
Restored Witness Part 2

May 6, 2018 - Titus 2:9-10

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

2:9–10. Although masters legally held absolute authority over household slaves, in most cases household slaves held freedoms that field or mine slaves did not, and they had more adequate provision than most peasants. In the popular stereotype entertained by their owners, slaves were lazy, apt to argue with their masters and liable to steal when they could. The stereotype was sometimes true, especially where the work incentive was least, but Paul urges Christian slaves not to reinforce the stereotype. Minority religions were already viewed as subversive, and to counter this prejudice Christians had to work especially hard to avoid the normal causes of slander. For more on slavery in general, see the introduction to Philemon.¹

2:9–10 About slaves

Paul dealt with the subject of slavery in 1 Tim. 6, and what he says here is similar. The word translated *to be subject to* is stronger than the word 'obey' and reflects the social setup of the time. Christian slaves have an added responsibility, that is to try to please and not to be argumentative with their masters. The fact that the slaves are urged not to steal suggests that they were particularly open to this temptation. Paul sees the possibility for slaves to commend the gospel by their attitude, a possibility which is of course equally applicable to every Christian. The Greek word translated *make attractive* is used of the setting of jewelry to display it in the most attractive way.²

(2:9, 10) "Servants" is doulos (δ ο υ λ ο ς). These were Christian slaves serving for the most part in pagan households. "Be obedient" is hupotassō (ὕπ ο τ α σ σ ω), used in a military sense of soldiers arranged in battalions under the commanding officer, thus, in subjection to him. Here it refers to the obligation of the slave (middle voice) to put himself in

¹ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Tt 2:9–10). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

² Guthrie, D. (1994). Titus. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1313). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

subjection to his master. “Master” is *despotēs* (δ ε σ π ο τ η ς) (our word “despot”), “a master, lord, one who has absolute ownership of and uncontrolled power over another.” “In all things” is to be construed with “be obedient.” “To please well” is *euaristos* (ε υ α ρ ι σ τ ο ς). Alford says that it is a servant’s phrase, like the English, “to give satisfaction.” “Answering” is *antilegō* (α ν τ ι λ ε γ ω), “to speak against, contradict.” Ellicott thinks that more is implied than *pert* answers (a.v. answering again); rather, thwarting their master’s plans, wishes, or orders. “Purloining” is *nosphizō* (ν ο σ φ ι ζ ω). Expositors says that “the particular form of theft implied is the abstraction or retention for one’s self, of a part of something entrusted to one’s care.” The word “pilfer” will translate it well. “Fidelity” is *agathos* (α γ α θ ο ς). Expositors suggests, “trustworthiness.” “Adorn” is *kosmeō* (κ ο σ μ ε ω), “to put in order, arrange, to ornament, adorn, decorate, garnish.” The noun is *kosmos* (κ ο σ μ ο ς), “an ordered system, a system where harmony prevails.” Expositors says: “The teaching, though really practical, can be plausibly alleged to be mere theory; it must then, by good works, be rendered attractive to them that are without.” *Kosmeō* (κ ο σ μ ε ω), as used in our present passage. means therefore “to embellish with honor.” The doctrine (teaching) is that found in verses 11–14.

Translation. Exhort slaves to put themselves in subjection to their own masters in all things; to give them satisfaction, not crossing them, not pilfering, but showing the utmost trustworthiness, in order that the teaching of God our Saviour they may embellish with honor in all things.³

Slaves/Employees

Urge bond-slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. (2:9–10)

Unlike the first four, the fifth category of believers about which Paul admonishes Titus is not based on age but on social standing. *Douloi* (**bondslaves**) refers to slaves, those who were owned and controlled by **their own masters**.

The Roman Empire depended on bond-slaves for most of its labor, and they were an essential part of society and the economy. Many, if not most, slaves were abused and often brutalized. For even minor infractions, or simply for displeasing their owners in some way, they could be severely beaten or killed. Many of them, however, were given great responsibility and authority in running a household and sometimes a family farm or other business. Some of them—frequently those who were captured in war—were highly educated and cultured, in many cases having superior education to that of their owners.

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Vol. 9, pp. 192–193). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Slaves were allowed to marry and raise their own families, their children becoming slaves like their parents. A slave sometimes was given a small parcel of land on which to grow crops to feed his family and perhaps earn a small income.

