

Take your Bible and turn to Titus 2:9-10. I want to keep moving through Titus 2, and we're going to cover these two verses this morning. The message I have entitled, The Gospel at Work, The Gospel at Work.

What we're going to look at this morning is how your Christian faith should affect your Monday morning productivity. Those two worlds are not parallel universes. So let's stand in honor of God's word. Follow as we read Titus 2:9-10.

Here's what Paul says to Titus for the churches on Crete. "Exhort bondservants" that is exhort slaves, "to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

So reads God's word, you may be seated.

In the book, A Man of Integrity, Howard Hendricks, who taught for many years at Dallas Theological Seminary, he tells a story of being on an outbound flight from Boston some years ago that was delayed. They were actually on board the aircraft, they were getting set to take off when there was a mechanical malfunction, and so they all had to disembark off the plane. They were told that it would be remedied pretty quick, but if you're a seasoned traveler you know that lying takes place in airports.

And so it was several hours actually, with an exasperated passenger list that they reboarded that aircraft. And as they took off, several of the air hostesses tried to make things right. And so they went up and down the aisles and row by row, and they are offering free drinks and you know, a second bag of pretzels or peanuts as a peace offering.

As Howard Hendricks took that flight back to Dallas out of Boston, he kind of was struck by this one air hostesses working for American Airlines who just took it on the chin, you know, row after row, and she did it with a smile. There was a professionalism, there was a poise about this lady. So much so that kind of once they got to cruising altitude and well into the flight, Howard Hendricks goes back to the galley and he commends this lady.

He says, "You know, I've watched you given the frustration of the passengers, their anger was beginning to boil over. You just handled it with such professionalism, with poise. And if you don't mind me asking, I'd love to know your name because I intend to write a letter of recommendation to American Airlines and just comment on the excellence of the way you handle yourself in a very difficult circumstance."

And she replied, she said this, "I wouldn't, you need to know that I don't work for American Airlines." And he's kind of a little flummoxed by that, and he says, "Really?" To which she replies, "Yes. I represent the Lord Jesus Christ." And so, it's a great story, it's classic, and it's a great introduction to Titus 2:9-10, because she reminds us, and we all need to be reminded of this fact, that one of the best places to put the Gospel to work is at your work. To bring your Christian faith, your Christian passion and perspective to your every day work environment.

This dear lady, this American Airlines air hostess, reminds us that followers of Jesus Christ believe that there is grace for the workplace, that they have a biblical vision that work can be a wonderful means of witness and worship. That your every day job can become a platform for the Gospel.

So, with that in mind, let's segue into Titus 2:9-10. We've been working our way through this passage where Paul is instructing Timothy to help Christians think out, work out, and flesh out how their belief in Jesus Christ, their biblical doctrine impacts their lives. Because you'll know that from verses two through ten, that those verses are sandwiched between this idea of living lives that fit with sound doctrine, verse one. And then verse 11 talks about the grace of God which appeared to all men in Jesus Christ, and that grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.

So the passage we're looking at and the verses we're looking at this morning are sandwiched between this idea of, here's what it means to live a life in accordance with sound doctrine. Here's what the grace of God teaches you. If you're an older man, here's what it teaches you. If you're an older woman, here's what it teaches you. If you're a young man or young woman, here's what it teaches you. If you are a servant or a slave in the Roman Empire, as a Christian, here's what it teaches you.

So that's kind of where we're at. Paul's been advocating discipleship evangelism. He's been discipling believers in the church, and he wants them to take what they have learned as disciples of Jesus Christ in the church, and take it into the culture with them and live it out domestically, in employment, in parenting.

And so, let's begin to look at this passage. And it's a wonderful passage. And although directly it speaks to servants and slaves in the Roman Empire, by implication it speaks to all of us who are employed or who work for someone. Because slaves and servants were the working force of the Roman Empire. And thankfully in God's providence that is gone and in our own nation, slavery is gone, with all of its blight and brutality. And so the implication is, whatever work force you're part of, here's some instruction for you.

And given that the balance, think about this, the balance of our of our waking hours are spent at work. I need to know and you want to know, what does God want me to do with that? Because some of us have falsely lived with guilt. You know what? I'm a sheet metal worker, I'm an office worker, whatever your employment is, and I feel guilty about that. Maybe I should be a missionary in Asia or Africa or Central Europe or South America. Well, that would be a wonderful thing, by the way, nothing wrong with that. But you need to understand that your every day work is a platform for the Gospel. You can dedicate that to Jesus Christ.

