

## Glimpses of Godliness (Part 5) – Godliness and Work

Beau Hughes – August 31, 2014

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It's good to see so many of you back. I hope you've had a good week. Is everybody doing okay this morning? I'm glad you're here. If you have a Bible, turn to 1 Timothy, chapter 6. That's where we'll be. While you're flipping the Bible... By the way, if you don't have a Bible, there should be a black hardback one in the seat in front of you. You're welcome to use that this morning. Then if you don't own a Bible, of course we'd love you to have that. Take it home with you if you'd like.

While you're flipping to 1 Timothy, which is toward the end of the Bible, I would love to just say hello to those of you who are new here. I know Tate already welcomed you. Some of you have actually come in after Tate did the welcome and the announcements. So if you're new, if this is your first time or one of your first times to be among us, my name is Beau. I'm one of our pastors and elders.

We are, as a church, delighted you're here. I don't know how you found your way in here. It's always interesting to learn how you showed up here on Sunday morning of all places you could be in Denton, but we're grateful you did. We've been praying for you. You're jumping in right here at the tail end of a sermon series our church has been studying from this little letter in the Bible called 1 Timothy.

It's a letter the apostle Paul, who was one of the key figures in early Christianity, wrote to his disciple named Timothy. He also wrote it *through* Timothy, as it were, to the church in Ephesus, which is where Timothy was. You see, the apostle Paul had planted this church in Ephesus, and the church had really drifted into being a chaotic train wreck of a church. That's the best way to put it.

Paul wrote this letter. He left Timothy in Ephesus to sort of clean up the mess, get the church back in order, and lead it ahead. He wrote this letter to Timothy in order to inform and instruct Timothy in how to do that. What we've been studying as a church is just kind of drawing out of this letter

what we can learn here as we as a campus are looking forward in the days ahead to becoming our own church (which, if you're new, I'd love to tell you more about that).

What can we learn from the church in Ephesus? What can we learn from what they did wrong and how they drifted into all sorts of chaos as a church? Then what can we learn from what Paul says to Timothy and to the church about what we can do by God's grace to make sure we're living, as we'll read today, in accordance with godliness? We've been looking at this letter and sort of drawing out these glimpses of what a godly church looks like.

Paul actually says in the letter, there's a way the church ought to live. There's a way the church ought to behave. That being the case, we want to know what that is. We want to see how God has instructed us to be his people. Of course, that implies we're particular types of people as we come together as a church.

There's been so much we've looked at. In the previous weeks, we've looked at how we please God when we come into this gathering. What does it really look like to be here and not just sort of do the Sunday thing but to actually please God as we come together and we pray and we sing? How do we do that?

How do we live together like a family, which is what God says we are if we're Christians? He saves us into a people, and that people is the family of God. How do we live like a family that has a backbone of self-sacrificing love toward one another, especially those who are the most vulnerable in our church?

Then even last week we looked at the importance of leadership in the church. If it wants to be godly and flourish, how does a church structure its leadership? What type of leaders does it need, and what does that have to do with the congregation? How do the leadership and the church sort of live together in harmony in a way that makes much of Jesus?

Then this week we're going to look at one last group of people Paul instructs at the church of Ephesus, and that group of people is the slaves in Ephesus. Of course, that means we have some work to do to get on the same page before we read what he says to that group of people. Will you pray with me just that we wouldn't be putting words into God's mouth this morning, but that we'd actually be hearing what he said from his Word as he illuminates that to us by his Spirit? Again, we're glad you're here. Let me pray.

Father, we come now. Even as Josh has already done, we ask that you would open our eyes to see wonderful things in your Scripture. We thank you that you have given us this Scripture that, Lord, we might, as your Spirit works among us in hearing it, actually be changed. As your Word goes forth, you intend for it to change people, not just for us to sort of come in and leave the same way and not really have ever had a transforming experience.

God, we're just opening ourselves up and asking for you to do that. Again, even as we've been praying, where we're distracted of mind and heart, would you help us to subdue those distractions? Would you help us to listen and to hear through those things, Lord? God, again, we just pray you would not make us just hearers of your Word but actually doers.

What you have prepared for us to hear this morning individually and corporately, you intend for us to respond to. God, would you show us that? Would you make that really clear? We're a dull people. We just confess that and ask for you to enlighten us. We pray it in Christ's name, amen. Amen.

Well, this past Wednesday, I sat in my office (which is just kind of right out the doors here) and wept for about 30 minutes. It was kind of one of those messy times where, you know, men try to lead with a foot where we're sort of beyond that. Man, I really just sobbed. I'm grateful that if Jesus' life taught us anything about true manhood, it's that sometimes it's okay to weep.

You know, the shortest sentence in the Bible is, "**Jesus wept,**" as his friend, Lazarus, had died (even though Jesus knew he was going to raise him from the dead). There are just some things that humanly speaking we should feel, we should allow to sort of hit our heart and cause us (even the most hardened of men or women among us) to weep. Not doing that will actually sort of callous our heart in a way that's not helpful. It makes us less human.