But Paul does not address the condition of slavery. He offers no judgment about its basic fairness or morality. He simply recognizes that it exists and deals with the attitude that Christian **bondslaves** should have toward **their own masters**, whether those **masters** were believers or unbelievers.

Although slavery was carefully regulated under Mosaic law, neither the Old nor New Testaments condemns slavery as such. Social strata are recognized and even designed by God for man's good. Some people will be served and some will serve others. That is the nature of human society. How they treat each other is what concerns God. Slave/master relationships and responsibilities are dealt with much as those of employer/employee, and both testaments give considerable instruction about God's plan for these relationships and associated responsibilities. As I have written in the *Ephesians* volume in this New Testament commentary series,

Although slavery is not uniformly condemned in either the Old or New Testaments, the sincere application of New Testament truths has repeatedly led to the elimination of its abusive tendencies. Where Christ's love is lived in the power of His Spirit, unjust barriers and relationships are inevitably broken down. As the Roman empire disintegrated and eventually collapsed, the brutal, abused system of slavery collapsed with it—due in great measure to the influence of Christianity. In more recent times the back of the black slave trade was broken in Europe and America due largely to the powerful, Spirit led preaching of such men as John Wesley and George Whitefield and the godly statesmanship of such men as William Wilberforce and William Pitt.

New Testament teaching does not focus on reforming and restructuring human systems, which are never the root cause of human problems. The issue is always the heart of man—which when wicked will corrupt the best of systems and when righteous will improve the worst. If men's sinful hearts are not changed, they will find ways to oppress others regardless of whether or not there is actual slavery. On the other hand, Spirit-filled believers will have just and harmonious relationships with each other, no matter what system they live under. Man's basic problems and needs are not political, social, or economic but spiritual....

Throughout history, including in our own day, working people have been oppressed and abused by economic intimidation that amounts to virtual slavery—regardless of the particular economic, social, or political system. Paul's teaching therefore applies to every business owner and every worker. ([Chicago: Moody, 1986], p. 324. For additional treatment of biblical teaching about slavery, see pp. 323–28 in that volume.)

Nowhere in Scripture is rebellion or revolution justified in order to gain freedom, opportunity, or economic, social, or political rights. The emphasis is rather on the responsibility of slaves to serve their human masters faithfully and fully, in order to reflect the transforming power of God in their lives.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote unambiguously, “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:5–6). After giving similar instruction to believers at Colossae (Col. 3:22–23), the apostle added, “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (v. 24). And to Timothy he wrote, “Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against” (1 Tim. 6:1).

For many Christians today, as throughout church history, the most important and fertile field for evangelism is the place where they work. That is their mission field. As in almost no other place, unbelievers have the opportunity to observe believers in day by day situations and activities. They see whether the believer is patient or impatient, kind or uncaring, selfless or selfish, honest or dishonest, clean or vulgar in his talk. They have the opportunity to see how well the Christian lives up to the faith he professes and the principles of the Scripture he claims to hold dear. Inviting unsaved friends to church certainly has a place in witnessing for Christ, but it will be useless and even counterproductive if one’s attitude, reliability, and honesty on the job are questionable.

As Paul points out in the passages just cited above, the primary purpose for working hard and for respecting our employer, even more than leading someone to faith, is to bring honor to Christ. And our most important compensation is not the possible praise or increase in pay we may receive from our employer but the assured reward that we will receive from our Lord. He is the One who determines and assures what the eternal compensation will be (cf. Rev. 20:12–13).

In Titus 2:9–10 Paul gives five character qualities that should distinguish every **bondslave** and every other believer who is employed by someone else. As clearly indicated from the apostle’s comments in the above passages from Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy, these characteristics are to be genuine and from the heart, and are to be without reservation, not superficial or hypocritical.

submissive

Urge bond-slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, (2:9a)

First, Christian workers are to be submissive, **subject to their own masters**, their own employers. *Hypotassō* (**to be subject to**) was often used by the military to designate a soldier's relationship to his superior officers. The relationship is not conditional or optional but an absolute and inescapable given.

In God's sight, the obligation of Christian workers to their bosses is just as unconditional and universal. **To be subject to** translates a passive imperative verb, and is therefore a command to submit oneself. Regardless of how unreasonable a boss may be or how oppressive a work situation may be, the faithful believer willingly submits himself **in everything** as long as he is employed in that job. If a situation becomes intolerable, he should look for work elsewhere.

