

Godliness at Work – Titus 2:9-10

Titus 2:9-10; Labor Day weekend that it is, and *resting* from the work we do, I thought we'd take a few minutes to see what *God* has to say about work (**Intro**)
To see what he requires and desires of us, whether you work for financial gain or just “jewels in your crown”

And when you get right down to it, there are certain marks of godliness that should characterize every single one of us at work

Marks that the Apostle Paul lays out here in Titus 2:9-10, where he says . . .

Bondservants [or slaves] *are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, [10] not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.*

- All right; Before we get to the marks of godliness, I want to first address the issue of slavery (**Intro – Slavery**)
Brought up by the very first word of v9 – *bondservants*, or slaves
B/c taken in a vacuum, apart from the rest of Scripture, you might think Paul is *condoning* slavery with his instructions here
In which case you'd miss the entire point, and fail to apply these principles altogether
So it begs for an explanation

Not only that, but this is the 150 year anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln

The proclamation that declared all slaves free in our country, but whose struggle continued for decades

And was highlighted by Martin Luther King, Jr in his “I Have a Dream” speech, 50 years ago this *week*; So it seems like a fitting time to talk about some of this

Starting with the word *bondservants*; It comes from the Greek word *doulos*, and refers to a type of slave; Someone who *worked* in the 1st century . . .

And maybe even received compensation, but didn't have the option of quitting

Either b/c they *voluntarily* relinquished their right to leave, in order to pay off debt or make ends meet; Or were involuntarily *forced* into servitude

Like prisoners of war often were; Or slaves in *our* country

Either way, a *doulos* in the 1st century was bound to their master by law; They couldn't quit

- And though it violates our sensibilities and is *clearly wrong*, the Bible doesn't come right out and say so; Slavery is not explicitly condemned in the Bible
Just like same sex marriage isn't explicitly condemned
But neither is it condoned; The Bible neither condemns slavery directly, nor condones it

What it *does* do, is sow the seeds for abolishing it; What it *does* do is teach a radical new ethic for those held in its ugly grip

What it *does* do is address the issues/attitudes of the *heart*, in those who perpetuate it
All of which serves to destroy it, in those who *take* the Bible to heart

- Like in the Genesis, where it says that God created us in his own image – *all* of us
That's where the Bible begins to sow the seeds of slavery's destruction, by teaching a new ethic, a new way of thinking about human beings

And it continues to sow those seeds in the Law, where God tells us to show *compassion* to those who are enslaved; Unheard of in the Ancient Near East

And then in the NT, Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves; And love those who hate us; And do to others as we would have them do to us

All seeds of destruction due to a radical new way of thinking, when it comes to the institution of slavery

- The result of which, in many cultures – is that as men and women begin to grow in their *spiritual maturity*, they begin to take a stand for *social* maturity, *social* change
IOW as the seeds began to take root in *their* heart and soul, they began to grow in the soil of their *culture*
Eventually leading to the *abolishment* of slavery in many areas of the world
And hopefully more as time goes by; B/c it's not a dead issue

So while the Bible doesn't come right out and condemn slavery, it does plant the seeds for its destruction, by focusing on our behavior and attitudes in the midst of it (**Sum**)

- And that helps, not only to *understand* this passage, but apply it
Inspiring us to emulate these *same* behaviors in our workplaces
B/c if 1st century Christians who are *involuntarily* enslaved are expected to live by these guidelines – how much more should you and I who are *voluntarily* employed, do so?

Or, another way to look at it, is that Paul is addressing the *extreme* in workplace settings, as an example for the norm

Identifying certain marks of godliness that should characterize *all* of us at work

The first, being . . .