This past week, I don't know if you can sometimes perceive in yourself a sort of weariness or a bunch of circumstances or burdens that have kind of collided where you just know, "It's time. I just feel like I need to cry." You know, it's like they took my Happy Meal I like to get off the menu, and I just got sad about it. It's like, "Okay, I'm tired. Something is going on here. I don't know what that is, but I probably need to get a good nap and maybe even just spend some extended time with others and personally just before the Lord."

It was just kind of that moment for me. I read a letter one of our members had written to me that was sprinkled with just unbelievable encouragement for me personally. I kind of blame it on him, but that kind of opened me up and softened me up. Then right after I read that letter and began to really sort through some things that had been going through my mind and heart over the last month or so, it just led me into weeping.

One of the primary things I was really burdened about and I was really just sort of overcome with grief about this week was the continued racialization of our country and of our communities that have been on display in very explicit ways in these days in Ferguson, Missouri, and of course everything that's come out of Ferguson.

You know, it's amazing. We are a diverse congregation ethnically, generationally, in terms of education and class, and all sorts of ways. We bring just such a diverse set of perspectives on everything we see in the headlines but especially around things of ethnicity, especially around things of race and racialization in our country.

You know, as a diverse church, we don't just get to sort of talk about things like what's happened in Ferguson once and then move on to the next headline. If you're a homogenous church, you can do that. That's not a bad thing necessarily, but it's just not that important because the reality of the room is everybody is sort of thinking the same.

When it comes to racialization in our culture, our church is not all the same. I mean, look around. We're not all thinking the same, and yet at the same time, part of what just hit me again and sobered me up again... It was sort of like an earthquake. You know, there's the initial devastation, and then there are these ripples of devastation, these aftershocks. It was sort of an aftershock of devastation for me where I just recounted again, regardless of what perspective we come from, a teenage boy is dead.

His death has set off chaos and just really set our nation on fire again. Of course, it's always simmering underneath in terms of race and racial relationships, but it just sort of came out again, and everything just got set ablaze again. That devastated me. We should mourn about that. We should be devastated about that, even as we seek to lean into one another, especially cross-culturally in our relationships and learn. That should cause us to be burdened. It should never go away. We, again, just don't get to move past it.

You know one of the things that really, I think, softened me up about this again and kind of pulled the scab off was this past Sunday I met with a group (if you're on my weekly email I send out, you would have known this. I said this in the email) of different members of our church from all sorts of different ethnicities and backgrounds. We've been meeting for a long, long time now to just talk about race and how the gospel changes us and makes us one people. It sort of breaks down dividing walls.

The next scheduled meeting just happened to be last Sunday, which is so providential and kind of God for me and for the rest of us, I think. We met. Some of the people are actually in this room. We just met. We said a lot, but mostly what we said was through tears. We just in that room wept together and tried to understand and tried to empathize.

Regardless of what perspective you come from, again if we're family and even if we've moved on to the next headline, as family we should recognize that others in our congregation have not. Indeed, they cannot because of the posture and the burdens of their heart, because of the color of their skin, or a thousand other reasons.

That means as Christians who are striving to be a family who really love each other, we shut our mouths, and we listen. We shut our social media mouths, and we listen. We try to empathize as best we can. In doing that, it was such a heartbreaking thing for me to hear brothers in my family of faith in this room who are saying, despite their faith in God, despite their faith in the gospel, just because of the color of their own skin, they're afraid. These brothers are levelheaded. They're saying this to their shame.

They're saying, "Listen. I know I shouldn't fear what anybody can do to my body. I should fear the one who can kill both my body and my soul and throw it in hell. But I'm afraid. My kneejerk response to this in my flesh is fear." I was devastated by that to hear sisters in my congregation, sisters in my family of faith, sit there and say, "I'm afraid and don't want to bring children in the world because of this."

Again, I found myself in my office on Wednesday. There were all sorts of things going on, but that just kind of was there on me. I broke down, and I wept. Of course, this is something we're going to continue to talk about. We've prayed about it. We've talked about it. We're going to pray about it again on Wednesday because, again, this conversation doesn't ever really go away for us.

Do you know what? Praise God that we have this congregation, because one of the things that came out of the meeting last Sunday was simply a reminder of the fact that the only hope in the hopelessness... If you read the headlines, you should be hopeless. Do you know why? Because there's going to be another one really soon. The same thing is going to happen again. The resources for healing don't exist outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The resources for true oneness in our nation and in our communities don't exist outside of the church of Jesus Christ.

That's one of the things we just were reminded about as we met together that the hopelessness... Think about what's behind everything we've been seeing in terms of racialization. The hopelessness. The apathy. The hate. The pride. The greed. The self-righteous inability to empathize. The sort of inferiority a lot of people walk in. Most notably, the demons who are behind it.