In fact, Colossians 3:22 makes that all too apparent. "Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do heartily as to the Lord and not to men." That lady's right, "You've misunderstood, I don't work for American Airlines. Which I do to some degree, but really I'm a representative of Jesus Christ. I'm doing kingdom work here, 33,000 feet up."

So let's work through the text. Let's remind ourselves that we need to get work right and we need to do it wisely. Three things, the category, the conduct, the commendation. Let me give you the outline, hopefully and remember one of the beauties of expository preaching is you get to see through what I'm doing how to interpret the Bible. So let me show you my outline, hopefully you'll see it in the text.

The category, who are we talking about? Well, there's certain people being addressed. "Exhort bondservants," that's the category. We'll come back to that. The conduct, these bondservants, these

slaves, are to be obedient to their masters, to be well pleasing, not answering back, not stealing, showing all good faithfulness. What's the commendation? That, that's the purpose. You do that for this purpose, that you might adorn, beautify, the Gospel by the way you work. See, your work is a platform for the Gospel.

I hope one of the outcomes of today is just a renewed enthusiasm for your work. And an excitement that God can use you on the factory floor and the university campus, in the supermarket, in the office. Gain an enthusiasm for that, that large slice of you life is not wasted. You are redeeming the time, you are doing the will of God.

Robert Frost once said the world is full of willing people. Some willing to work and the rest willing to let them. Well, I hope you're willing to work and dedicate your work to the Gospel.

So let's move quickly. The category. You know that as Paul has spoken here about designed discipleship, as he thinks about life in accordance with Gospel doctrine, he's kind of applied it along several lines. He's identified certain groups along age lines, gender lines, and now the fifth group, he kind of distinguishes through social status. He's talked to men, he's talked to women, he's talked to older men, he's talked to younger men, now he's talking to slaves.

You'll find that in the New Testament slaves, who made up a upwards of a third of the Roman Empire, are part of the church. In fact, some Roman critics of the church said that the church is full of women, children, and slaves. And so they demeaned the Gospel because of that.

But in Ephesians 6, Colossians 3, 1 Timothy 6, 1 Corinthians 7, and Titus 2, when Paul addresses the church, because the church was made up of so many slaves within the Roman Empire, he gives attention to them. He speaks to them with dignity. He celebrates their freedom in Jesus Christ and he calls them, in the midst of bad circumstances, to live a transformed life for the glory of God.

So that's the category. The category is that of bondservants or slaves. Now, before we go any further, let me just talk for a few moments about slavery in the first century. I mean, this is in a sense a topic and a talk all to itself. But just to kind of set a little bit of background, just exhort bondservants, so we're imagining there are slaves in these churches on the island of Crete.

Let's go behind the scenes a little, what would life look like for them? Well, the first thing is, slavery was pervasive in the first century. Historians tell us we believe that one in three people in the city of Rome were slaves. And generally, across the Roman Empire, one in five. So this was a massive part of life back then. There were slaves everywhere. Not always distinguishable, by the way, by race or by dress or by social standing. But pervasive.

Number two, we need to understand, because we tend to maybe look through the prism of slavery here in the United States, which was such a blight and stain on our history. But slavery in the Roman Empire was not racially driven. It was racially indiscriminate. Slavery in the United States was racially driven. It was one group of people, focused on one slice of society, African slaves. But that's not true in the Roman Empire.

Slavery affected every strata of society, every kind of person, every nation, every race, every color, every culture. Because you could be put into slavery for several reasons. You could be captured in war, you

could be defaulted on your debt, you could have an inability to support yourself and therefore you voluntarily sell yourself into servitude to pay off that debt. Some children were sold into slavery by destitute parents. Some were born into slavery because they were the children of slaves. Some were convicted of a crime, some were kidnapped, some were the victims of piracy.

