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Titus - Making Things Right

Chapter 2 - (vs. 9-10)

We're in Titus 2. As we go through this book, it is always important to go back to the fundamental point of the book, and that is "setting things in order." So, Paul sends Titus to a place in which things were out of order and in disarray and he puts things in order. I told my wife, "It would be interesting to see how Titus would go about setting certain churches that we know today that are out of order in order." I've oftentimes thought that churches have their own dynamics and it's interesting that oftentimes pastors go from one place to the next. Really, the people in the church are more faithful than the pastor because he moves around and goes to different churches; but because the pastor does move around, you're coming to a place that is already set in the way that they think. So, when you bring in another pastor, he's either got to acquiesce to what's going on in the church (i.e. the sheep leading the shepherd) or he needs to just clean house, and that's pretty hard. So, it would be an interesting thing to see how Titus would handle these kinds of things, but clearly, he's setting in order.

One of the first places that you start is in the leadership. So, he says to establish this. Churches can fare a lot of problems if you have the right leadership. When you have the wrong leadership, you're not only going to have problems, but you're not going to be able to get out of them. So, it is important not only that you have the right leadership, but that the leadership, because they are right with God, be in unity with one another. Wherever there's unity, the Spirit of God is. So, it is very important, and he establishes order starting with the church.

As we go through this small letter, we begin to realize that we go from the church, which is the starting point, but then ultimately, we end up in our daily lives. So, as we see with wives, you need to do this and young men, you need to do this. We now find ourselves in the workplace. So, that's what we're going to be talking about today. We've gone from church to daily grind and let me just say this is the way that church should be. When you come to the church, it is the beginning of your week. So, you need to follow suit with the things that you've learned where you are; otherwise, it's just hypocrisy. But this stuff needs to be lived out. So, you come into church to be rejuvenated, directed, and as Scripture would call it, equipped to go into the world and do the things you should be doing. You should be an extension of the church where you are. So, that's why the workplace is going to be so important because of the fact that this should be lived out where you are in very difficult circumstances. The world is not a friendly place, and it can be very hostile to people that want to follow the Lord. So, how do you do this and how do you handle this, and what does it look like?

So, we pick up in Titus 2, and just to once again summarize, what is it that causes disorder? Well, a very simple way of putting it, disorder begins when you leave God. Obviously, God is the God of order and Paul writes that. You see that literally in the word that is used in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world." It's actually the word "*kosmos*." "*Kosmeó*" is where we get the word "cosmetics" which means to put your face in order. So, you're putting your face in order, and Scripture is saying that God has made order in the universe. When you look up at the sun and the moon and the stars, you realize, "Ok, this is a time piece." I mean, lunar calendar; you've got months that are orchestrated and times of planting. It just continues to follow suit, doesn't it? You can set your watch to it. It's amazing. The sun comes up, and the rotation of the earth and how these things continue in the same pattern. Could you imagine if God wasn't a God of order and what it would be like? So, how wonderful it is to know this.

As we have oftentimes read in the Gospel of John, it seems as if John was writing to the stoics. The stoics actually believed that there was a force in the universe that was logical because they saw the order in the universe. So, the stoics believed in order. They called this logical force "*logos*" which is where we get the word "logic". More specifically, it's translated in the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word," "*logos*." So, as the stoics began to hear this, they realized, "Ok, he's talking about order. We can swallow that hook, line, and sinker." But the wonderful thing about the Gospel of John is that it takes order and says by the Word of God all things were made, and without Him, there's not anything made that was made. So, it is very clear that He was the orchestrator of all these things. Then, John just turns midstream, and he looks at the stoic and he goes, "This logic was love." That's where they go, "Woah! How can logic be loving?" because they felt like dodging emotions was the best way to deal with reality. So, he begins to show the love of God throughout the Gospel. It's a great book.

So, as we come to this, we realize what happens when you abandon God. That's why he starts off the way that he does, "I've come in the name of God. The things that I'm telling you are God's plan; not man's way of thinking." So, you put things in order and establish things according to God. If you don't, then it's basically every man for himself like in the book of Judges; every man did what was right in his own eyes. So, when you take every man for himself and everybody does whatever they want to do, what are you going to have? You're going to have chaos. So, chaos really comes when we pursue our own selfish ambition.

