Mac
 - 4. The wicked will corrupt the best of systems and the righteous will improve the worst of systems
 - a. Prov. 29:2
 - 5. The solution is not reform it’s redemption
 - a. This is what we see in our text – V10

A Sainly Servanthood

- 1) **What Paul does in V9,10 is equip Titus and the church with a picture of what it looks like for a servant to live “set in order”, grow spiritually, apply sound doctrine, and be a bold witness for Jesus**
 - a. This helps us as “employees” to gain a picture of what saintly servanthood looks like

- 2) **Be Respectful toward your authority**
 - a. “Obedient to their own masters”
 - b. Once again Paul employs this military term meaning “proper submission”
 - i. Hupotasso – under + to order/arrange
 - ii. Passive imperative verb – a command to submit yourself
 - c. This obedience is not a matter of worth – its is a command for order
 - i. Its understanding that we live in a world of authority and order
 1. Everyone has an earthly authority to answer to
 2. This tells us that we should answer to ours well
 - ii. Masters – translates “despotes”
 1. English – despot
 2. Denotes a person with absolute authority or power
 - d. Q – why would this be the 1st exhortation?
 - i. Reminder of who we really serve in this world
 1. We have earthly authorities, but we also have a Heavenly Authority
 - ii. Col. 3:24
 - iii. Our motivation in the workplace as believers goes beyond a mere paycheck or employment significance – we serve our boss because we seek to honor the God who is over all
 - e. Are there exceptions? Yes – 4
 - i. You cannot submit when something is: unbiblical, illegal, unethical, immoral

- 3) **Be Reliable in your assignments**
 - a. V9 – “to please them well in all things”
 - b. This is a call to work in a manner that is well-pleasing
 - i. Grk – euarestos – well + pleasing/acceptable
 - ii. In NT – it is almost always used of being acceptable or pleasing to God
 1. Rom. 12:1
 - c. This addresses both scope and spirit of your service
 - i. Scope – in everything
 1. Denotes not only the matter, but the consistency of effort
 2. Applies to both seen and unseen work
 - ii. Spirit – attitude
 1. A Christian worker should seek to please their employer
 2. Eph. 6:6,7
 - d. IOW – a Christian worker should be the most dependable person on their crew
 - i. Ex – assistant safety director looking to Christians to hire
 - e. Excellence at work is an act of worship

4) Be Restrained in your speech

- a. "Not answering again"
- b. Lit. to speak against – denotes not being argumentative, no backbiting
- c. Carries the idea of mouthing off
- d. Same word in 1:9 "gainsayer"
- e. The Christian worker should be characterized by God-honoring speech
 - i. Prov. 6:12, 13:3, 18:6, 18:21,
 - ii. Ps. 39:1
- f. A person's speech is one of the clearest indications of what is in a person's heart
 - i. "the tongue reveals the temperament of the heart"
- g. According to the small business association of Michigan
 - i. Negative interactions and attitudes in the workplace cost US employers an estimated 1.9 trillion in lost productivity annually
 - ii. Workplace incivility (rude, disrespectful behavior like backbiting and mouthing off) cost US businesses 1.3 billion per day in productivity

5) Be Righteous in your integrity

- a. "Not purloining" – lit. to put aside for oneself or to misappropriate
- b. Denotes theft through a quiet, stealthy manner – not breaking and entering or armed robbery
- c. IOW – the servant of Christ is not to be a thief in the workplace
- d. Context – many servants were household managers or business managers
 - i. Made it easy to misappropriate funds, take what is not theirs, hide income, etc.
- e. Rather than being a thief, the Christian worker aims to go the extra mile in being above reproach
 - i. Don't cut corners
 - ii. Don't misappropriate funds
 - iii. Don't steal (company time included)

6) Be Reputable in your trustworthiness

- a. "Shewing all good fidelity"
- b. Fidelity – faithfulness, firm persuasion (as in faith)
 - i. Denotes – proven faithfulness
- c. Notice – conjunction "but"
 - i. Carries the idea of contrast to what was just mentioned
 - ii. The Christian worker is not to be untrustworthy, but rather be visibly faithful
- d. Shewing – to show forth, to prove visibly
 - i. Idea – your faithfulness and fidelity is evident and visible to all
- e. The Christian worker should be one who holds the trust of their employer

A Salvific Stewardship

- 1) Notice the result of this faithful Christian worker**
 - a. Paul gives another purpose clause – V5, 8, 10

- 2) Being a faithful, honest, gracious, kind, and submitted servant has a noble end**
 - a. You put the Gospel on display

- 3) Adorn – Kosmeo**
 - a. Means – to beautify
 - b. English word – Cosmetics
 - c. Root idea – to arrange something in a particular order to give it symmetry, comeliness, and beauty
 - d. Bible times – used of arranging gems on a brooch, neckless, ring, or crown in a way that best displays to beauty of the gems

- 4) What does the Christian worker beautify?**
 - a. The message and teachings of the Savior

- 5) Fascinating**
 - a. Notice who Paul gives this purpose clause to – servants
 - i. The lowest in the Roman empire are positioned to show forth the great beauty of the Gospel
 - b. Notice – to the other groups, the purpose clause is stated in the negative and focused on avoiding criticism
 - i. To the slave – he states it in the positive – they make the message beautiful

- 6) How the Christian worker works puts the life-changing truths of God’s Word on display**

- 7) Paul doesn’t end with productivity – he ends with purpose**
 - a. The goal is not merely to be a good employee – the goal to be a bold witness by showing your good works that they may glorify your Father in heaven

Closing

- 1) Church, tomorrow morning your mission field won't be a sanctuary with a pulpit and hymn books**
 - a. it will have time clocks, tractors, tool belts, spreadsheets, supervisors
 - b. And the question won't be - "Did you sing loud on Sunday?"
 - i. The question will be - "Will you adorn the doctrine of God on Monday?"

- 2) When you show up early...**
 - a. When you stay honest...
 - b. When you refuse to gossip...
 - c. When you don't cut corners...
 - d. When you answer respectfully instead of react defensively...
 - e. You are putting the gospel on display.

- 3) Some of you will preach more sermons with your work ethic this week than you ever will with your words.**
 - a. Your boss may never open a Bible
 - i. But he will read your attitude.
 - b. Your coworkers may never come to church
 - i. But they will watch your integrity.

- 4) So here's the challenge:**
 - a. Don't just work for a paycheck.
 - b. Don't just work to survive.
 - c. Don't just work to impress a supervisor.
 - d. Work in such a way that puts the Gospel on beautiful display

- 5) Tomorrow, go to work not just as an employee —but as an ambassador.**