If you really think about it, as Christian people who believe in the supernatural, to think that Satan is not having a field day with this, even among the people of God who aren't protecting and mindful of that, yeah, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We are mindful of those things, but if you really think about the demonic influence that's behind this and always has been in our country, it's pretty sobering. It's what leads you back around to either give up or press in to a God who cares about these things, a God whose heart breaks about these things.

I really do believe the only hope we have is found in the resources of what Christ has done when he died to make one people for himself. We, as it were, get to be a signpost for the world that says, "This is how it should be." We can come in this room, and we can be one. We can have relationships. We can actually seek to understand one another and grow in the likeness of Christ in doing that, in considering one another more important than ourselves.

What the group just talked about again, which is where we always come back, is it all starts with relationship. It all starts with our relationship with the Lord and being humbled enough underneath that to listen and care for our brothers and sisters. But then it leads into cross-cultural relationships with one another, which starts not in this room necessarily, although it can start here, but it starts around our dinner tables. It starts in our living rooms. It starts with us really seeking to know each other for God's sake and for the sake of loving each other.

I just was burdened, and I just put that before you just to share that this is something that ongoing, church, we can't move past. We won't move past. Yet the other reason I wanted to touch on it this morning is that it's significant for the text we're going to read. If you think about the history of our

nation racially... You think about the expulsion of the Native Americans. You think about race-based slavery. It's the black eye of our conscience as some secular historians will call it, and rightly so.

If you think about that, you think about presently what's going on. You think about our hearts and how we're still soft and how we're still responding to these things we see in the news and in other places, even in our own experience. You can see how easy it would be to read into the Bible the experience of our nation and the experience of our present burdens if we're not careful, especially when we come to a text like the one we'll be on this morning that talks about slavery.

I just want you to know it's really important we don't do that. It's really important we don't approach the Bible and let our own experience shape what the Bible says. That's not how it works. We approach the Bible, and we listen and let what the Bible says shape our own perspectives and our own experience. We come to a text in the Bible which is frequent in the New Testament. We've covered them. I don't want to belabor the point too much.

We've preached an entire sermon series on the book of Philemon. Philemon was a runaway slave. We talked about slavery and what the Bible says about it. It doesn't say in great detail. That sermon series a few years ago... We've covered it when we covered the book of Titus. This is what happens when you preach through the Bible. You have to talk about these things. That was for free. You just have to! We covered it when we talked about 1 Peter. We're going to cover it again this morning as we're walking through 1 Timothy.

As we dig into these texts here that we're going to read, again, what we're learning is how we behave as the people of God. What does what Paul says to slaves here say about that? Let me just say a couple of things about slavery. First, slavery in the New Testament in the first century is different than the type of slavery we think about. It's really important you understand that. I'm not saying one is good and one is bad. They're both bad. Both institutions were bad, but it's important we understand the nuances and recognize they're different.

It's not apples to apples here. There are a number of factors that point to this, but firstly, slavery in the New Testament in the first century was rarely based on race. I'm not saying it never was, but it was rarely based on race, which was the predominant basis for slavery in our country. In the first century, it was rarely based on race. In fact, most of the people by the time Paul was writing this were actually born into slavery.

You know, armies would conquer armies and then take captive those people they had conquered and make them slaves. Again, it's not to say that was a good thing, but that's the way it typically happened. At this point, people would actually sell themselves into slavery to pay back a debt or something like that. Most notably, though, people were born into it.

There were people who were from different social classes who were slaves. It wasn't just this one class of people and this one race of people (like in the history of our culture) who were slaves in the New Testament. Okay? I'd say lastly that the treatment of slaves (although, again, this doesn't mean it was good) ranged from everything from inhumane abuse to being treated like family in the New Testament times.

There were actually some people... Despite the fact that people would come to a place where they could actually pay back and purchase back their freedom, when that happened for many people in the first century, they didn't want to because the actual social structure in the first century was less safe for them to not be slaves than it would be for them to be slaves, especially if they had masters who were good masters and masters who treated them like family and treated them well.

These are just a few ways where slavery in the New Testament and slavery in our culture in our country's history are different. Again, it's not to say either one of them is good, because they're not. Then secondly, the fact that Paul even addresses slaves is something that is revolutionary and uniquely Christian. You need to know this. The fact that slaves were addressed in this letter and in Paul's others letters and in Peter's letter, that all throughout the New Testament they were addressed, is groundbreaking because slaves during this time weren't even considered fully human.

Now I don't know if the culture went as far as like we did to actually put an inhumane label, Three-Fifths Compromise (something that despicable), but they weren't considered human. Therefore, they weren't considered to have any more responsibility. "Why would you address them morally? Why would you say anything to them? They're not really human beings!" What Paul is doing here is he is rebuking that idea.