So it was pervasive. One third slaves in Rome, one fifth throughout the Empire. It was racially indiscriminate, it was not racially defined. Unlike slavery in the United States. And it was a varied experience, by the way. It was a varied experience. On the one hand, if you had a brutal master, it was a brutal experience. He could be violent. The slightest misconduct could be brutally and violently punished. It was law in the Roman Empire that if one slave killed the master, the rest of the slaves who may have been not party to that would be executed by crucifixion. Slave masters understood that they owned the slave and if they owned the slave they owned the body. And therefore many slaves were sexually and physically abused. The Bible talks about harsh treatment, violent, coercive treatment.

That's on the one hand, but we would have to acknowledge on the other end, there were many slaves that kind of worked more like a domestic servant. They were not abused, they were not physically harmed. Many of them were educated, many of them held down professional roles within the household. If you walked the streets of Rome you couldn't distinguish them from a free man by the way they dressed or the way they acted.

In fact, one writer says this, "In the first century, slaves were not distinguishable from free persons by race, by speech, by clothing. They were sometimes more highly educated than their masters and held responsible professional positions. Some persons sold themselves into slavery for economic or social advantage. They were reasonably hoped to be emancipated by the 10th or 20th year of service, certainly by their 30s at the latest. They were not denied the right of public assembly, they were not socially segregated and they could accumulate savings to buy themselves freedom."

Now I don't say that in any manner to justify slavery in the Roman Empire. It's degrading, it's dehumanizing in any form. And as we'll see in a moment, it's condemned by the Bible. But you need to understand, when we read here bondservant or slave, this is what Paul's dealing with, this is what he has in mind.

So there we have what I call the category. Now, we could move on, but we're not going to for a few moments because I'm going to answer a question that I think some of you are asking. And it would be this, and you're going to be asked it by someone else some day, at the water cooler at the office or if you're doing some street evangelism, somebody's going to think like Richard Dawkins and are going to cast God as this violent, despotic, woman hating, enslaving deity. And they're going to say, "Hey, no where in the Bible does any writer, especially in the New Testament, neither Jesus nor his apostles, called for the abolition of slavery." So how do you explain that? Is that not a ding on Christianity?

Well, for a few moments, hang with me, I'd love to almost make this the sermon, but you know we're done with part ones, twos, threes, and fours. We're trying to get the rest of Titus wrapped up here. So, I'll go through a list of things I want you to bear in mind. I've culled this from several writers.

And so the first thing I want you to know is the Bible clearly condemns the act of kidnapping and enslaving people. The Bible does condemn it. And Paul condemns it. Speaking about a life outside the law of God, 1 Timothy 1:10, here's what we read of those who do not know God's law. They're

fornicators, sodomites, the New King James, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and he speaks about those things that are contrary to sound doctrine.

The New King James takes it's cue from the Old King James. And to be honest, I think there's a good argument to be made, this is a kind of soft selling of the Greek word, kidnapping. And some have made an argument that perhaps the translators of the King James back in the 16th century realized that, "You know what, if we were to translate this literally and strictly, it might offend the King, it certainly would upset the apple cart socially." And so they translated it kidnapper, but really in the Greek it's enslavement.

And if you've got an ESV, and maybe an NIV, but certainly the ESV, it's translated enslavers. Those who are lawless, those who don't comport to sound doctrine, enslave people. So the Bible condemns it because I think Paul's thinking about Exodus 21:16, write it down. I'll read it for you, Exodus 21:16, what do we read? Here's the law of God in the Old Testament, "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or is found with him in his hand, shall surely be put to death." You want to know what God thinks of enslaving people under the old law? Penalty of death. And it's certainly condemned in the New Testament.

Both sides of the Bible see kidnapping for the purpose of enslaving people as abominable. That's my first argument. Number two, Titus 2:9 says this, "Slaves, be obedient to your own master." There you go, Christianity is furthering slavery. It's encouraging people to stay enslaved to masters.

I want to remind you of something. Submission in the Bible does not communicate that the authority being submitted to is morally approved. There's an easy answer in that Christians in Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 were told to submit to the powers that be. Submit to the government. At times, that was a Roman, Pagan government that persecuted the early church.

So just think about this, when the Bible calls someone to submit, in many cases it is not approving of the behavior of the one to whom we submit. Think about not only 1 Peter 2, but 1 Peter 3, where the godly, gracious wife who is married to a guy that may not be saved. Certainly the Bible says who does not obey the word, she is to submit. Now submitting to him doesn't mean the Bible's saying, "Oh, he's a good guy. We like people that don't obey God's word." No, submitting to another authority in the Bible doesn't mean by implication that that authority is morally approved. It just means there's a recognition for the sake of society and for the ordering of life that when you're in an authority relationship, that in the best of circumstances, that is to be heeded and followed.