Once again, to parallel this, I don't want to take too long on the introduction, but if you look with me in James; we read this last week, but just to remind you. Sometimes I feel like we need a running start, but in James 3:14 it says, "But if you have bitter jealousy and..." What's the next phrase? "...Selfish ambition." That's pursuing what you want, right? Not pursuing what God wants.

"... in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

(James 3:15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic."

Now, watch what he says in verse 16, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”

So, where does disorder come from? Well, every man for himself. Man begins to pursue those things that are self-gratifying and self-indulgent; by that, he becomes undisciplined. Then, he begins to live, as Thessalonians will say, an unruly life.

So, as we’ve been going through this, we’re setting things in order according to God’s way. We’re establishing the order of the household. Wives, young women, do this. Young men, do this, and now we come to the workplace.

If you pick up with me in Titus 2:9-10, as it seems to focus specifically on those that are servants. Now, it starts off in verse 9, “Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters...”

It is to be noted that the phrase that is being used here is in the masculine. I do think that’s interesting because if you go back, verse 3, “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,

(Tit 2:4) so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

(Tit 2:5) to be sensible, pure, workers at home...”

So, it seems logical that when he would come to the workplace, it would be in the masculine tense.

(Titus 2:9) “Urge bondslaves...;” that is to say, those that are servants, “to be subject to their own masters...”

Now, whether or not you perceive that you’re a servant at your workplace or that you have masters, it’s kind of a mood point; because the fact of the matter is, if you’re working for somebody, you’re serving them. If they’re in charge, they’re your master. So, however you want to perceive it, and if you want to call it by another name, it’s still a “rose.”

“Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters...” Once again, it’s interesting that in verse 5, tell the young women “To be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being...” What? That’s the same word, “subject.” In other words, you’re placing yourself in order. It’s actually a military term that makes reference to falling in line. Once again, the thought may be, “I don’t need to listen to anybody.” That’s true, but you may not need to work either. I’ve got news for you, if you’re not going to fall in line, you probably won’t have a job and you have to be willing to do that.

The perception oftentimes with the women is, “I’m not going to be subject to my husband.” Everybody is subject to somebody. So, when your husband goes to work, he’s subject to his boss. So, would you rather be subject to a stranger or somebody that loves you? You really have it better off; I would think and hope that it would be true that the person you married was

somebody that actually loved you. So, you're being subject to somebody that would have some kind of care for you. Whereas, when your husband is working in the workplace, he has to be subject to somebody that could care less about him oftentimes. Once again, it's an interesting parallel.

"Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything..." That's pretty broad, isn't it?

"... to be well-pleasing, not argumentative..."

"Well-pleasing" seems to emphasize the fact that you're trying to please your boss. It's almost like the passage in Ephesians 5:10, "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." Now, once again, you're always going to have people saying, "If my boss wants me to do something wrong, do you think I should do that?" No. 1 Peter 4:15 makes it pretty clear; look, by no means let any of you suffer for doing what's wrong. Scripture has multiple passages that talk about the fact that you want to suffer for doing what's right; you obviously don't want to suffer for doing what's wrong. Peter will say, do you want to see a good life? Turn away from evil. So, if there's evil or something wrong in the workforce, you need to turn away from it. You don't want to become a part of it. We're not talking about that because most of the time, your boss isn't telling you to rob a bank or hurt somebody; we can go down the list. They might tell you to work a certain way where you say to yourself, "I think I could do that better if I just do that my way;" but if he told you to do it a certain way, guess what, you need to do it his way. Why? He's your master. You're the servant.

We live in a day and age and a place that is very similar to Crete. It goes back to 220 BC when they were actually having trouble in Crete with civil strife. I think that's pretty interesting. So, that pattern kind of followed. Crete was very interesting in the sense that if you were to go to Athens, women and slaves were more subject, but in Crete, they had far more rights. So, they had more rebellion on this island than in other places because they knew their rights. So, they were able to pursue those things. Well, Paul is telling them not to pursue them. Scripture says, look, you have the right to do a lot of things, but not all things edify or are beneficial. So, think through this. (1 Corinthians 10:23) So, he says to try and think about what would make your boss happy; what would be pleasing to him. It has a sense of arousing good feelings. That's probably the way that the word is described in the Greek. In other words, when your boss thinks about you, does he have good feelings, or does he have bad feelings? "Oh no. Good grief. It's that guy again. I've got to deal with this guy." Is that the way he feels? You really should be arousing good feelings.