He is countering that idea, and all Christians everywhere were as well and saying, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no. All men are created in the image of God. All men have equal value, dignity, and worth." That's part of what it means when Paul says, "Listen. There's no longer any Jew or Gentile now. There's no longer any slave or free, because in God, there's an equal playing field because we're all



made in his image. We're all human beings." The fact that slaves are addressed, that's something of a good sign in terms of the trajectory of where Christianity was actually taking the conversation.

Then lastly, I would say this. Just because Paul writes about slavery without calling for the implicit or explicit (but I would argue that he *does* call for the implicit) overthrow of the institution, it doesn't mean Paul affirms slavery. It's really important we get this, especially a church like ours. We have to understand this when we come to the Bible.

Paul, by saying something to the slaves in Ephesus or anywhere else, is not affirming the institution of slavery. In fact, his intent is not even to address the institution of slavery. His goal is to simply address how Christians should live in an institution that exists whether we like it or not. One first-century historian and theologian said it this way. He said the commands we're going to read about this morning to slaves are to be seen, of course, in the setting of ordinarily daily life in the first century.

Slavery was a fact of life, and there was no point pretending it wasn't in the first century. You could no more abolish slavery overnight in the first century than you could invent space travel. The fact that you might hope slavery and the institution would go away one day and wish it would, it wouldn't justify giving slaves the impression that now that they were Christians they could disobey their masters.

One of the worst things Paul could do pastorally is to know there's this group in the church who are slaves, to know there's really nothing they could do about the institution in the Greco-Roman world, and then to not address them in how to live in that life. How horrible would that be for a slave in the first century? What Paul is doing is he is, again, not addressing the institution. He is addressing their hearts. He is addressing the hearts of the slaves and, as we'll see, even the masters in these different letters where he writes about it.

What he is doing, though, is teaching them and instructing them, even as slaves and maybe (in the case of the verses we're going to read) *especially* slaves. Here's how the gospel of Jesus Christ... Here's how what God has done in Jesus to reconcile the world to himself can be made beautiful through your station of life. That's what he is saying. He is giving very practical and helpful instruction to these people who had this station of life.

How do you make much of God while you live out that station of life? That's what he is going to talk about. Let's look at what he says here in verse 1 of chapter 6. Just to remind you again, he has talked about these two different groups already. He has talked about the widows. You know, all the widows there (the true widows). He has talked about the elders, all the elders who are ruling well. Now he is going to say in verse 1 of chapter 6 in the same train of thought coming from chapter 5...

You know, the Holy Spirit didn't give us the chapter breakdown. You do realize that, right? It's a letter. We put it there so I can do what I just said: "Look at verse 1." Paul didn't say, "Verse 1. Chapter 6." He didn't do that. He was just writing a letter. His train of thought is coming out of what he has already said about widows, what he has already said about elders. Now he is speaking to this other group in the church.

He says this: "**Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor...**" So again this idea of honoring. He says honor the true widows who are really widows. Honor the elders who are leading well. Now he is saying to this group of slaves, "Okay, you honor these particular masters" he has in his mind. But if he is not affirming the institution of slavery, why would he say that? What's the point of his instructions?

Well, he tells us at the very second part of the verse. He says do this "**...so that the name of God and the teaching [the gospel teaching] may not be reviled.**" Here it is. Here's the reason Paul is so burdened about the attitudes and the actions of the Christian slaves in the church regarding their masters.

It's the same burden he had for the erring widows in the church. It's the same burden he had for the erring elders in the church. Apparently just like with the young widows and just like with the false teachers of the church, there were attitudes and actions of some of the slaves in the church that were actually bringing disrepute on the name of God in the community. That was happening.

By the way they were going about their station in life as a slave, they were doing it to such a degree and soiling their responsibility to such a degree that non-Christians were looking in and going, "Oh, if that's how Christians are, let me tell you what I think about their God. If that's how Christian slaves treat their masters and this is how they work, this is what I think about their God." This is what's going on.

Paul has a burden about this. He wants the slaves, even though they're in slavery, to live and work in such a way that they're honoring God, that they're bringing glory and adorning the gospel of Jesus Christ. Does Paul sort of detail what's happening? Well, he gives us a hint in the next verse, in verse 2. He says, "**Those who have believing masters** [masters who are Christians] **must not be disrespectful** [to those masters] **on the ground that they are brothers...**"

Apparently some of the slaves thought they could disrespect their masters because their masters were part of the church family. This is what's going on. "Oh, you're a Christian. Well, because you're a Christian, let me just tell you how I'm going to dishonor you here, and I'm going to live in this sort of way." Paul is saying, "No! That's not ground for disrespect."

In fact, he finishes. He says, "**...rather they must serve all the better...**" If your master is a Christian, he says they must serve all the better in that case. "**...since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.**" Again, as in his other letters, Paul is actually here planting the seeds that would actually grow up and undermine the institution of slavery altogether. It's pretty amazing if you can lock in to what he is saying here.