• Submission

Bondservants [it says] *are to be submissive to their own masters in everything* (9)

Or, in our context, employees are to submit to their employer

Submit, as in joyfully and voluntarily yield to the leadership and discretion of your boss or manager; Which isn't so popular in our day and age

Especially for those with authority issues

- And lest you think you're exempt because your boss is a bad person, think again
B/c the word *masters* translates the Greek word “despotes” – from which we get the word despot – as in, dictator or tyrant
A person who routinely *abuses* their power and authority
If that's your boss, you're not exempt from submitting

Which the Apostle Peter is explicit about (**1 Peter 2:18**) – *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the unjust.*
Your boss may be unreasonable and even unfair, but that doesn't get you off the hook

But neither does it mean you have to stick around*****
But while you do, you need to submit

- And do so *in everything*; Everything, it says
Unless, they ask you to do something wrong; In that case, you need to take a stand for what's right, and let the chips fall where they may

Short of *that*, submission should mark every single one of us
That's godliness at work

2nd is . . .

• **Excellence**

Which I think is the implication of Paul's command that bondservants are to be *well-pleasing*; B/c you can't please your employer with *shoddy* work, that's for sure
You have to do things *well*, and the way *they* want it done
It might not be the way *you* would do it, but it's not about you
In fact, it's about the Lord

B/c **Col 3:23** says – *Whatever you do, work heartily* [as in give it your all, do it with excellence] *as for the Lord and not for men*.

Godliness at work involves excellence, first and foremost, to please the Lord
And one of the ways to do *that*, is to please your boss*****

Which involves 3 things:

1. *Going above and beyond the call of duty*
Work that's well-pleasing requires excellence, and excellence requires going above and beyond; Doing the *extra* thing; Doing *more* than what's required
It's not brown-nosing, it's godliness; It's being other-oriented
2. Excellence requires *hard work*
In fact, it's rarely sustained *apart* from a strong work ethic
And it covers a whole *host* of shortcomings
3. *Timeliness*; Excellence requires timeliness
If you walk in at 7:59 every day, and stand around the coffee pot until you catch up or wake up – that's not excellence; That's laziness
Excellence gets there early, works hard, and fights the tendency to think “good enough is good enough”; That's the 2nd mark of godliness at work

3rd is . . .

• **Compliance**

Or as Paul says it – *bondservants* are not to be *argumentative*; They're to be compliant
Not grudgingly compliant – “I gotta do this because I'll get fired if I don't” . . .
But *genuinely* compliant; Agreeable in your demeanor
Doing your work with a *great* attitude instead of a crummy one; Or a neutral one

Nor is it doing what you're told with a disposition of *opposition*; That's not compliance
It's not toeing the line b/c you *have* to
It's not saying the right *words* with a wrong *attitude*
It's not arguing with every decision, or questioning every word
It's not going through the motions with a cloud above your head
And it's not getting the job done while being passively resistant in your silence
None of that is compliance; And it's definitely not *godliness* at work

Compliance is about being *agreeable* – *genuinely agreeable*
Doing all things without grumbling or complaining as Paul says (Phil 2:14)
And conforming to the desires of your *employer*; And making yourself *easy to lead*

Are you easy to lead? And would your boss or manager say the same? I hope so; B/c godliness demands it

- Now, I'm not saying you should be a wallflower
Or that you shouldn't offer alternatives at work; Or voice your opinion

What I'm saying, is that you should do it with respect, and an *obvious* disposition of agreement; An *obvious*, and even explicitly *stated* desire . . .

To get on the page of your boss – not the other way around; To understand and acquiesce as much as possible

That's compliance; And a mark of godliness at work for sure; 4th is . . .

• **Integrity**

That quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles
It's being godly whether people are around or not; It's doing the right thing and avoiding the wrong thing, whether someone *knows* or not

One of the most obvious examples of which, is *not pilfering* (10a); Not stealing, even the small things; Even if your employer would never know; Even if he's a jerk
Even if your company has deep pockets; Integrity won't allow it

- I remember a guy who worked for my Dad about 30 years ago, who was always bringing new power tools into the office, and selling them for cheap
And when they asked where he got them – he said he was buying them from wholesalers, who wanted to make room for the new models
But it didn't ring right to my Dad