So, it says, "well-pleasing" in the sense of arousing those feelings and "not argumentative." In other words, combative, confronting all the time; it has that sense of antithetical. So, you're always against and looking for ways to disagree.

Now, when it goes into the next verse, it begins to describe how you might do that. So, there's those that are aggressive, and there are those that are passive-aggressive. So, the aggressive would probably just be argumentative and maybe walk off the job because everybody wants to be treated "fairly." So, they're going to be looking out for their best interest so to speak. Once again, that's that sense of "selfish ambition." We always used to tell our kids, "Never ask for a raise. You work for God, and you do your best for God. Let Him give you the raise." God can move the heart, right? God can cause the guy at the workplace to think, "I don't know why I'm doing it, but I'm going to write a bigger check." We've seen that happen so many times. God will take care of you, but your heart has to be "this is all for God." Then, that frees you up to willingly make your boss successful, if I can put it that way; that's your desire.

It goes on and says,

(Titus 2:10) "not pilfering..."

Obviously, it seems to be that you're taking something that is not yours and using it to your advantage. But it has more the sense of a covert activity in which you're trying to gain advantage; which could not only mean the sense of taking money, which would be covert activity; sneaking money and putting it in your pocket, but it could also be talking to people and stacking the deck in your favor. It could be in a manipulative way, or all kinds of manifold ways of you working the system to make yourself look better than everybody else. That's a kind of pilfering because you're covertly manipulating to gain advantage for yourself. It's basically saying don't try to gain advantage for yourself. Try to make your boss look good. Of course, that's not in our heads to do that.

So, "not pilfering..."

Watch what the phrase goes onto say, "but showing all good faith..."

Now, it's not as much talking about your faith in Christ; which obviously is what motivates you to do what you do, but it's talking about fidelity in the sense of you being trustworthy to your boss. If he senses that you're for him, he can feel like he can trust you with more things. He's looking for people that he can trust; people that he knows. Even the ungodly are looking for people that they can trust because they know that's what they need to have in order to move forward in their lives. Scripture is telling us that by doing this, you make the Gospel look good. Isn't that what it says?

"... so that they will adorn the doctrine of God..."

We tell people that we're Christians. We tell people that we're followers of Christ and that He changes our lives to the degree that we're no longer selfish, but we're generous. So, why do we have such a problem with what he's paying you? Why do you continue to argue with the way that he tells you to do something? Scripture is giving us this wonderful pattern. This is not a new thing. It's one of the things that I wanted to look at in a more extensive way because as

you go through the New Testament, you see this interesting thing; you see even how God calls people that are faithful where they are.

An example of this is in Mark 2:13, “And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.”

(Mark 2:14) As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth...”

Now, my question to you is why is he sitting in the tax office? He’s working.

“... and He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ And he got up and followed Him.”

Now, think through this, if you look at chapter 2, aren’t here multitudes following Jesus? Why wouldn’t He pick one of the multitudes? Why would He go to a place of business where a guy is working? He’s going to him and calling him out. Why would He do that?

If you back up into Mark 1:16, “As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea...”

Watch the end of verse 16, I like the way it says it, “... for they were fishermen.” It’s so axiomatic, isn’t it? Why was he fishing? They’re fisherman. That’s what they do. It’s one of those complicated questions.

(Mark 1:17) “And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’”

(Mark 1:18) Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.”

What were they doing? They were working. Even Peter, as Christ will come into his life again, he’s washing the nets and getting everything ready, and He tells them to cast them on the other side. Peter ultimately says, “Wow, you’re God.” These men were faithful where they were. Where was David when he was called? I guess his brothers were wandering in the house, and some of the other ones were thinking, “I’m better looking” and “I’m stronger” and God basically says, “Go to the guy in the field that’s keeping watch over the flock. Get that guy.” We see this continually in Scripture, and it’s telling us that God is a God of order, and He is looking for those that will fundamentally do what they’re supposed to do where they are. We were talking about Moses, “What is that in your hand?” “It’s a staff.” “Well, that’s what you’re going to lead people with.” The things that you’ve been doing, “I’ve been training you for 40 years now to be a shepherd. You’re going to shepherd a lot of people.” Can you imagine the fact that a lot of these people didn’t have the expertise? Quite frankly in some cases that’s true. Then, God pushed them through boot camp. You’ll see that as well, but the point of the matter is that He looks for faithful men. Paul will say to Timothy, teach “faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2)

The point is, if you look with me in Matthew 24, that there’s a sense of responsibility that God is looking for where you are. I know that are thoughts are “I want to be used greatly by God,”

and God would just simply say, “He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much. I’ll give them much, but you’re going to have to be faithful where you are with the things that I’ve given you.”

