

# (Titus - Part 17): The Duties of Employees

by A.W. Tozer

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*A.W. Tozer emphasizes the importance of Christian ethics in the workplace and the transformative power of righteousness in society.*

**Duration:** 30:31

**Scripture:** Titus 2:9

**Topics:** "Titus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the impact of the gospel on society and the relationship between employees and masters. He emphasizes that while the purpose of the gospel is to save individuals, it can also bring positive change to the world. The preacher highlights the influence of Christianity on the concept of employees, explaining that the term 'employee' instead of 'slave' is indirectly attributed to the gospel. The sermon also focuses on the instructions given to employees to be obedient and work to please their masters, highlighting the importance of honesty, loyalty, and efficiency in their work. The preacher suggests that such behavior would astonish unsaved masters and potentially lead them to question the transformation in their employees' lives.

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## Transcript

In the book of Titus, the second chapter, two verses, nine and ten, he's exhorting the man of God what to teach. And he says, exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Now the Holy Spirit here instructs what he reads in the King James Version, servants.

But I would remind you that we cannot understand this properly except against the background of the time in which it was written. And when I first began to teach the book of Titus, I mentioned, which you all know, but it's necessary to bring these things up if we're going to be intelligently speak and hear, that Roman society was divided roughly into three classes. There were the patricians, the plebes, and the slaves.

The patricians were, of course, the fathers, or they, it was a name given to the nobility. They were the, usually the rich, who had inherited the riches probably, and who were in high places. There were not many, but they were a very important class in society.

And there were the plebes. There were the plebeian class, bourgeoisie, I believe they call that now, the middle class, the class from which is drawn the shopkeepers, professional men, businessmen, and persons persons who own the little factories or little stores or anything of that. They weren't patricians and they weren't slaves, they were the middle class.

Then there were the slaves, and they were very plentiful. Now at first, the majority of the Christians were drawn from the slave class. We might as well admit that and acknowledge it to be so.

Some have complained that in India we go among the outcasts, but there isn't anything to worry about there because they did the same thing in Paul's day and in Christ. He drew, they drew their followers chiefly from among the simple people at first. Now here's what Paul was talking about when he wrote to the Corinthians, and of course Corinth was under the Roman Empire, and he said this, you see your calling brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, those would be patricians.

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. The base things of the world and the things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

So that in Crete, as elsewhere throughout the Roman Empire, the largest number of Christians was drawn from the slave classes. Now here we must step aside for a little excursion into a by-path meadow and note an accusation which is brought against Christ and against Paul and against Christianity, particularly the Christianity of the early times. It is that Christianity adjusted itself to society and even to slavery instead of rising up to exterminate it.

They said Jesus taught obedience and Paul taught obedience. They should have rather taught that society should be righteous and they should have risen and rebelled against the unrighteous society and brought about a complete change, a renovation of society. Well now, the answer to this is very simple.

It's so simple that it is amazing that men don't see it. Jesus our Lord said, my kingdom is not of this world and he taught all through his earthly ministry that he came not to improve the world but to save men out of the world. He said in his high priestly prayer, I pray not for the world but for them that thou hast given me out of the world.

The only responsibility our Lord told his church that they had to the world was twofold, to pay their taxes and be obedient unto Caesar and render to Caesar only the things that were Caesar's. And the second one was to go into all the world and proclaim the message of forgiveness through Jesus Christ the Lord that disciples might be won out of the world, baptized and taught the commandments of Christ. Jesus taught this plainly and he taught the corrupting, the progressive corruption of human society till it got so bad that when he comes he'll hardly find faith on the earth, so bad that it'll be necessary for God to send judgment on the earth in the latter days.

And he taught that he would finally return and establish a purer society. But you see the critics of Christianity say, why do you not now try to establish a pure society? The answer is it is not yet time. We are here not to establish a pure society as Christians but to preach the gospel to all the world until a people shall be taken out of the world for the name of Jesus after which he will return and raise up the tabernacle of David which was fallen down and he shall then be king of the world.

And the 72nd Psalm tells us that there shall then be a pure society established of which the King Jesus Christ is the head. And Paul taught the same thing. He taught that evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse until the end came.