He is saying, "Listen. As Christians, both master and slave, treat each other differently." The gospel (believing about what Christ has done for us) changes the way you act as a slave, and it changes not just for those who are slaves the way masters act as masters. You know, Paul says this beautifully and explicitly in his earlier letter he had written to the same church, the church at Ephesus.

In Ephesians, chapter 6, let me just read this to you. I have it. We'll put it on the screen. He says this. It says slaves, so much in the same vein of thought... He has covered husbands and wives and other stations in life. He says, "**Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ...**" You're really serving Christ and not them if you believe in God's sovereignty here.

**"...not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord..."**

There's your motivation. You're doing it for the Lord, and the Lord sees it. The Lord knows your heart. If you live unto the Lord and work unto the Lord in this way, he is going to render back to you

in ways that are going to bless you and are going to make it all worth it on that last day. This is the case whether slave or free.

Then he says to the masters... Listen to this. These are Christians in the church. **"Masters, do the same to them..."** That is revolutionary! That is an egalitarian statement that is revolutionary. You treat them the same way, and you **"...stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours..."** Really? He is not just their master; he is your master. Whatever kind of master you're going to be, guess what kind of master you're going to have in heaven? That's part of what he is saying here.

He says know that. Remember that. **"...and that there is no partiality with him** [our master who is in heaven]." This is utterly groundbreaking in what he is saying. Listen. There are a lot of nuances and wrinkles here that if slaves were in a relationship where they were being abused and treated inhumanely, what do you do then? That's not what he is getting at here. He is getting at what is the healthy picture in this institution that exists for Christians to walk in as slaves, as masters?

What he is saying is so groundbreaking. Could you even imagine in the first century in Ephesus if the Christians in the church lived that way, if the slaves and the masters were so changed and transformed by the gospel message that they actually lived in this way?

The people in the city who would have been living on a different standard would have looked in and gone, "Oh my gosh! What in the world? What's gotten into these masters who are actually serving their slaves, who are mindful of them, who are caring for them, who are loving them like family? What in the world has gotten into those masters?"

What in the world has gotten into those slaves that, in spite of the difficulty of their station of life they were born into or purchased into, they're doing so in a way that's cheerful even? It doesn't even make sense. What in the world has gotten into these people?" Of course the answer would be the God of Christianity is what's gotten into them.

The God of Christianity is what has changed them. This would have been one of the most powerful witnesses the church could provide to a culture, to live in this way that God would be made much of. Paul still would say, "Listen, if you're a slave and you can be free, then you ought to pursue your freedom. Okay?"

Again, we're still not saying Paul is affirming the institution, but he is saying, "This is how you live, and you begin to redeem it." You can see the seeds here that Paul planted way back when that would eventually grow up these gospel-motivated seeds. They would do away with the whole institution altogether. It's radical. This is one of the ways the church in Ephesus was to be a pillar and a buttress of truth by this kind of living. It's beautiful when you see it for what it is and, at the same time, still heartbreaking that the institution existed.

What are the implications for us? We're not in Ephesus in the first century. We're in Denton, Texas, in 2014. In many ways, I'm really thankful for that. I'm just thankful to live in the generation I live in with the technology and all the other things. But what are the implications? It can make us hard, because even though many of our brothers and sisters... Some of them we even prayed about this morning even as we read that text that talks about how God treats those who don't treat people this way, especially those who are vulnerable.

Many of our brothers and sisters around the globe are still enslaved right now. Even in our own Metroplex, there are men and women who are Christians who are enslaved (sex slavery or some other sort of slavery). As far as I know, none of us in this room are slaves. If you are enslaved and nobody knows that, I want to know that. We need to know that, okay? Please come tell us that.

As far as I know, none of us are slaves. How do we take what Paul has said here to slaves and obey it? What are the implications for our lives? Well, one I think is recognizing we're not slaves (none of us in this room), but the principles that are here... What can we do with the principles that are in this text? If these principles are principles for slaves, how much for those of us who are not slaves?

Well, I think what you have to do is think through what role you play where you are subservient to an authoritative figure. Think work. You're an employee. It's not slavery. It's not the same. Is everybody clear on that? At the same time, principally there are some things you can draw out and apply and obey in your role as an employee or in your role as a student. That's your station of life, where you're submitted to authority.

As you think about that, as you think about this role we're in where we are subservient to an authority, how much more do you think the principles Paul highlights here for slavery, the principles of showing honor to those in authority, that, as those in authority, even if it's not slavery, we show honor to those in authority? We exhibit respect and serve all the more those who are Christians who are in authority. How do we think through that as Christians?

Part of what I need you to hear here is what Paul is saying. We're thinking about being a healthy church. That's what this whole sermon series is about. We're thinking about being a church that, as we move forward and become a new church, we put on display the goodness of God together and personally. We make what God has done in Christ look attractive as much as we can. What he is saying here I want you to hear.