So, when you look at Matthew 24:45, it starts off this way, “Who then is the faithful and sensible...” We’ve been hearing those words in Titus, haven’t we?

“... whom his master put in charge of his household...”

I just want to stop here. One of the problems that people oftentimes have when stories or examples are given by Christ is they immediately over spiritualize them. You have to take it where it is. What is he talking about? He’s talking about a guy that works and he’s also talking about a guy who’s in charge. His statement is that we’re looking for people that we can trust. That’s simply all that he’s saying within the passage, and this is the kind of person that we’re looking for.

It goes on and says, “Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?”

Now, the phrase is telling us that the concern of the slave that’s faithful is those that he’s in charge of. In other words, he’s making sure that they’re fed at the time that they need to be fed; not at the time that’s convenient for him, but at the time that’s best for them. That would be faithfulness, wouldn’t it?

So, it goes on and says in verse 46, “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.”

What is that talking about? It’s talking about trustworthiness, and that trustworthiness is that continuance; uninterrupted faithfulness. Why would the boss find him faithful when he came? Because he had been doing what he had always done; he hasn’t changed his pattern.

(Matthew 24:47) “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”

Why? Because he was faithful.

(Matthew 24:48) “But if that evil slave...”

“Evil” is dealing with somebody that is bad in nature; thus, is worthless to the person who hires him. In other words, if he’s just thinking about himself then he’s no help to the guy that hired him.

“But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’

(Matthew 24:49) and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;”

He’s self-indulgent. These are things that begin to define who he is. You have to ask yourself, how did someone like this that would do something like that get the job in the first place? He lied and he put on a facade that tricked the boss because it goes onto say,

“the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know,

(Matthew 24:51) and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the...”

What?

“Hypocrites.”

That’s the person that puts on a mask and fakes it out. How did he get that job?

I often think of Psalm 66:3 where it says that the enemies of God feign obedience. It’s kind of a fake thing. That’s why you have to be sincere. Psalm 81:15 says, “Those who hate the LORD would pretend obedience.” The thing about pretend obedience and feigned obedience is they can’t last. That’s why Hebrews will say, “the evidence of real is it endures firm until the end.” What then is the evidence of fake? It doesn’t last. So, all the way through, even as you go into chapter 25, it says be on the alert; be ready. It deals with the virgins in the next chapter. Then it states in verse 14,

“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them.”

He gives some different amounts, right? Then, you go on and the master ultimately comes, and he finds these that are faithful, and he says, “Well done, good and faithful slave.” (Matthew 25:23) The point of the matter is that all these slaves that were good and faithful were trying to make their boss successful. They ultimately find out that their boss comes back, and he goes, “I’m going to give you more.” That’s an interesting twist, isn’t it? You’ve been doing it for him all along, but he wanted to give to you all along. The one guy that he doesn’t, if you look within the passage, he hides the talent, and he goes, “I knew you were a cruel guy, and I didn’t want to give you success. So, I just hid it.” The master says, “Well, if you knew that I was cruel then you would have known that I expected at least some interest from the money I gave you or the things I gave you.” The point was that “I didn’t want to make you successful because I didn’t like you.” So, it’s talking about the motivation of the heart. Once again, if you put that truth in the context of us and the Lord, we should be trying to learn what is pleasing to Him. See, we’re on the job. We’re doing everything to please Him.

You need to see the passage, because if I don’t show you then you might not underline it; if you don’t underline it, you might forget it. So, turn with me to Colossians 3 because I wouldn’t want you to forget it. Would it surprise you that Scripture seems to agree with itself? It says this in verse 22,

“Slaves, in all things...”

That sounds like Titus, doesn’t it?

“...in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service...”

Oh, this is going to get a little deeper here.