Number three, 1 Corinthians 7:23-24 makes it clear that a Christian must not voluntarily enter slavery. Let me read this verse for you. This is a chapter that deals with a bunch of questions and relationships. It's interesting in 1 Corinthians 7:23, "You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men." Now some commentators say Paul is talking about spiritual slavery, don't become enslaved to sin or to men. Maybe, there's a plain reading of just taking it literally, do not become slaves of men. Plain as the nose on your face. You don't need to spend four years at the Master's Seminary to understand that. The Bible wants men free, not in bondage to men or the devil.

Number four, conversely, if you go up a couple of verses, verse 21, Paul says this, "Were you called while a slave?" Stop. Paul is saying, "Hey, I'm addressing Christians in Corinth. Now I've addressed single women, I've addressed divorcees, on and on." He says, "Hey, did you become a Christian when you were

a slave? I've got something to say to you." What does Paul say? Listen to what he says, verse 21, "Were you called while a slave? Well then, do not be concerned about it. But if you can be made free, rather use it."

But he's not arguing for social revolution. But he is arguing, if the providence of God permits it, if a backdoor becomes available to you to escape slavery, take that. If you can buy your freedom, if someone can buy your freedom, or just in the providence of God you can embrace freedom, Paul tells them to get out of slavery if providence permits.

What's the point? Well, if you want to make an argument the Bible endorses slavery, then what are you going to do with 1 Timothy 1:10, Exodus 21:16. What are you going to do with the issue of submission, it's not an approval of the morality of the one being submitted to. What are you going to do with 1 Corinthians 7?

Number five, Christian ethical behavior, immediately and inherently began to undermine slavery. Now we'll get to the point here in a minute, why didn't Paul directly call for the abolition of slavery? Which he never did. Jesus is mute on that issue also.

I would remind you that Paul's silence on the abolition of slavery is not to be taken up as an endorsement. And it's not to be taken that he embraced the status quo, he didn't. We don't have time to go to these verses, but if you write down Ephesian 6:9, if you write down Colossians 4:1, if you write down 1 Timothy 6:1-2, or Philemon 16, here is what you'll read in all of those passages. He redefines the relationship of the master and the slave to acknowledge they're brothers in Christ. And he talks to Christian masters, that they be fair and just and treat their slaves or their servants with kindness and acknowledge them as brothers. They worshiped together on a Sunday morning with equality in Christ.

Remember how you've got the runaway slave, Onesimus, and how Paul sends him back to Philemon and tells him to receive him as a brother? The whole ethics of the Gospel is brought to bear upon the master/servant relationship. And it began to undermine it. It began to chip away at its foundation. The way a Christian master treated a Christian slave became a model that removed coercive violence, that recognized personhood in the servant and the slave. As Danny Burke says, "The Bible completely undermines all of the defining features of slavery. Kidnapping, coercive violence, the treatment of people as property."

Number six, the Bible condemns racism. The judgment of someone on the basis of the pigment of their skin or their social standing or whatever the case might be. The Bible censors racism. Now although slavery in the New Testament, as I said, was racially indiscriminate, it was not race based. It was in American history. The bulk of slaves in America were African by origin. They were brought here violently and coercively. They were treated brutally. They were seen as property and not persons.

And so, while we're dealing with New Testament slavery, dealing with that then and dealing with slavery in our recent history, we have got to remember as Christians the Bible condemns racism. And people might point to some inconsistencies on certain Christians throughout history regarding this, but we're coming back to the authority of the word of God. And the Bible reminds us in Acts 17:26-28, we are all one blood. We are all created in God's image, as our Constitution recognizes.

The church is one through the blood of Christ, Colossians 3:11, where there's neither slave nor free, male nor female, Greek or Jew. You know, a while back I was watching a program on the Golf channel by David Feherty, who hails from my homeland. He was interviewing the former President Bill Clinton. It was a fascinating interview. And in it, Bill Clinton tells about his upbringing in Little Rock, Arkansas during the Civil Rights Era, when this country was imploding. And how he was brought up by a single mother. And for a time he was kind of parented by his grandparents because his mother had gone to school to get a degree to help the family move forward and get a better job.

