



Sermon – 09/03/2017

1 Timothy 6:1 – 2

Acts 9:15 – 16

So howdy! Glad to have the Aags back. They're kind of like grand-children; you love the headlights and love the taillights. So we're glad, even though we can't eat in restaurants after five o'clock anymore, we are glad to have them back. So I, when I taught at seminary this summer and taught, we had ten young men in the cohort, in the Doctor of Ministry cohort, and my job was to teach them through the Greek text of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. Now they had to pick two passages that they would preach two sermons from in that two-week period. So we didn't address all three books in their entirety, but we did look at the different, I taught the paricopes that they chose, the sections of scripture that stand alone. One of them actually chose the passage we come to today. We're in 1 Timothy. We're walking through the text. We're in 1 Timothy 6. Now I looked at him when I understood what he had picked. I said, "Zach, do you know that with this passage you've got to address the elephant in the room? You've got to deal with it." He said, "I figured nobody else would pick it." I said, "No. Because nobody would preach on this text unless he's forced to because he's preaching through the book and he forgot it was in there." This is, in our day, a particularly difficult two verses. As a matter of fact, the entire subject is difficult inside the scripture. We're living in a day when there's all sorts of debate about the Confederate statues and I don't care what you think about that one way or the other. It doesn't matter to me. I understand the implications for so many. And so there's a big debate about all that today. The problem with this text is the problem you have in the entirety of scripture when it comes to the issue of slavery. We believe, I mean I can't even imagine anybody, even alt-right, that would be nutty enough to go to Congress and say, "Let's have a bill and re-institute slavery." Nobody would do that. It wouldn't get five minutes in the chamber. We understand and we believe that slavery, owning another person, is simply wrong. I don't have the right in the image of God to control another person in the image of God. That's between him and the Father, not between him and me. So clearly we would understand that. The problem when you come to the New Testament is, it's not how it works. You have, as a matter of fact, addressed and particularly in this passage, you have addressed believing masters and believing slaves in the same church. And what he does not say is: release them. The closest we have to Paul telling the slave-masters to release their slaves is in the book of Philemon. A weird little book. An interesting story of the sovereignty of God. But there was a guy in Philemon who was a member of the church at Colossae. He had a slave named Onesimus who stole from him and ran off. But he got caught and he got put in jail and lo and behold he's in the jail with Paul. Paul shares with him about the grace and the love and the forgiveness of God in

Jesus Christ. Onesimus embraces that, gets saved, and so Paul writes a letter to Philemon at Colossae in the church and he says, “Look, I want to keep him. Not as a slave, I don’t do that. But I wouldn’t do that without checking with you first. So I’m sending him back to you. I want you to forgive him.” And then he makes this statement. It’s the only place where you have kind of a close idea of this in scripture. He says, “Maybe God did all this so that you could have him permanently; not as a slave, but as a brother.” But that’s the only place. He tells the masters in another book, “Treat your slaves well because their master sees you.” But there is not in the New Testament a statement of release the slaves.

Now there are a couple differences. One that I don’t think has ever been pointed out. I don’t understand why we’ve missed that, but somehow we have. Slavery in the Roman empire, you could, if you raised enough money, buy yourself out. Couldn’t do that in American slavery. Second thing is in American slavery, it’s a racial slavery. We only enslaved one color of skin. In the Roman world it was poverty slavery. So there is a distinction. But even so the Bible never really tells the slave owner to release the slave even if the slave is in the church with him. As a matter of fact, that is going to compound the issue today. You say, “Well why doesn’t it say that?” Well the answer’s in the text that we’re going to walk through today very, very carefully.

Now let me just tell you, you’re not going to like it. It’s really hard. But it is imperative that you grasp it, whether you like it or not. There is a point at which, ladies and gentlemen, seriously, we have to give up the American Christianity and become Bible believers once again. So we’re going to listen to what the Bible says. Here it is. 1 Timothy 6, verse 1.