“... as those who merely please men...”

That would be putting on a show for the moment, maybe to get the job.

“... but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”

So, who are you really doing it for?

It goes on and says this, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

(Colossians 3:24) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance...”

Watch this last phrase,

“It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

In case you didn't know who you are working for. So, why would you not do your best today? Why would you not adorn the doctrine of God by demonstrating to this person that followers of God are not those who pilfer and look to gain an advantage for themselves? Followers of God are those who seek to help others and to elevate them. Isn't that Christ, who took on a form of a bondservant and became obedient even to the point of death on the cross? It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. It's making it pretty clear there, isn't it? There's a lot of examples of this in the Gospel, but I think it's interesting how many times you see the workforce being brought up in the Gospel. Don't you think that's pretty interesting?

So, when you look at Luke 17, as he's talking about the last days, and if you drop down to verse 27, you begin to see during the time of Noah. Now, I'm trying to think in my own mind, “I wonder what Noah was doing with his days?” I think he was building a boat.

(Luke 17:27) “They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying...”

In other words, they were feeding their desires and cravings, and they were going after those things.

“...they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Now, watch verse 28, “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

(Luke 17:29) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

(Luk 17:30) It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.”

Now, why is he giving these examples? He's saying that if you're doing what you're doing to please yourself, you're going to be going after the things of the world. When Christ comes, you're not going to want to let go of that stuff. You think, "No, no, I'll let go of it." I don't think you will because you've been so used to being selfish, and your selfish ambition is so powerful that it's got a lock on you, and you're not going to let go of that stuff. By the way, while we're here, verse 31 reads this way,

"On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out..."

Do you hear what that's saying? The time is coming when Christ is calling, and you say, "Wait! I've got stuff in the attic. I've got to go get the stuff in the attic." We don't have basements here.

"... and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back."

"I've got to get more stuff." Let it go. It's not important. If you work every day for the glory of God, do you think things are going to be important to you? They're not going to be important to you. That's why you're going to be your boss's favorite person; because you never ask for a raise; you never think of yourself.

Watch how this ends,

(Luke 17:32) "Remember Lot's wife."

That's an interesting phrase, isn't it? Oh, by the way, you can go ahead and memorize this verse. Just one turn, and it changed everything for her forever. She just loved it a little too much and couldn't let go of it because really, that's where her heart was all along.

It shouldn't surprise you when you look at Luke 16, it's a very unique chapter because it starts off with a parable that I know people fuss over saying, "Does Jesus tell them to do something wrong?" The story goes, it's pretty interesting, as He talks about a steward that squandered his possessions, and he really didn't handle things appropriately. He realized that his boss was going to fire him. So, he says to himself, "I don't know how to work, and I'm not sure I have a lot of favor." His bottom line was, "Do you know I think I'll do? Of all the people that I took money from, I think I'll go to all their houses. They owe my boss a certain amount. So, I'm going to go up to them and say, 'I'll tell you what, you can pay half and you won't have to pay my boss the whole thing', and I'm going to collect. When I collect, I'll give it to my boss, but they're going to like me because I didn't make them pay everything that they owed my boss." Jesus turns to His disciples, and he goes, "This guy was smart." Now, he's not saying that he was smart because he was cheating his boss, and that's where we get it wrong. He'll go on to say that he realized at this point that relationships were more valuable than money. He started mending relationships because he knew that once the money was out, he needed friends. So, he was willing to give up in order to gain friends. Jesus will turn to His disciples, and say, "So, why won't you do that? Why won't you realize that relationships are far more valuable than

mammon?" He says, "If you'll be faithful, and use mammon to help people instead of hoarding, then I'll entrust greater riches to you."

Luke 16:9 is the conclusion to the scenario and reads this way, "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings."

Watch verse 10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful..."

Here again, lest we mistranslate this, Scripture is not saying that you need to be good stewards with money by having a savings account and that if you'll have a savings account and take care of your money, and let it build up interest, make sure you have enough for retirement. It's not talking about that; it's saying that you use money to invest in lives. If you'll do that, God will give you the greater riches.

Therefore, if you've been faithful in something like unrighteousness; which He's calling money unrighteous, if you look in verse 9.

So, verse 10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

In other words, "unrighteous" would be hoarding, like the guy who tears down his barns and builds bigger barns, that would be unrighteous.