And with his grandmother, as they talked one day about Civil Rights and racism in America, his grandmother said this, which it always stayed with Bill Clinton, "You know what, Bill? You know what, son? Nurses will tell you that we all bleed the same color." It's just a good reminder of the equality of the races and the dignity of human life, wherever it's found. And so, we need to be aware that the Bible condemns racism.

And seventhly, and finally, Paul's silence I understand on two fronts. I think his silence, his lack of calling for the abolition of slavery or encouraging Christian slaves to rebel, or encouraging Christian masters to break the cycle of slavery in the Roman Empire. I think there was a pragmatic reason and a theological reason.

Here's the pragmatic one, there was no grounds swell within the culture for that. The cruelty of slavery was not uniform. And just practically, any uprising would be put down brutally and immediately. There would be no purpose to it. This was so pervasive, so grand, everywhere, that to call for societal restructuring would just not have flown in the face of reality. You would have been sending Christian men and women straight into a buzz saw called the Roman army and the Roman powers that be.

So I think just pragmatically, he realized at this point in history, given what we're dealing with, called for the abolition of slavery would be an impossibility. But I think this is the greater argument, theologically he understood the purpose of the church. I think this is the greatest reason why the New Testament and the epistles don't address structural change within society, because that's not why the church exists. The church is about spiritual redemption.

In fact, you'll see in chapter one, verse one that Paul calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ. And elsewhere he'll use that kind of language of freedom and slavery to speak about how Christ has freed us from the slavery of sin and we gladly give ourselves in servitude to him because he's a kind, loving, wonderful master. That's the Gospel.

You'll see in the epistles and we've seen it here in verse five, verse eight, and verse ten, the church exerts social change through changed lives. Paul's chief concern in this chapter, and you'll see it in 1 Timothy 6:1, is that the Gospel's not blasphemed. He wants to perpetuate the reputation of Christianity within society. He wants to put a good showing for Christ within life. And so his primary concern is not individual rights, it's not societal change. His primary concern is the advancement of the Gospel and the reputation of Christianity.

I like what one writer says, Murray Harris. He says this, "If Christianity is viewed as basically a movement of social reform, then this silence regarding slavery is indeed surprising, if not culpable. But Christianity in its essence is concerned with the transformation of character and conduct rather than the

reformation of societal structures. The principle change sought is in the individual and the secondary change in society through transformed individuals."

So, you see that working out. And you know what? The social justice warriors in the evangelical church I think need to relearn this. Paul's focus was on the Gospel, changing of individual lives, and as they live out their life in accordance with sound doctrine, it will chip away at those things in life that are contrary to God's word. It will bring about change incrementally. But the church exists for spiritual regeneration, not societal revolution and that's why Paul does not ever directly address the issue of the abolition of slavery, which the word of God condemns.

Okay, hopefully that's helpful. Hopefully that will give you some talking points when this issue comes up. Let's move on and we'll move quickly here. What I call the conduct. Okay, here's the profile of a good slave of Jesus Christ who happens to be a slave, because remember all Christians are slaves to Jesus Christ. His will, his kingdom, his agenda. That's the priority. And that's even a priority over individual rights, as was the case with a first century Christian slave. Who if they found themselves a Christian as a slave, Paul says, "Okay, just embrace it and maybe in God's providence you'll get an opportunity to be free, but while you're in slavery, you use that and the transformative power of the Gospel to bring attention to Jesus Christ."

And so you've got the profile of a good slave of Christ who happens to be a slave. The issue here is, what does he do? How does he behave? What's his attitude on an every day basis as a slave, as a servant, that will allow sound doctrine, Gospel truth to be put on display? Several things, number one, he's to be submissive. And what's true for the slave then is true for you and me now in terms of our employment. He's to be submissive.

Look at verse nine, "Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters." This is a Greek word that means to come under rank, to take your proper place. It was used of the military of obeying those in command. And so you've got the idea here of submission and compliance as an essential part of life. God has established certain authorities in life, in the home, in the church, in the government. Members of a church are to submit to their elders. Children are to submit to their parents. Citizens are to submit to their government.