Proper submission to authority is essential in a family, in which children are subject to their parents (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20). It is essential in government, in which citizens are to respect and honor their leaders (Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1). It also is essential in the work place. A Christian worker who is first of all concerned about his personal rights and who participates in noncompliance efforts and work stoppages against his employer dishonors God.

Masters translates *despotēs*, from which we get the English “despot,” which denotes a person with absolute authority and power. If **bondslaves** are obligated to submit to **their** absolute and often cruel and arbitrary **masters**, how much more are “free” believers obligated to submit to an employer, even one who is mean, unreasonable, and overbearing (cf. 1 Pet. 2:18–19).

committed to excellence

to be well-pleasing, (2:9b)

Second, a Christian worker should **be well-pleasing**, committed to excellence in his work. **Well-pleasing** translates *euarestos*, which, in the New Testament, is almost always used of being acceptable and pleasing to God. Paul urges believers “to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:1–2). Later in that letter, he says that whoever has “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ... serves Christ [and] is acceptable to God and approved by men” (14:17–18). It was always the apostle's “ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him [Christ]” (2 Cor. 5:9). He declared that the sacrificial giving of Philippian believers was “a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18). It should be the purpose of every Christian “to learn [and to believe and to do] what is pleasing to the Lord” (Eph. 5:10).

Even in the workplace, Christ is our ultimate overseer, and in His Word He makes clear that being well-pleasing to our heavenly Master includes being **well-pleasing** to our earthly **master**, or boss. Some Christians reason that, if their employer is a Christian, they have less obligation to respect and please him, because we “are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). But equality in the spiritual realm does not translate to equality in the earthly. “Let those who have believers as their masters not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren,” Paul says, “but let them serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved” (1 Tim. 6:1–2).

It is not wrong to work hard, do excellent work, and seek to please our employer in order to advance in a company and increase our income. In the right spirit, those motives are legitimate. But they should never be a Christian’s highest objectives. Above all else—far above all else—should be the sincere desire, even on the job, to do that which is pleasing and acceptable to our Lord.

respectful

not argumentative, (2:9c)

Third, a Christian worker should be respectful to his employer in such a way that he is **not argumentative**. *Antilegō* (to be **argumentative**) means literally “to speak against,” in the sense of talking back or contradicting. It carries the ideas of “mouthing off,” of being contentious or obstructionist—at least partly, if not entirely, just for the sake of being disagreeable. Being **argumentative** is the opposite of being submissive and well-pleasing.

Paul used the same verb in 1:9 in regard to church members who want to contradict sound teaching. In Romans 10:21, the word is translated “obstinate.” And in Pisidian Antioch, when Jewish leaders saw that “many of the Jews and of the Godfearing [Gentile] proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas,” and that “nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of God ... they were filled with jealousy, and began *contradicting* the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming” (Acts 13:43–45, emphasis added).

The noun form (*antilogia*) of that verb is rendered twice in the book of Hebrews as “dispute” (6:16; 7:7). Later in that letter it is used of the “hostility” that Christ endured “by sinners against Himself” (12:3), and it is used by Jude in referring to the “rebellion of Korah” against Moses (Jude 11; cf. Num. 16).

In our day of self-centeredness and self-elevation, being **argumentative** is almost a way of life for some people, including, unfortunately, some Christians. The prohibition does not refer to standing up for our convictions, for what we believe is right, proper, and God-honoring, but rather to standing up merely for our own self-interest and preferences.

If a worker has opportunity to express his opinions in a proper forum, that is certainly permissible. Workers today obviously have legitimate means for expressing grievances to an employer that slaves of New Testament times could not have imagined. We have many more appropriate means for doing so than workers in free societies even a century ago. But when management makes a final decision, that decision should be accepted and fully complied with by workers, no matter how disappointing and unfair it may appear to be. As already noted, if a policy or requirement is too onerous, involves doing something immoral or unbiblical, or in any other way is unacceptable to our conscience, the only permissible alternative at that point is to find another place of employment.

honest

not pilfering, (2:10a)

Fourth, a Christian worker is to show honesty by **not pilfering**. **Pilfering** (from *nophizō*) literally means “to put aside for oneself or misappropriate” and came to be used of stealing by embezzlement.