(Luke 16:11) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

(Luke 16:12) "And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

Corinthians says, "What do you have that God didn't give you?" So, why does He give you anything? To help others.

(Luke 16:13) "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

We would think He would stop right there, but He doesn't because it then says in verse 14, "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money..."

What did they do? They laughed it off. I can just see them, "Well, that was a stupid statement. How's he going to be able to retire?"

(Luke 16:15) "And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.'"

Of course, He goes onto say that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. Why would he say that?

When you go into chapter 18, a guy comes up to Him and says, "How do I obtain eternal life?" I think he's probably thinking, "I'll make an investment." Jesus says, "Keep the commandments." So, He goes down the list of the commandments. This is what's interesting about the scenario, he can jump through the hoops in the fact that he's not going to murder somebody. If you look in chapter 18, "Do not commit adultery." Ok, he can do that. "Do not murder." He can do that. "Don't steal." He can do that. He can even be honorable towards his mother and father, at least outwardly. The one thing he can't do is give up his money. So, Jesus says, "Ok, one more thing. Sell everything you have, give it to the poor and follow Me." "Wait a minute, you're not talking about me not murdering somebody. Now, you're talking about the fact that I have to be merciful and care for that person as much as I care for myself. That isn't going to happen."

Jesus says in verse 22, "When Jesus heard this, He said to him, 'One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor...'"

(Luke 18:23) But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."

Of course, the disciples are thinking, "Well, who can be saved then?"

All the way through, this chapter is dealing with the sense of humbling yourself and the sense of mercy. In fact, the whole chapter is really about mercy, which starts off with the widow asking for protection. It then goes into the tax collector who is beating his breast, saying to God to have mercy on him while the pharisee is condescending and going, "I'm just so thankful that I'm not wicked like this guy." Then, it goes into the little children, and Jesus says, "Permit the children to come to me." All the way through, you see the mercy of God, and you see the wealthy being unmerciful, saying, "Well, can't they get a job?" All kinds of things like that. It's the heart because Proverbs says that the rich man answers roughly. It's saying that he's used to getting what he wants, and he doesn't know why everybody else can't jump through the hoops. He doesn't have that sense of mercy towards other people.

My point is that if you're working, serving others, you don't become that way. If you're working for the money, then yes, you'll become hard and detached, and only think about yourself. I oftentimes bring up the individuals that I've worked for when I was going to school in California. When I was working at the car shop and doing things like brake jobs; we all really loved Will because we knew that he not only loved God, but that he loved people. There wouldn't be a day that passed by that he wouldn't do a free break job for somebody or say, "Forget about it, you don't owe me anything." If he knew that you had a need, he would stuff bills in your pocket. Even to the day that Will retired, I don't think he retired with much, but all his life he was giving to people and always doing things for people. We really didn't think about it as a mechanic shop, we thought of it as a ministry. You begin to see how God can use something like a mechanic shop to minister to people. He would purposely hire young men that were going

either to seminary or Biola university, and he said, "I want to help you." It's a long story, but I remember the first time I went there. I said, "I don't know how to do that stuff. I'm taking 17 units in school and my hours are really strange." He said, "I'll work with you. Whatever your hours are, I'll work with you." It didn't take long to figure out that he was trying to help me. He helped a lot of guys go through college. He was working for God.

When you work for God then you serve others; when you serve others, you never get selfish. I would say, it's the fringe benefit of serving, and I would say this, everybody is going to serve somebody. You can't serve two masters. You can work for money, but money is not going to be there when you need it. It's not going to hug you. It's not going to care for you. As Scripture says, it will make wings like eagles and fly away. However, when you begin to serve others, how wonderful it is that it takes you out of that realm of selfishness; which really will begin to destroy you and bring disorder into your life. It's one of the reasons why he talks about order. Really, he's talking about saving your life.

Let me give you an example of this. In 1 Timothy, Paul begins to encourage Timothy in chapter 4. While we're here in 1 Timothy 4, if we skip over into chapter 6, let me just show you how this starts off. Surprise, here's the workforce again in the Bible, but in 1 Timothy 6:1, it reads this way, "All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against."