One of the primary ways we do that is away from this gathering. We've talked about this gathering, but it's not just this gathering that we glorify God. It's not just when we come together as a family with a backbone of love that we glorify God. It is there as well. It's not just when we have godly leadership that's leading the church in the right direction that we glorify God. It's when we leave this place and we scatter that we can glorify God in profound ways.

That's part of what we get to take from this as a church, that our ministry when we leave is just as profound and, honestly, there are a lot more opportunities than when we're in here when all the non-Christians in Denton are asleep. It's sort of like the nicest day to go on a jog in Denton is Sunday morning. There are just crickets around the neighborhood for the most part.

When we're in here, we're in here receiving from God, encouraging one another for the purpose of going out. If you really think about our work, you really think about our station of life, whether we're at home or we're in the classroom, for those of us who are employed full-time, roughly half of our adult waking life will be spent on the job. Half of it! We'll spend more time on the job than we will anywhere else in our life besides sleeping.

We're not doing much while we're sleeping. We're glorifying God by just reminding ourselves, "We need sleep; you don't. You never sleep. You're God; I'm not. I need to sleep. You keep working." That's sort of what happens when we sleep. God is glorified if we have eyes to see it. When we work (the other place where we spend the majority of our time), we have an opportunity, part of what Paul is saying here, through the way we're living, our attitudes and our actions and even the work itself, to honor God, to bless God.

That's what draws people. It's not us just being here and going, "Hey, man. Let's sing the right three songs today and hope our non-Christian neighbors are going to think that's awesome and maybe hear it through the doorway and come in." That's not happening. That's never going to happen! It's

going to happen when we go out, and we live the right kind of life empowered by the Spirit in front of our non-Christian neighbors. Then they're going to think about what's going on in your life.

That's what Paul is saying here, which is really beautiful. Thank you. Somebody was trying to help a little bit but didn't really. Anyway, if you think about this, the way we honor those in authority is one of the ways we share our faith. We also have to open our mouths while we're doing that and tell them why we're honoring those in authority. By doing the best possible work we can do is worship by serving under those who are brothers and sisters in faith in such a way that we're exhibiting even more joy and honor.

Yet these are often the very temptations that draw us away from Christ likeness. Are they not? I mean, have you really ever listened to people talk about work, talk about their station in life? I mean, you just hear all sorts of sin, I think. I'm just going to lovingly sort of lean in here because I think it is sin. There's a fine line between sharing burdens and grumbling. Most of the time when we talk about our work generally, we're grumbling. In doing so, we're sinning.

It's sin, because who we're really grumbling against is not just our general work environment, although that may be the case. It's not just our managers, although that may be the case. We're grumbling against God. All grumbling is grumbling to God. We're saying, "Your provision for me in this job, your provision to sustain me, to give me finances, to put food on my table, the bare necessities... Your provision to share the gospel with these people I'm working with, I don't care about that."

Your entitlement is poking its head out, or it's just actually aflame in your heart. Our grumbling proves we're grumbling against God. You listen. Look. Pay attention in your Home Group. People who are working or people who are in school, whatever the station of life is, we all have a tendency to grumble. We don't connect the dots that it's really grumbling against God. We don't have the perspective that God says, "Be grateful in all things. Rejoice. Again, I say rejoice."

We'll get to that here in a moment. If you even think about beyond that just dishonoring those in authority... It's one of the most shocking conversations to me when I meet somebody who talks well about their manager or their professor or their coach or whoever is in authority. As a pastor, I sit with a lot of people. I sit with a lot of you. I listen to your stories.

When somebody says, "I just love my boss" and sort of like oozing out joy about that, I'm like, "Wait. Rewind." Rewind doesn't exist, but anyway. "Say that again." It's amazing to me. It's like, "What did you just...? What came out of your mouth? Do you know how rare that is? Do you know how countercultural that makes you even within the church for you to not only not dishonor them, not say something bad, but even positively?"

One of the steps is maybe just not saying anything at all. Maybe that's an in-between step. To hear somebody say something good about the person who is in authority over them, that is utterly shocking, even in the church. It shouldn't be. That's part of what Paul is saying here. Sadly enough, we just join right in with the dishonoring. We shame the name of Christ in doing that. That's part of what Paul is saying here.

Then lastly, even if you think about doing shoddy work... It's not just we're generally grumpy at work, or it's not just we're dishonoring those who are in authority. Sometimes we even dishonor those who are in authority who are Christians more than those who aren't maybe because we think that by really working hard for non-Christians, we can show the gospel, which is a good thing but certainly doesn't mean you get to dishonor those who are Christians.

"Oh, you're a Christian? I'm going to be a bum, and I'm going to talk badly about you at the water cooler with everybody else." I think that's even part of what's going on in Ephesus. Paul is going, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no." One of the things we like to do to those who are in authority over us who are Christians is we like to put upon them a standard we don't even have for ourselves with our Christianity.