Because household stewards, or business managers, in New Testament times were frequently slaves, they had considerable opportunity to misappropriate money, food, jewelry, or other valuables entrusted to their care. In modern times, many workers have access to company funds and property that is easily converted to personal use. Many others pilfer by such means as submitting inflated time sheets and expense reports, taking office supplies home for personal use, making unauthorized calls on the office phone, and taking unauthorized trips in the company car. When Christians do such things, their actions not only are unethical and damage their employer financially but also are unspiritual and do damage to the Lord’s name and to their testimony.

In effect, Ananias and Sapphira embezzled money that belonged to the church, and therefore to the Lord. After selling a piece of property, they gave only part of the proceeds to the apostles but claimed they had given the full amount. As Peter explained to Ananias, they were not obligated to sell the property or to give any of the proceeds to the Lord’s work. But by giving less than they claimed, they lied not only to men but to God (Acts 5:1–4). Their deception amounted to **pilfering** and was so serious in the Lord’s eyes that it cost the couple their lives and caused “great fear [to] came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard of these things” (vv. 5–11).

loyal

but showing all good faith (2:10b)

Fifth, **showing all good faith** describes that most cherished virtue of loyalty. *Pistos* can be translated **faith**, but in this context it seems preferable to render it as “faithfulness,”

referring to faithfully doing whatever work a believer is supposed to do. It refers to trustworthiness and reliability, the quality of being utterly dependable, even when one is not being watched by the master or the employer.

Showing is from *endeiknumi*, which means “to show forth for the purpose of demonstrating or proving something.” The Christian employee is not to leave his loyalty in doubt but is to give ample evidence of it. Tragically, **good faith** loyalty to one’s employer, and to one’s fellow employees, is a common casualty of the modern “work ethic,” even that of some Christians.

the result

that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. (2:10c)

This last clause in verse 10 is the third purpose clause in this passage that gives a reason for such a call to holy living (see also vv. 5, 8) and, like the one in verse 5, focuses on honoring and glorifying God’s Word.

Adorn is from *kosmeō*, from which we get “cosmetics,” the vast array of substances, both natural and artificial, that women (and men) use to make themselves more physically attractive. The root idea of the term is that of arranging something in proper order to give it symmetry, comeliness, and beauty. In ancient times it was used of arranging jewels in a brooch, necklace, ring, or crown in a way that best displayed the beauty of the gems.

Paul of course, was not speaking about physical and superficial adornment. What makes the church attractive and influential in the world for the Lord is not its strategy or its programs but the virtue and holiness of its people. His people therefore are to **adorn the doctrine of God our Savior** by their submissiveness, by the excellence of their work, by their respectful attitude, by their honesty, and by their loyal service to their employer—whether he is a fellow Christian or a rank pagan, fair or unfair, pleasant or unpleasant, deserving or undeserving.

Our supreme message to the unsaved about **God** is that He is **our Savior** and desires to be their **Savior** as well, because He is “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). We are to let them know—by what we say, by what we do, and by the way we work at our job—that God “is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).⁴

Slaves

In the first century, a man would be referred to as “lord” (*kurios*, equivalent to the modern “sir”) by his wife and children, but to his slaves he was the “master” (*despotes*) who

⁴ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1996). *Titus* (pp. 96–103). Chicago: Moody Press.

exercised unrestricted authority over them. Society imposed constraints on his behaviour as a husband and father, but recognized no such restraints when it came to his behaviour towards his slaves. Slaves had no rights. It is within this context that we have to read Paul's instructions to slaves. He is not supporting slavery as an institution, but is asking Christians to maintain harmony in the social and cultural context of the times.

Fortunately the spread of understanding of the implications of Christian beliefs has led to the abolition of slavery, and so it may not always be appropriate to apply Paul's instructions literally in our times. But the principles underlying what he says are still relevant because they address universal issues affecting the relationship between employers and employees. Although employees have much greater freedom than slaves, they are still under their employer's authority and should show the same five good qualities as Christian slaves in Paul's day (2:9). Our goal should be to serve in a way that avoids bringing dishonour to Christ.

A corollary of this point is that we must recognize the social and cultural constraints in our own societies. For example, it would be unwise to assume that we can simply impose Western labour laws or concepts of workers' rights in an African country. The entire cultural context has to be taken into account when deciding what laws are appropriate. There is no point in instituting laws that will paralyse a system and destroy a functioning economy.