A believer never walks in saying, "I know my rights," and a believer never goes in with selfish ambition. He thinks in terms of "How can I work for God?" and "How can I help this man that I'm working for?" What is that boss ultimately going to think? It might take a while, but finally he will come around and say, "I don't know who this guy serves. This God, I don't know what He's like, but I know this, that guy is not selfish, and I know something else, I can trust him to look out for my good." Do you know what you've just done? You've adorned the Gospel; you've adorned the doctrine of God because it is the picture of Christ.

The very next verse says, "Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles."

So, Paul will begin to talk to Timothy. Of course, he has a responsibility, and he should be serving the people and ministering to them. He says this in 1 Timothy 4:12,

"Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

(1Timothy 4:13) Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

(1Timothy 4:14) Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.

(1 Timothy 4:15) Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all."

In other words, you serve the people with this gift. Don't be lax about this. Be absorbed; make every message something that you've wrestled with. Be absorbed in your own life. Then, put it to practice because you're not going to be able to help people if this is not true in your life. Now, he's talking about the fact that he's called to serve. We even call it "ministry," right? What does "ministry" mean? Serving.

Then it says this in verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Now, he uses the word "sōzō" which means "it will keep you safe". He's not saying they'll be saved by virtue of you; he's saying that it will keep you safe and free from injury and peril. There's a lot of problems that a pastor can get into. There's a lot of temptations that come along. There are a lot of pastors that have found that to be true. What will keep them safe? What will keep you safe? If you're absorbed in serving, you'll be safe. If you'll be absorbed in doing what God has told you to do and not go into the whole selfish ambition, "I wonder what I can do for me" self-gratification thing because that's going to make you extremely vulnerable. But it really is being absorbed in service that recues you and keeps you on track. I think that's probably one of the most encouraging things when I think about that. It's one of the reasons why Paul is so hard when he writes to the Thessalonians. He says, "Look, some of you aren't working. You need to go to work."

If I can show you 1 Thessalonians 4, some very simple verses, but clearly stated.

(1 Thessalonians 4:9) "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

(1 Thessalonians 4:10) for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more".

By the way, I just want to emphasize that loving somebody is thinking of them more highly than yourself.

Then it says this in verse 11, "and to make it your ambition..."

Make it your ambition..."to protest; to shout for your rights."

No.

"...make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,

(1 Thessalonians 4:12) so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need."

One of the grave concerns that I've oftentimes had with people in the ministry is when they almost perceive that people owe them things. I feel like they're always walking around with their hands out, and they're trying to raise money for themselves. Stop it. You're embarrassing me. One, if you're walking by faith, tell God if you need money. He can't hear you? He can't move hearts to do something? That's one of the things that Paul says at the beginning of this letter when he writes to the Thessalonians. He says, "When I came to you, I didn't ask for anything. I came to you, and I started working because I knew that you would begin to think, 'He's in it for the money,' and I didn't want you to think that way." Now, are there times that he receives money from people? Oh yeah, he receives money from the church of Philippi, which really wasn't a rich church, but they begged him to let them give to him. He says, "The only reason that I took your money is because it increased your account."

Then, he goes on to say in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

(2 Thessalonians 3:7) For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,

(2 Thessalonians 3:8) nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;"

See, that's when doors start opening up. If you go onto the job, and you're looking to take from that employer, you become a burden to him. Have you ever been on a job, and you say, "Boss, this one is on me. Let me just help you out today."? Can you imagine the testimony? If you're working for the testimony, and you're not working for the money, you don't think God will take care of you?

He goes on and says,

(2 Thessalonians 3:9) "not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."

(2Thessalonians 3:10) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."

Now, the one thing that he's mainly concerned about is the unruliness that happens when somebody is not working. In fact, if you back up into 1 Thessalonians 4, at the very beginning, he says, "You're going into all kinds of immorality and it's because you have all this time on your hands." We're all working for God, bottom line as believers; aside from this, you and I should be serving someone all the time. You should find somebody that you're serving all the time because once you stop serving, you start getting selfish. It's the serving that produces this heart

that is really focused on benefiting and doing good things. You become very prosperous by doing this.

Like I said, there are a lot of passages that deal with this, but I like the way that Ephesians emphasizes the way that we work. Ephesians 6:5 says, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling..."

Here again, the emphasis is on what? "...the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ."

So, we've already seen this repeatedly. Who am I working for? It is the Lord Christ that I serve. So, when I do the service, do I really want to help this guy? Well, if I want to do it for Christ, I do and I'm very sincere about it.