"Oh, you're a Christian, and you're my boss? That means you have to be perfect...perfect in the way you schedule my hours." I don't want to get too real here. We just won't go here. "Perfect in the way you treat me. Perfect in the way you do everything I want you to do." We do not put that standard on ourselves as Christians.

What we want is, "Hey, we're Christians. Man, it's tough out there. There's still indwelling sin, and I just struggle all the way home. But you should be done with your sin because you're my boss." We do that. It's sin, and it dishonors Christ, not to mention it doesn't serve our brother who is a Christian who is a family member in the faith, which takes us back to two weeks ago.



Lastly, one of the things I think we've really struggled with is we do poor work. We don't work hard. It's amazing how, when nobody is looking, we just waste time at the office. It's like how do you have this much time to track down those YouTube videos that are funny (some of them)? Who found that, and what were they not doing at work? I don't understand. Maybe that's just my life, but it's just crazy to me.

Just in general, sort of like, "Hey, the coach has his head turned. The teacher is doing... I'm just going to sort of do what I do." You know, I love Dorothy Sayers. She was a writer. One of the things she said about Christians and work is one of the ways we honor God is just by the excellence of our work itself. She says, "It is not right for [the church] to acquiesce in the notion that a man's life [or a woman's life] is divided into the time he [or she] spends on his work and the time he spends serving God." There's no distinction.

Work has value and dignity. Work existed (I know this is going to bum some of you out) before the fall. It's not the result of the fall. Some cases have been made that there's going to be work in heaven. It's not going to be a work by the sweat of our brow anymore, but it's going to be this glorious productivity, this dominion we're given. She is saying you can't divide it. It's like, "There's work, and then there's *this*." We're serving God as we work is her point.

"He must be able to serve God *in* his work, and the work itself [we're doing as students or as whatever we are in our station, homemakers, you just go on and on and on] must be accepted and respected as the medium of divine creation." This is so sad but true. "The Church's approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays."

The station in life where we spend more time anywhere else than sleeping... This is what we tell people as the church. That's sad, man. That's just really sad. She says, "What the church *should* be telling [this carpenter] is this: that the very first demand his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables" to the glory of God.

A friend of mine is a student. He talks about this. How do you do this as a student? He said he came in as a freshman. Since we typically just stereotype all professors like they're all liberal theologians who don't care anything about God or mankind and just would rather us be dead, the next time you're tempted to do that, just know we have a lot of professors in our congregation who love the Lord and serve him and care about him.

One of the things this friend of mine said was that he was a Christian. He was just all revved up. I don't remember what class he went into. He was ready to let the professor know why he was wrong about what he believed about God. The way he decided to do that was just by raising his hand in class and starting arguments, which is flawed on so many... I mean, it's humorous it's such a bad philosophy of how you're going to make a difference as a student.

The professor who was not a Christian finally pulled him aside, and he said, "Young man, if you really want to honor your God and actually give him a hearing in my life, what you could do is quit starting arguments and actually do your work." If that doesn't shape your perspective about Christianity... Some of you I know. It's okay you got a bad grade on the test. I'm not saying you're not working hard. The point is how we honor God in our station of life, through the actual work itself in many ways.

Pulling back here, there's a lot Paul is saying here that implies how we should live our lives together. This is good news that we have an opportunity to express the godliness we've been brought into and invited to walk in through our vocation. Let me just ask you a few questions, church, and then we'll come to the Lord's Supper.

*Are you adorning the gospel?* Are you making much of God in your vocation, in your station of life? Based on everything we've said, what do people think of Jesus and his gospel based on your work, or do they even think of him? If they don't think anything different about you, then that's not a good sign either, because it probably just means the hope that is within you looks about the same as the hope that's within others based on the way you're working or not working or doing whatever you're doing.

*What's the primary motivator of your work?* Primary motivator. We all have a lot of motivations in our work. That's fine. That's not ungodly. What's the primary motivator? Is the primary motivator of your work God? As Paul said to the slaves, you're working for God, not for man. Do everything as if you're working for the Lord, not for man. Is your primary motivator God, or is it man? Are you working for God or for man?

If you're working for man, that's going to eventually kill you. It's going to exhaust you, because you're never going to measure up or, worse, you will, and people will love you for what you do until you don't do what they want you to do. Then they'll leave you alone, and your identity will be

shredded. We work for God. We don't work for man primarily. We don't work for money. We do have to work for man and for money but not primarily. Our primary motivation is we do all that we do unto the Lord and not unto man.

*Do you work hard, whether you like your job...?* Paul doesn't say much about that. He obviously didn't care much about that, principally speaking. Do you work hard because you understand you're really working for God and not for man? Is his name honored or dishonored in your pursuit of excellence in your station? I'm looking around. Some of you I know it's honored because I know how the Lord is using you at your work. It's so encouraging.