And in this world, slaves were to submit to their masters. I think there's two fold implication here, attitude and action. They are to submit, they are to be compliant in their behavior and in their attitude. Because you know this, this affects the passive voice in the Greek, which means they had to voluntarily, their slavery may be involuntary, but their submission is voluntary. And they are to bring themselves within the will of God, accepting the providence of God for a season in their life, should that be the case, where they are willing and compliant with regards to what their master wishes.

And along with that will be a right attitude. Because this is an attitude issue as much as an action issue. Because you can act submissively, but in your attitude you can kind of be rotten, you can kind of hold back a good attitude. And you kind of comply with an attitude. And so we're looking for both.

You know that story of the little boy in the kitchen who wouldn't comply with his mother and sit down on the seat around the kitchen table. And eventually he's kind of coerced, to put it lightly, to sit down. And then in an act of defiance, he says to his mother, "Well, you know what, mom? I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside." And we can do that! You can do that at work.

You can go and you're there, and you're in your seat. And it's 8:00 and off you go to your work, but the attitude's wrong.

Secondly, to be submissive, be productive. Notice the phrase here, well pleasing. Well pleasing in all things. The Greek here means acceptable. Points to excellence in work. You do good work, you do acceptable work, you do excellent work. That's what Christians are known for, they are good employees. They are punctual, they are polite, they're productive, they've got a good attitude, they'll go the second mile.

In fact, here's what's interesting, this phrase well pleasing is almost exclusively used in the New Testament to speak of pleasing God. In fact, some commentators argue that's what's in mind here. Although they are told to be obedient to their masters, they are to be well pleasing to God and certainly obedience to your master, submitting to God's will, would be that.

But I don't think we need to do that. But we could connect the ideas. You want to please God? Then be a good worker. Be a good team member. That's a Christian thing to do. That's Gospel work. Carelessness, shoddiness, lacking initiative, tardiness. I don't say this to draw attention to myself, you know, I've walked the platform several times in my life for different degrees or certificates or awards. But one of the ones I'm most proud of was when I was an aircraft engineer. In my third year of apprenticeship I became the apprentice of the year in a company of 6,000 employees. I don't say that to draw attention to myself, I say that to encourage you. I am as proud of that award as my M Div or my D Min that's still coming. Because I'm as much a servant of Jesus Christ on the assembly line at an aerospace company in Belfast, as I am this morning in this pulpit.

I was well pleasing to my company. I took pleasure, my dad was proud, and I think Christ was glorified. You should be employee of the month. You get whatever that stupid mug is or whatever, you know. Go for it. Go for it. Or, you know what, a five buck Starbucks card, it's worth it!

Okay, submissive, productive, respectful. Respectful. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this. Not answering back. Can I put it like this, since I tend to like gangster movies, don't be Larry the Lip at work. Don't be mouthing off. In fact, the word is used in chapter one, verse nine of those who contradict. So the point is, don't contradict, don't argue back. That doesn't mean don't make a positive contribution to a conversation. But you know what? Your boss doesn't need to know everything you've got to say. You don't need to contradict him in every meeting. You don't have to try and put yourself on display. And you certainly should not be argumentative, you should be productive and you should be polite.

Number four, be honest. Be honest, not pilfering. That's a great old word, pilfering. Don't steal. Okay, don't skim off the top. Don't take what's not yours. And by the way, that means like physical objects, the property of your company, don't take what's theirs. That means your time.

Hey, I had to remind myself when I was an employee of Short Brothers in Belfast. I wasn't being paid by the company to be an evangelist. And sometimes I was caught on, you know, evangelizing with my fellow workers or trying to win someone to Christ. And when the opportunity naturally lends itself and it's appropriate, that's okay. But it's not good when the foreman says, "Hey, De Courcy, cut it out, get back to work."

You can steal things, you can steal time. In fact, the idea of stealing isn't just like stealing what doesn't belong to you, it's withholding back what belongs to others, which is the right attitude, submission, hard work, all of that. You need to embrace that.

I've told you the story before, back about 100 years ago in the history of my own country, in Northern Ireland, there was a move of God. And God used a very interesting character called W.P. Nicholson, you can find out about him if you want. But there was a move of God and people were being saved in the hundreds and thousands over a period of time.