Be subject to masters

Paul instructs slaves who are believers *to be subject to their masters in everything* (2:9a). It was tempting for slaves to argue that their freedom in Christ meant that they were no longer under any obligation to obey their masters. The slaves in Ephesus seem to have been making a similar argument (see comments on 1 Tim 6:1–2). But our unity and the quality in Christ do not do away with our social responsibilities. Being a Christian means that slaves will be better slaves! (In the same way wives will be better wives, husbands better husbands, and parents better parents.)

In saying that they must be subject "in everything", Paul is not saying that slaves must obey their masters if what they are commanded to do is in clear violation of God's word. God is the ultimate master, and everyone must honour his authority. When a conflict arises between God's will and an earthly master's will, the instruction to be subject to or to obey the earthly master ceases to apply.

Today, employees are still obligated to place themselves under their employer's authority. Doing otherwise confuses the order of command. Of course, employees also have freedom to demand fairness in this relationship, but the way they make these demands

should not confuse the order of authority. Wisdom is necessary to know how to balance the need to express oneself as an employee with the employer's need to remain in charge.

Christian employees are called to be good employees. As such, they will contribute to the prosperity of their employer and will also benefit the national economy and the well-being of the entire nation.

Try to please them

Every other time Paul uses the word translated “pleasing”, he uses it in relation to God or the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 12:1, 2; 14:18; 2 Cor 5:9; Eph 5:10; Phil 4:18; Col 3:20). He sees it as an essential element in a relationship that gives satisfaction rather than causing emotional pain.

Once again, Paul assumes that the person to be pleased is operating within God's standards. A slave or employee will be able to discern whether someone is or is not breaking God's standards, but there is also a need for wisdom here. For example, I am sometimes approached by someone who believes that Christians should not drink, asking me what he should do when his employer sends him out to buy alcohol. I usually tell him to do as his employer instructs him, adding: “It is your obedience that will enable you to quietly tell your employer that the errand troubles your conscience”. However, when an employer asks for sex or immoral conduct, the request falls into a completely different category. Such situations call for outright disobedience. Our heavenly Master is able to provide if we lose our job because we honour him. But where God's right to be honoured is not being violated, employees' duty is to please their employer.

Do not be disrespectful

Part of pleasing someone in authority is obeying their instructions without opposition. This is what lies behind Paul's statement that slaves should not *talk back* to their masters. Some commentators assert that Greek slaves often answered back or got into arguments with their masters and mistresses. This kind of behaviour is implied by the fact that the Greek legal system included instructions on what to do if this became a problem. But masters of Christian slaves should never have to appeal to the law because their slaves live by the philosophy that their service is rendered to the Lord. This is a much higher standard than society in general would expect. The masters would be impressed by the dignity and quality of service offered by believers.

Paul is not prohibiting dialogue or even debate between employers and employees on issues that are important to them. Rather, he is reminding Christians that when there is disagreement about some aspect of a job or the terms of their employment, they should express their disagreement in a respectful way.

The same principle carries over to the larger issue of strikes and other forms of industrial action. Just as it is important to glorify God and serve others by serving an employer well, so it is also important to consider whether supporting a strike will glorify God and serve others. Teachers, for example, who want to fight some injustice need to remember that a strike during the weeks when students are scheduled to write examinations may cause serious difficulties for the students. It might be better if the teachers were to strike during the school holidays—but then the strike would probably be ineffective because there would be no angry parents pressing the authorities to address the issue being raised. Strikes do need to cause some inconvenience and public unrest if they are to be effective. But do the ends justify the means?

When considering whether to strike, we need to ask questions such as “Why is this strike being called?” “Is a strike the best way to solve the problem? Is there a better option?” “Will people be hurt by the strike?” We cannot say that workers should never strike, but we can say that calling a strike should be a last resort and that the reason for the strike must be right, the motives pure, and the effects must not harm others. It may sometimes be better to suffer and allow God to fight for us rather than fight for selfish motives without consideration of his will.

Be trustworthy

Slaves are *not to steal from their masters* (2:10). The verb Paul uses here literally means “to separate” or “to lay on one side”. In other words, slaves are not to pilfer their owner’s goods by taking some things for themselves. They may have been tempted to argue that they were only getting what was owed to them in exchange for what they had to put up with. But Paul does not buy this argument. A Christian slave *must show that they can be fully trusted*. They should be dependable in every aspect of their service to their masters, for they are not serving an earthly master but their heavenly Master and Saviour. His reputation will suffer if his servants are not honest and trustworthy.