¹As many slaves as are under a yoke

Now there’s a redundancy. If you’re a slave, you’re under a yoke. If you’re under the yoke, you’re a slave. Now why does he say that? Because he wants to understand before he starts out telling them the reason why he’s not going to ask the slave owner to release them, he wants them to understand, “Look I know how bad it is.” And it was, it could be livable, if that’s a word. If you were, as a matter of fact we get the Greek word *paidagógos*, paidagóg, from the slave who managed the household. Similar to what Joseph did for Potiphar. He managed the household, he disciplined the kids, he watched the money of the master. He was still a slave, but it was kind of a livable slavery. But when we were in Ephesus, we went there a few years back, Mike Wilkinson and I. We were strolling through the town looking at different things and the guide took us into a bottom kind of pit and he told us what the slaves duty was in this pit which is so vile I can’t mention it in here. So when Paul writes and he says, “Look you slaves that are under a yoke,” I think what he’s trying to say is, “Look before I tell you what the issue is for your own life, you need to understand I get it. Even though I’m not a slave, as Paul, I’m a free man, I’m a Roman citizen. But I want you to understand I get what you’re going through. I’ve seen it. I understand it. So he very clearly kind of lays this out before he gets into the difficulty of the text. Here he goes.

let them esteem their own masters as worthy of all honor,

He doesn't say they deserve all honor. He says, "You're going to treat them like that." Wow! Think OK. I almost did my dissertation on a black pastor named John Jasper. Jasper was a slave. He built a mega-church in Richmond, Virginia, head of the Confederacy, before, during, and after the Civil War. He died in 1901. Tremendous preacher. Maybe one of the best we've ever had in America. Wasn't a believer at the time. As a matter of fact, this episode would lead to his conversion. But when John Jasper was 18 he married a young girl who was also 18. The next day his slave owner came and found him and accused him of running away. And Jasper said, "I didn't run away. I just got married last night. I went to marry her. I was coming back." But the slave owner was incensed enough that he sold Jasper. So Jasper was removed from his 18 year old bride of one night and never saw her again. So Paul writes to people that could experience that in a circumstance and he says, "I get how hard it is. But here's the first thing I want you to do. Even if your master doesn't deserve respect, you give him and treat him as if he is worthy of all honor." I would think that'd be a little difficult. And then he takes it further. Why should I do that? Why in the world should I honor someone who just ripped me apart from my wife of one night. I didn't even have 24 hours with her. Why should I respect him with honor? Now here's the answer.

[in order that, now listen, the name of God and the teaching might not be blasphemed or spoken against.](#)

He said, "Let me tell you why. I don't want Jesus' name slandered and I don't want the teachings slandered." Remember we've been through 1 Timothy. He's talked about the fact that he's given Timothy a box of teachings. Remember he said, "I want you to live inside it's truth. I want you to get in there, and I want you to pull it out and train yourself for Godliness with it so that you will revere God in a way that will alter how you live." And then he said the third section, I know that you backed off a little because people have mouthed you. I want you to quit letting their mouth run your life. I want you to get in there and let that teaching be critical. So here's what he says. There are two reasons why when you're a slave and you're a slave owner took your wife and sold you that you treat him worthy of all respect for two reasons. Because the name of Jesus and the truth in this Bible, now listen, this is the hard thing. The name of Jesus and the truth of this scripture is more important than your life and your happiness. That is what he says. Now we don't like that because we have American Christianity. We hear it all the time on the TV listening; God you live our, your dream, you claim your dreams, you speak your dreams into existence, God wants to prosper you, he wants to bless you, wants to give you this and that. That's not what this says. Now listen. Now listen. It says the name of Jesus and the truth of this book is more important than a single dream you have in your heart. That's his answer. But it's not fair. Doesn't matter. What he says, if you find yourself in the worst circumstance you can find yourself in in life, you still choose the value of his name and his truth over any place you find yourself in. No circumstance, no matter how vile it is, no matter what you have to do, no matter what it cost you, is more important than the name of Jesus and the truth of the book. Then he makes it worse. Watch this. Verse 2.

[²But those who have believing masters they are not to discredit them, not to speak against them, not to demean them.](#)

Now look at this next phrase:

because their brothers.

Now there are two ways to take that. He could be saying, "Look they're your believing masters so they're your brothers so you don't disrespect them." I don't think that's what he's saying. I think what he's saying is, "They're your brother and that is the reason why you're discrediting them. Because you're struggling with that." I think that's exactly what he's saying. You picture this, right. You're a slave, first century, master's struggling financially, you've heard rumors he's going to sell your son. You've got to treat him worthy of all respect. And then you have the extra problem, right. It's Sunday. Go to the same church. Sing the same songs. Sing to the same Jesus. Same access. Preacher gets up, opens the scripture, the promise that the preacher walks through is applicable to you, a slave, as surely as it is to your master. Lord's supper comes around you take the same amount of bread, you take the same amount of juice, same amount of bread. There's no distinction, right. You go home and he may sell your son. And you're kind of sitting there going, "You know what, I don't get this because you're my brother. How can you treat me as a brother in Christ on Sunday and you treat me like a dog on Monday? How do you do that? You can understand how if you are a Christian in this day and your master is a believer, you get it how this is just ripping your guts out. It's making it harder. And so he makes it worse for you. He says,

but serve them better.