He taught that even the church itself should be corrupt and should backslide and no longer follow the teachings of Christ until the end when there should be a few left who should be taken at his coming at the time the dead are raised. Now that's the answer. Then notice this, my friends, that in spite of the fact that the Lord said my kingdom is not of this world, in spite of the fact that he taught his believing followers to be obedient to the world as far as they could morally, and in spite of the fact that he and all of his apostles taught that they did not come to improve the world, yet so powerful is righteousness and so creative is godliness and so with such fiery creativeness came the Holy Ghost that even though our Lord did not come to make the world better, still the secondary effect has been in society in some areas to make it better.

Look at the way they treated the sick, for instance, before our Lord came. They treated the sick as they treat them now in the countries of which our missionaries speak. They believe they have devils in them and some lance them, cut them with knives and unsanitary knives, let the devils out of them.

Lepers were driven away into the wilderness at the time of Jesus. The insane were considered to be possessed with devils. The blind had no friends and the crippled lay by the gates waiting somebody to drop a dime in their cup.

That was the way they treated people before Christ came. But even though the purpose of the Lord was not to better the world but to save men out of it, looking forward to a final universal and perpetual betterment of the world, still it wasn't long until the kind-hearted Christians began to look after lepers. It wasn't long until the insane were treated no longer as devil possessed.

It wasn't long until the blind had a place to go and the crippled had hospitals. Even by the fourth century this was true. And then look at slavery itself, which is the occasion for what I'm now saying, the fact that our Lord did not nor did he tell his apostles to attack slavery as an institution.

Aristotle, the great Greek teacher, believed that slavery was a normal and proper thing and that the division of society into slaves and masters was a normal thing, just as dividing into men and women might be. And when Plato wrote his Republic, he included a slave class in his Republic. The Stoics were indifferent to slavery.

They said it doesn't make any difference. The slave is as high as his master and the master as low as the slave, and so they waved it off as did the Epicureans. But still, slavery began to disappear wherever the gospel went and does to this day disappear wherever the gospel goes.

You know the story of slavery in the United States. And while it was defended by some misled churchmen, it went down before Quakerism and Methodism and Christian writers and poets and preachers who couldn't stand to see it. And then there was the treatment of children, particularly child labor.

When Christianity got abroad, it taught the purity and honor of childhood. Jesus, our Lord, had been the child at his mother's breast. And so child labor was abolished finally by the groundswell of revival in England.

Well, so we might go up and down the scale. I think there are some preachers who've handled this and gone into it more deeply. But though it is true that this will collapse and that from other directions there will come the evil that will cause the world to go down and perish in its own rotten slough at the last, still and nevertheless, the gospel cannot go throughout the earth without making it better somewhere in some areas, even though the purpose of the gospel is to save men out of the world rather than to improve the world.

Now, the spirit here speaks to what we call employees. And I might point out, my friend, that if you work for somebody else, the reason you're called an employee and not a slave is that the gospel has been here and you owe your name as employee rather than slave indirectly to Christianity. Don't forget that, just keep it in mind.

Now, the instruction itself. He says, be obedient to your masters, you who work for others. Work so as to please them.

Now, I see nothing but what is right in this. I see this is good and right. And he said, your moral conduct in your work, don't talk back, he said.

Don't talk back if you're told to do something or even if your employers are not quite fair to you or rough with you. Don't talk back. And he said, don't purloin.

Purloining, I think is a very beautiful sounding word. You could rhyme it with something else and have a poem. But actually, it just meant steel or it meant pilfer rather than steel, really.

It wasn't a grand larceny. It was petty larceny. It was the taking of small things.

Now, this is very interesting because the slave, you see, had no rights. The slave belonged, the Roman slave belonged to his master, body and soul. He was not responsible before the law except for a few criminal things such as murder.

He owned nothing. He could own nothing. He could not sign his own name to a paper.

He could not enter into contracts. He could not vote. He could not stand up and make himself heard.

He was a property, a piece of property that belonged to his master the same as the cow and the donkey did or the camel. He belonged to his master. And so says one historian, what he took from his master was not considered to be stolen but merely displaced because it would be, it would simply be the pot stealing the kettle.