In today’s terms, Christian employees must be honest in carrying out their responsibilities. They must take care of their employer’s property, honestly record their work hours, and honestly account for every cent when a supervisor sends them out to make a purchase. Unfortunately, it seems that such honesty and dependability are rare. It can take a long time to find someone to whom you can give the keys of the house or office and go away for a week, knowing that the employee will carry on working diligently. Even in Christian institutions, employers have to keep constant watch over their workers to ensure that they perform their duties honestly.

This lack of dependability is also apparent at the highest levels of institutions and governments. There appears to be truth in the allegations that many African presidents divert large sums of public money into personal bank accounts overseas and that civil servants enrich themselves from the funds under their care. Presidents and civil servants

are employed by the taxpayers, and what they are doing is nothing less than stealing. Their example is followed by the rest of society, right down to the farm workers who steal vegetables. Paul's "no stealing" applies to everyone, no matter what their status. To go against his instruction is to be an enemy of what is right. And when stealing is done by a Christian, that person's behaviour is an insult to the Christian faith.

Churches often put effort into cultivating good values among couples, adults and young people, but they sometimes neglect to talk about what it means to be a good employee. Most of us are employees. We should not only chat about our work when we meet at church, we should also spend time reflecting on the ethics of our behaviour at work. It would be good if churches conducted seminars on this topic, too.

Attract others to the gospel

The motive for this extraordinary behaviour by Christian slaves must be *that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Saviour attractive* (2:10b). The verb translated as "make attractive" is the same one used in 1 Timothy 2:9 in relation to the way women should "adorn" themselves (nasb). It is the same verb from which we get the English word "cosmetics". Just as the appropriate use of cosmetics can enhance a woman's beauty, so the exemplary behaviour of the Christian slaves will draw attention and make the gospel attractive to unbelievers.

To Sum Up

The good reputation of God's name, his word and his church is clearly of great importance. Three times in this chapter Paul mentions the need to maintain a good reputation for the sake of the gospel (2:5, 8, 10). Nor is Paul alone in recognizing that what we do affects God's reputation. Peter makes the same point when he encourages women to be submissive to their husbands "so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives" (1 Pet 3:1). The principle that "actions speak louder than words" is as true in evangelism as it is in life in general. It applies to all aspects of life; we are to make the gospel attractive "in every way".

All believers carry a tremendous responsibility. What we do and what we say affects how other people see Christ. We should ask ourselves, "What do others say about God, Jesus, the gospel and Christianity after they have observed my way of life—in public and in private, at home and at work?"

In Africa, where most people are religious, many more could be drawn to the church if they saw all Christians behaving like Christians. Unfortunately, too often we hear unbelievers say, "Even the Christians are no different" when it comes to corruption, immorality, cover-ups, financial mismanagement, and so on. This is not true of all

Christians, but it is true that many of us have not attracted people to the gospel as we should. Our way of life has betrayed the gospel more than it has promoted it.

Questions for Discussion

1. Recently one of the wheels of my car got stuck into a ditch. In less than a minute a group of young men appeared, apparently eager to help me. But their very first words were "*Lete pesa tukutoe*" (Pay us and we'll help you get out). I paid, and they pushed the car out of the ditch. What did their actions tell me about their values? Now think about other incidents that you have experienced. What did you learn about people's values? Has the way anyone behaved ever made you praise God or attracted you to their church? Have you ever behaved in a way that has led someone else to praise God or to accompany you to church?
2. Paul attaches great importance to self-control. He lists it as one of the virtues required of church leaders and older and younger church members. In the commentary, self-control is linked to drugs, alcohol and extramarital sex. Are there other areas in which Christians also need to exercise self-control in order to bring glory to God? In what areas do you struggle with self-control?
3. What is your evaluation of the work ethics in your community? How does it compare to the standards Paul lays down? What changes should you be making? What can your church do to help Christian employees attract their employers to Christ?
4. Most of the members of the church in Crete were either poor or slaves, so Paul did not discuss how masters should behave to attract their slaves to Christ. If you are an employer (whether in a business or in the home) how do you think he would ask you to behave to make Christ attractive to your employees?⁵

⁵ Ngewa, S. (2009). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (pp. 369–375). Grand Rapids, MI: Hippo Books.