He goes on and says, "not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."

(Ephesians 6:7) With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

Look, I've had bosses in the past. I can't remember how many jobs I've had, but I've had bosses that I'm going, "Wow, I wouldn't ask my worst enemy to work for this guy." You can look up into heaven, and say, "I'll do this for You." When you start doing it that way, God will give you a love for the person. Without going into too much detail, one of the greatest gifts that God gave me was the ability to minister to somebody that really hated me. A lot of you know this story. So, I don't want to belabor it, but when somebody starts spitting on you, it's pretty evident that they don't like you. It's your foremen. So, it's not like you can spit back, which you really wouldn't want to do. I'm just emphasizing that. You might feel like it, but you really don't want to do that. He was cursing at me and stuff like that because he knew that I was a Christian. For some reason, he just hated Christians. I can still remember the guy; Charles was his name. He owned a few large shrimp boats. Anyway, he was a hostile guy and mean. Long story short, he wasn't just mean to me, he was mean to other people. There was a guy that came back after he had fired him. I remember seeing him from a distance. We were actually out at Sawgrass. I remember Sawgrass when there wasn't one house; it was all sand. We were out at Sawgrass, and we were laying pipe. I looked down the road, and a truck was going like ninety to nothing in the sand. The guy gets out of the truck, big guy, probably about 6'3", 350 lbs. He pulls a gun out, and everybody knew who he was after. Once again, long story short, I talked with him, he put the gun away, and drove off. Charles is shaking, and he says to me, "Do you want to learn how to operate heavy equipment?" I remember going, "Yeah," and he said, "I'm going to teach you." It was because that day I returned good for evil as unto the Lord, not thinking anything would come from it. Well, about a year or two later, I had gone off to school in California. I never went back to Jax Utilities again. Then, I came back here and started this church. We were meeting at a Methodist church in San Pablo, actually at one time, there by the water. Then, they moved to new facilities. It was when they had moved that we were renting. We didn't have a lot of money then, but we were able to rent it in the afternoon. I think it was like 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Anyway, we were having service, and I never will forget it. This

particular service, I look, and there's a guy in the back kind of holding another guy up. This was after the service was over, and they started walking towards me. Well, lo and behold, I recognized the guy that was being held up. It was Charles. The guy that was holding him up looked at me, and he said, "Charles wanted to come and see you." I said, "How did Charles know that I was here?" He said, "I don't know. He wanted to come and see you. He has cancer, and he's dying." Then, Charles said, "I want to be saved." Who would have thought? It was one of those investments that make you go, "Man, I'm glad I didn't pursue my own selfish desires." Actually, within a few months after that, he passed away. God is able to save, isn't He? A lot of these bosses, the only thing that we can think of is "how much money can we get out of them?" and we should be thinking, as Paul writes to Timothy, "How can we ensure salvation for us and for them?" We should be thinking that way. Isn't that what "sensible" means? You're pulling in the reigns of your selfish desire, and you're thinking salvation instead. "He who saves souls is wise."

I was thinking about 1 Peter 2, it talks about unreasonable bosses. It says even if he's unreasonable, do what's right. Do you remember James 5? It talks about the fact that they're withholding your pay. Do you remember what James says? Don't grumble; don't complain. You go, "But they withheld..." I can just see God going, "Don't say anything. Be patient." Scripture says. God will take care of this. That's where our faith kicks in because once again, if we're doing it for God, and we know He's the one that rewards us, then we know He will make things right; if in the sincerity of our heart we do it for Him. You realize that this order thing begins in the church, but it has to go and extend where we are. If it doesn't go and extend where we are, it doesn't work. Order doesn't come, but when order does come, then there isn't evil or destruction. God's going to use, save and rescue where you are, wherever you are.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your goodness to us, and thank You for the order that You ordained for us. We couldn't have imagined that this order was to save, but that's what it's about. By virtue of us doing the right thing in the right way, You're rescuing people. We have found that when we try to do it our way, oftentimes, we give words, and we throw out the words to people. It's meaningless to them. We become offensive to them by virtue of using them and abusing them and manipulating and the subterfuge that we use to gain an advantage for ourselves. They can tell that we don't care for them. Change our heart, Lord. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.