It wouldn't be somebody on the outside stealing from the master, but it would be one who belonged to the master already taking something else that belonged to the master. Rather an odd situation, but that was the way slavery was. And of course, knowing human nature, you know what they did.

They just pilfered for all that was in it and prolonged all they could. And the master had very little recourse. But now comes Christianity.

And instead of rising up in fury against the institution of slavery, which incidentally, as I have said, indirectly finally destroyed, it said to the individual Christian worker, don't steal from your boss. And if the argument was, as I used to hear in the factory where I worked, oh, they're rich. What do they miss? They don't miss five dollars.

Look, they're rich. But the Holy Ghost says, you're not doing this for your master's sake. You're doing this for my sake.

You're doing it because you're a Christian. Don't be a pilfer, even though you can get away with it. They no doubt took whatever was at hand.

It was common and no doubt widespread. But when a Christian, when a slave became a Christian, he took a new master. And while he still worked for the old boss, he took a new master altogether.

And that was one problem the early apostles had to work out. You see, the apostles got a bunch of slaves together and said to them, now you've changed bosses. You no longer are under your earthly master, but you have a master which is in heaven, Jesus Christ the Lord, and you obey him rather than your other master.

And of course, that could have been very serious and was very serious sometimes. And if you'll read the book of Philemon, you will see a beautiful example of how a slave was treated and how he was converted and then sent back as no longer a slave, but a son. But the Christian, to the Christian, the Holy Spirit said, no more of that.

You can get away with it and it's accepted, but there's no more of it. Now you're a Christian. He said, and show all good fidelity, all good faithfulness.

I wonder if there's anything like this left in the world. I wonder if any man exists, at least down on the worker level, who has anything like loyalty to his boss. I don't think so.

It is now get all you can in the shortest time you can and then go out. But they said, show all good fidelity and be loyal to your master that you may adorn the doctrine of God, our savior in all things. Now, don't you think that an honest, faithful, polite, and efficient worker must have astonished those masters when a man, instead of stealing, stopped stealing, when instead of getting away with as little work as possible, began to do a good day's work, instead of turning angrily and talking back to his boss, said yes, sir, and went and did what he was told, and instead of lying around drunk and would have to be, have a pail of water thrown on him to get him up and get him to work in the morning, he was up bright eyed and smiling.

Don't you suppose those unsaved masters must have said, what happened to this man? He's still my servant. I still own him, but he's got a strange, far away look in his eyes and a joy that I've never seen before. And not only that, he's honest.

He hasn't stolen a thing since he met this man, Paul, and he's been completely faithful. He's polite to me, no more talking back, and he's more efficient than he used to be. He's one of my best workers.

Don't you suppose that that had a tremendous influence upon the Roman masters? And don't you think that that was the softening up, which the Holy Ghost gave the Roman empire finally, which finally adopted Christianity as the state religion? I don't know that was a good thing, but that was one of the reasons, because they could trust the Christian. And so a slave, as John Calvin pointed out, the wonder that a slave should beautify the doctrine of God, adorn the doctrine of God in all things. How wonderful if it had been a patrician, if it had been a man with a laurel crown about his brow, or a man with a long toga.

Why, many people might have said it'd be expected that one of the nobility might adorn religion, but this was a common slave, a chattel property who couldn't read and write often, and who didn't own anything

and couldn't own it, who couldn't enter into contracts with anybody else. And yet God says, beautify my gospel, and spoke to slaves. Isn't that a wonderful thought? I think it's a wonderful thought.

Now, if Christians lived as Christians should, and it became known abroad, let's use our imagination. It takes quite an effective exercise of our imagination, but let us imagine that all Christians should suddenly begin to live like Christians, that they should, as the unsaved atheist, or as the atheist said, Quakers came and astonished the world by living like Christians. Let's suppose that all Christians should begin to live like Christians, the way Christians should.

Employers found it out, and they would find it out very soon. Do you know what would happen? There would be a great clamor after Christians to work for them. They would want them because they were polite, honest, faithful, and efficient, because they could trust them with anything, anytime, anywhere.

They knew they wouldn't lie, they knew they wouldn't pilfer, they knew they wouldn't watch the clock and coast by until it's time to punch out. They knew they'd know that, and so everywhere, Jews and atheists and unbelievers everywhere would be looking for Christians to work for. But we Christians have so betrayed our Lord in our living that we're not trusted because we're Christians.