You're kidding me. No. Serve them better because the good works they receive, they receive them because they're faithful, they're believers, and their beloved by God. So no matter how they may rip your life out, you give them good service, you give them worthy of all respect, you love them even if on Sundays you go on the same church, you do the same Lord's supper, you read the same Bible, you hear the same sermon, same song, same God, same Jesus, same access, doesn't matter. You honor them because the calling of the name of Jesus and the truth of the scripture is bigger than any circumstance you find yourself in. See how quiet it is? Because we don't like that. We want the Bible to say, "Oh no, no, no, no. This is wrong. Give it up." It's not what the scripture says. Because the Bible's not interested in changing your social construct. It is interested in you living for Christ no matter what construct you find yourself in. You say, "Well that's pretty unfair." Can you be a missionary in a land where the people could kill you if this is not the case for you? You say, "Well it's easy for Paul to say." Acts 9:15. Go there. The Apostle Paul, remember he's a big stud in Judaism. He's on the way. Has the light. Sees Jesus. Blinds him. Now he's been waiting three days blind. Now we tell that story all the time in Bible school because that's a great story. The conversion of Saul. He's killing Christians and God saves him. So God comes to a Baptist named Ananias. You say how do you know he's Baptist? Because he does the typical Baptist thing. He tells God what apparently God does not know. God says, "Hey, I want you to go over and lay hands on this guy named Saul and I want you to get, I'm going to use you to give him his sight back." And Ananias goes, "You know, God, maybe you've, I know you've been busy, but this dude has been killing our brothers. Now if it's all the same to you, I'm just going to stay here and watch A&M this afternoon. I'm not going over there." I love God's response in verse 15.

¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go,

You don't get a lot of response from God going, "Well I understand what you're feeling." That's not what you get. He thinks, he really does, he thinks he's God and you aren't. So he says go. Now watch this. I love it. No fine print with God.

because he is a chosen vessel for me. This one is to bear my, what, name.

What did he say to the slave? What's more important? The teaching and name.

He's going to bear my name before Gentiles, Kings, and the children of Israel.

Now you hear that and you go, "OK. If God's going to come I'm going to get my sight back. I'm going to go preach this great gospel I just discovered on the Damascus Road and I'm going to preach to kings, to my own countrymen, and the Gentiles. There's nobody I'm not going to take this gospel to. What a great statement and I love God because there's no fine print. Here's the next thing he says. Look in verse 16.

¹⁶I will show him all the things he must suffer for my name.

We don't have time, but if you go to 2 Corinthians 11 and you read that section, it will blow you away. They sewed him in wild animal skins and put him in the arena in Ephesus and let wild dogs do at him. He was in the ocean a day and a night. Three times he was beaten with 39 lashes. He went through all sorts of physical issues and then he adds at the end of 2 Corinthians; oh and by the way, I've got this enormous emotional, internal concern for all my churches. Paul writes this to the slaves because this is exactly how he lived. The name and the truth were more important than his happiness and his fun. You say, "Well Jesus wouldn't be this hard." Oh, you shouldn't have said that. Jesus said, "If you put your hand to the plow and you look back, you don't turn back, you just look back, you're not fit for the kingdom of heaven." Listen, we are not a country club here. We're not the Kiwanis. We're not the Rotary. This is not some sort of game. Yeah, salvation's free, but it was not cheap. You see that right there? It cost our Lord his blood and his life. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians he became sin on our behalf. There isn't anything you can go through that matches what he went through on that cross. And his name and his truth are more valuable than anything you might or might not be happy with. And it is time to ditch American Christianity and become Biblical again. Do I believe in slavery? Absolutely not. Do I believe that whatever circumstance you find yourself in you reflect the glory of God so his name and his truth cannot be slandered? Absolutely, I believe that. Because that's the scripture. Paul's life, there is no missionary that can accept the calling without it. And here's the other deal. We're responsible in this room when we leave these doors to take his name and his truth to a world that has no idea who he is. No matter what that means, no matter what that costs, no matter what happens, that is our calling. His name, his truth, and nothing should be more important in your live than that.

Let's pray.

Father you always put some hard passages in your book. And Father sometimes the hard passages give us the greatest truth. I do thank you we've become a country that's understood

that in the image of God I shall never control another man. Particularly based on the color of his skin. But Father the other side is let us all remember your name, your truth, is always more important than our happiness and even our life. Rain that into our soul today. In Jesus' name, and we don't pray in his name lightly. We pray understanding as best we can in our feeble minds what he did on that cross.