*Do you honor those in authority over you?* This is where I think, for many of us this morning, the rubber hits the road where we just need to repent of some sin together and be okay to do that. Do you honor those in authority over you, or do you join in the dishonor and the grumbling without connecting the fact that what you're really doing is dishonoring God by your little gossip, your little funny kind of add-on to the joke about the boss at work?

That's grumbling and dishonoring to God. You're not dishonoring your boss fundamentally. You're dishonoring your God and bringing shame upon his name which, again, is what was happening at Ephesus. What would it look like more positively speaking to honor those in authority over you? Let's sort of get beyond the, "Yeah, I'm kind of dishonoring. I need to repent." How do you honor them? How do you repent by saying, "That's not good. I'm going to go the opposite direction and start to honor them and walk in a way that may even just change the culture in my workplace"?

Then if you're working alongside or under Christians, are you serving them all the better because they're Christians? Church, in our attitudes and our actions, in our very work itself, we're to be worshiping God. This is good news. Those of you who are students, this is fundamental as you move on through your career and into the workplace. I'm so grateful you're here, that we get to talk about this, and you get to practice this right now.

This is one of the primary ways the church... As we move forward in Denton, we get to be a pillar and a buttress of truth. It's not just coming in here, as much as that's going to do it. It's not just gathering like a family and loving each other like family or having good leadership. It's living our lives in our vocations in this way that is going to be a pillar and a buttress to the truth in our city and beyond. That's unbelievably life giving to me to think about.

That's what he says. That's what he says to the slaves, and that's how I think it applies to us. We're concluding this sermon series now. It's like we have talked about a ton the last five weeks. How do you end this sermon series? How do you go, "Okay, this is what we've drawn out of this letter Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus. This has been good news. This has been great"? Well, I think we could just end the way Paul ends, so let's just read what he says in conclusion and let that be our conclusion and lead us right up to the Lord's Supper.

This is what he says. He says to Timothy, **"Teach and urge these things."** All these things we've just talked about, all these things he has just laid out in this letter, teach and urge these things to the church. **"If anyone teaches a different doctrine..."** He just sort of ends with another moment of speaking to the false teachers.

**"If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy..."** Listen to this language. **"...and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness..."**

Actually Christianity is some sort of means of gain for themselves is what he says. Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, **"...for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich [those who are trying to get, from Christianity, money] fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."**

They baptize people, immerse people, in ruin and destruction. **"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some [even in the church of Ephesus, these leaders] have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God [speaking to Timothy and the church right along with him], flee these things."** Be a people, be a person, who pursues **"...righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith [as you move forward]."**

**Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives**

**life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time..."**

Jesus will come back. "...**he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.**" There's another sentence here, but this is the tone of the way he ends this letter. He ends with doxology. He ends with praise and worship, the very same way we're going to end this morning.

Do you know what's amazing? As we come to the good confession, as we come to the exhortation that says, "Hey, all this I've been talking about? This is teaching that accords with godliness. This is how you be godly together. This is how you be godly together in such a way that makes what Christ has done attractive as it can be to the world around you. Live this way, and hold on to the confession that motivates this and sustains this..."

The confession of our faith we hold onto, church, is not that we work really hard for God and do well at our jobs so he'll love us more and so he'll be made much of. It is that, but the fundamental confession he is talking about holding onto, the fight of faith he is talking about fighting here, is the confession not about how we work for God but how God has worked for us.

The central message of Christianity is not that we work hard for God so he'll love us. The central message is God has, because he loves us, done all the work we need to do in Christ to make a way for us to know him and love him and be reconciled to him. This is the message of Christianity we hold forth.

Even if you're not a Christian, this is the confession we would invite you to confess with us, to put your faith in Christ, to understand that when he came, God became a man. It says, when he came, do you know what Jesus came as? A slave. How powerful that though he was God, he didn't hold onto that as something to be grasped. Paul says in another letter that he emptied himself, and he took on the form of a bondservant, a slave.

He made himself one all the way to the point of death, even death on the cross where he gave his body and his blood so all of us who have dishonored God in every way, including with our work, including in our grumbling for our superiors, we could be forgiven and we could be made right with

God this morning. We could be cleansed and justified in his sight this morning, declared innocent. We're going to come remember that now. Hold on to that confession even as we confess it over the Lord's Supper together.

Father, we thank you for this confession that Jesus, as Paul wrote at the climax of this letter, was manifested in the flesh. He came, and he was vindicated by the Spirit. He died, and he rose so we could come to this Table, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and to fight the fight of faith. Lord, we thank you for this meal we're about to now celebrate.

We pray as we come to this Table that it indeed would strengthen our hearts. As we scatter again tomorrow morning, this afternoon, and we go to our vocations, we would be fighting the fight of faith there just as we've done this morning. We pray you'd use us. In Christ's name, amen.