They demand the same references for us as they do for an atheist. An employer, General Motors, or First National Bank, or whoever it might be, when they want to employ somebody, we ask for a reference, just they have it to do, it's right, they should do it. But you can't write across the top, he's a Christian, and sign it, they say, oh well, we've hired Christians before, and they ran off with the payroll.

We've had Christians working for us before, and they were the dirtiest mouth people we had. We've had Christians working for us, and that doesn't mean anything, we want to know, do they drink, are they honest, and do they live right at home, do they pay their bills, and have they ever been in prison? They put that down, we've got to answer those questions. When a Christian girl from our church wants to get a job as a stenographer, and she gives me as a reference, though she's a Christian and gives a pastor as a reference, I don't have any one in mind, but I've given many a reference, I have to write and fill out a questionnaire two or three pages long, telling about the character of this girl when she's already said, I'm a Christian and this is my pastor.

Now it isn't the individual Christian's fault, it's a general breakdown in the moral quality of Christianity. If Christians lived, I say, the way Christians should, we'd be clamored after and sought out, and our service would be at a premium everywhere. Righteousness, he says here, the reason I ask you to do this is that you may adorn the doctrine.

My friend, righteousness is always the best adornment. Godliness always beautifies, and it beautifies whether it is in a slave or in a patrician, whether it is Lady Huntington or whether it's Billy Bray, whether it's Holy Ann or Sophie the Scrub Woman, or whether it is Suzanne Wesley, whether it's at the top or at the bottom in the social scale, godliness always beautifies. Whether it's an emperor or a slave, always righteousness is a beautiful thing.

And the world is waiting around, this cynical tough world that will wink and raise its eyebrows, but nevertheless is inwardly scared and uncertain and ready to believe, waiting for an example, the beauty of the Lord our God. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, prayed the old man, and the work of our hands establish thou it. Nothing is more beautiful than righteousness, nothing.

And if it were found among us, it would run before us like a fiery flame and make a way for us. It would plow the field for the seed that we plant. It would be our letter of reference.

Paul said he didn't need any. His life was his letter of reference. But righteousness and godliness would go before us like two faithful heralds and say, here comes a man of God, here comes a woman of the Spirit, here comes a Christian.

And though the world in its fury might rush upon us and slay us, as it has rushed upon and slain many thousands and hundreds of thousands of Christians down the years, it would be like Saul who helped to kill Stephen and then came under such blistering, shocking, terrifying conviction and self-accusation that it wasn't long before he was converted by the very presence of the Lord. So our very martyrdom would bring some to Christ, the story of the church down the years has been a story of good people among bad people, honest men among liars and thieves, but it's also been a story of martyrs and the very soldiers that cut their head off being converted after them. We find it in history where a soldier came in white and trembling and said to the Christian, I'm sorry, forgive me, but I'm under orders.

Then executed the Christian and then crawled away to lick his wounds until finally he turned to the same Jesus on whose lips, the same Jesus who had been on the lips of the dying man and gave his heart to God. Oh, it sounds like an old religious hackneyed expression, but my friends, it's still true that what we need is godliness and true holiness as adornments for the gospel. Beautiful buildings now in this day of monetary boom, beautiful buildings are being built, some of them too ugly for mule, but some of them very beautiful and expensive.

Nobody thinks anything now running up into the hundreds of thousands and even three quarters of a million dollars to build a church to adorn the doctrine, and yet that same church may be filled with bats and owls before too long. No bat or owl or flatworm or vampire ever roosted in the heart of a holy man, and it doesn't cost anything either. You don't have to ask a congregation for 25 years to keep paying for a holy man.

Adorn the doctrine, beautify it, beautify it. You testified to it, you witnessed to it, now beautify it. Set a crown of adornment upon it, drape it in the lovely robes of righteousness by your own life.

That's the only way you can do it. So whether you're an employer, an employee, a housewife, student, whatever you may be, this is all for you. Live as a Christian should live, and the world will recognize moral beauty when it sees it.

And even though it may will not be converted, it'll be humbled and silenced, for the beauty of the Lord our God is still the most beautiful thing in all the wide world. Amen.

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