And there was a true story in the great ship building factory of Harland and Wolff in Belfast, if you ever go there it dominates the skylines where the Titanic was built. So many men in that factory were saved that they started bringing back stuff they stole. And they brought so much stuff back, you can go today to that factory and there is a shed, a very, very, very large shed that was built during that time to house the stuff that the workers started bringing back. Because you see, if Jesus Christ takes root in your life, you don't steal. And if you stole, you bring it back.

Be respectful, be submissive, be honest, be productive, finally, be faithful. Do you notice the adversative here? Look at the adversative, "not pilfering, but." So there's a contrast, a really strong contrast. You'd better not be stealing and you better be showing all fidelity. The word show there, it's like, you know, you go to one of these home exhibitions or some state fair and you get some guys wanting, trying to sell you a shammy or something that's going to clean your windows forever. And he's put it on display. He's got his little table, he's exhibiting it. And they're fascinating to watch.

That's kind of our word. Here's what Paul says, "I don't want you stealing. Here's what I want you to do. I want you exhibiting, to your boss, to your fellow workers within your company, I want you to exhibit dependability, reliability, good faith, faithfulness." So there's the profile. This is, by the way, your checklist for Sunday night, for Monday morning, you know, as you get ready to go back out, you got to get that second wind. You've got to remind yourself, "Hey, this is part of life." Work is not a result of the fall, frustration at work can be result of the fall. But work is a purposeful thing. We were made in the image of a working God. We can dedicate our work to Jesus Christ. Our work can become a platform for the Gospel. We can put him on display and you get excited about getting in to work. It's meaningful, you're contributing to society. You're making money for your family. On and on it goes.

You go down your checklist. "Today, I'm going to be submissive. Today, I'm going to be productive. Today, I'm not going to chat back. Today, I'm going to be honest. Today, I'm going to be faithful."

Finally, the commendation. The commendation. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this. But you'll notice the purpose for all of this, verse ten. "Not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity that." This is the purpose that slaves are to be submissive, this is the purpose where slaves are to be obedient, well pleasing, not answering back, not stealing, being dependable. That, through that, in that manner "they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

Ladies, this word adorn is your word. It's found in 1 Timothy 2:9 for ladies who arrange their jewelry in an appealing and alluring way. And there's nothing wrong with that. You know, Paul's whole point back there is not you can't use make-up or jewelry, it's don't overdo it. And the word is there, you know, some just adorn themselves on the outward appearance and not the heart and not the attitude. But that's our word, it's the Greek word *kosmos*, gives us our English word cosmetics.

So some translations or paraphrases would go, "So that you might beautify, make attractive the Gospel." Just like that air hostess did. I mean, she caught the eye of a theological professor. He didn't know she was a Christian. But man, the way she handled herself, the way she rolled, took everything on the chin with a smile. Because she really doesn't work for American Airlines. She's a representative of Jesus Christ.

And as we close, given the absence of the incarnate Christ, given the fact that he is no longer present with us. Given the fact we're living beyond the apostolic era where there were signs and wonders that authenticated the preachers of the Gospel as revelation was given. Given the fact that since Christ isn't present, he's not incarnated on the earth any more and he's in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, you and I need to embrace this thought that the Gospel message will be judged today by the world looking at those who profess it.

The day of miracles is over for the most part, that's my argument. Jesus is no longer in Israel, you can't go and see him and see the glory of God in human form. But where is the glory of God today? It's in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit and people have every right to judge Christianity based on your life and mine. The credibility of Christ and the respectability, a reputation of Christianity hangs around our necks.

You know this, Christians are the best argument for Christianity. But they are also the worst. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for our time in the word. We thank you that the Bible addresses Monday through Saturday. Help us to embrace work as a gift, all labor is profitable. We thank you we're made in the image of a working God and we can put the Gospel to work at work. Help us to repent of a bad attitude. Help us repent of our lack of initiative. Help us to be hard working, honest, cooperative. Help us to show the right action and attitude. Help people at work who don't come to church to face church and Christ in us.

So help us to embrace this. Help us to indeed learn from our slave brothers in the first century, who in the most difficult circumstances, in the midst of ugliness, beautified the Gospel before both their Christian and their unchristian masters. May they speak to us. And may we, as slaves of Jesus Christ today, follow their example as his. Amen.