And one day, he noticed that several of the company trucks that were supposed to have *new* tires, still had old ones
And then he started spot checking their inventory of equipment, telephone equipment – and found some of it missing
The long and short of which, is that he eventually traced it back to this guy – who was stealing company goods, trading them for stolen power tools . . .
And then selling them to his friends, in the company! Not real smart
Gutsy, but an obvious lack of integrity

- And though that's uncommon in terms of *stuff*, it's *epidemic* in terms of *time*; People steal company *time*, all the time
For instance, if you routinely use company time to run errands, send personal texts, check your Facebook, or make personal phone calls – you're pilfering
And it shows a lack of integrity

Or, if you work differently with your boss *present*, than you do when he's *absent* – you're stealing; Stealing money that you're getting paid . . .
For productivity and work you *should* be doing

So many people rationalize dishonesty, petty theft, and shoddy work – b/c they can
Or b/c they're mistreated; Or the company can easily afford it; Or their boss is mean; Or company policies are burdensome; Or everybody else is doing it
None of which shows one ounce of integrity, or one shred of godliness

Eph 4:28 says – *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands*

If you're abusing company time, slacking off, using company equipment when you shouldn't, or stealing company things – you need to stop*****

You need to stop doing that, and start showing some integrity – some *godliness* at work

5th is . . .

- **Sincerity**

We are to *show all good faith* Paul says; That's sincerity

It's kind of like that phrase you sometimes hear – “He made a good-faith effort”

Meaning, he made a genuine effort; A sincere effort; That's the idea

As employees, we are to be *sincere* in our work

Which Paul says outright in **Col 3:22** – *Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers* [you know, putting up a front when your heart's not in it], *but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.*

Far from being disingenuous like so many others – we ought to be making a good faith effort to *better* the company we work for; And *support* its leaders

Anyone can bash the boss; Anyone can criticize and take pot shots and complain

But it takes a pretty special person to give the benefit of the doubt, and work with sincerity; A pretty special person to work earnestly and with the *best* of intentions

And we ought to be among them; Out of reverence for the Lord, *fearing the Lord*, and keenly aware that he disciplines those he loves . . .

We ought to be marked by *sincerity* at work*****

➤ Which really gets at the heart of our *motives*, doesn't it? And doesn't allow for faking it
Godliness at work doesn't allow for smiling in *front* of your boss, while *snarling* behind him; Or rolling your eyes when you turn around
Or complaining to a co-worker as soon as you're out of ear shot; That's not sincerity

Show *good* faith in what you do; Be sincere through and through

And if you're not – either ask the Lord to change your heart, or get a *new* job

Otherwise you'll tarnish your testimony, harm your company, or get fired

And then last, work with . . .

- **Purpose**

Bondservants of Jesus Christ that we are – we ought to be marked by submission, excellence, compliance, integrity, and sincerity . . .

So that [as v10 says] *in everything* [we] *may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior*

That's the *purpose* of all this; And the final mark of godliness as well

Of all people, followers of Jesus Christ ought to work with *purpose*

Not only to provide for their family (1 Tim 5:8), but to make the truth of God *appealing* to those they work with, and for; To make it as attractive as possible

That *they may see* our *good works* and *give glory* to our *Father who is in heaven* (Mt 5:14)

If you're being really good at work just to get a bigger paycheck, or buy a better car, or do the things you've always wanted but never could – you're missing it

First and foremost you ought to be marked by godliness at work, in order to *adorn the doctrine of God*

Especially in this day/age where it's increasingly disparaged, and desperately needed

We ought to make people scratch their heads and wonder what in the world would cause us to put forth so much effort, with so much joy, for so little, and so long

➤ Is that you? Does your work ethic make the good news of Jesus attractive?
Does your behavior adorn the gospel?

I hope so; And to the extent it doesn't, I hope you change (**Summary**)

I hope you repent on this Labor Day weekend, and make it a point to conform more and more to the marks of *godliness* at work

Prayer – Thank you for work; For the challenge, the fulfillment, even the difficulties; Find us faithful to do all you want, marked by godliness in all we do

Use our tithes and offerings now to advance your kingdom and build your church; We give b/c you first gave; Just like we love b/c you first loved