

A New Compass for Work

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[0:00] Well, today's lesson is entitled, A New Compass for Work. If you think about a compass, a compass doesn't first tell you where to go.

A compass actually doesn't tell you where to go. Instead, it orients you to the direction that you should be. It provides a proper orientation so you can decide which way to go.

It orients you. And so you say, ah, let me see, this way is north, so I have to turn right or I have to turn left. The gospel, then, is a compass.

It gives us a proper orientation for work. It orients us in the right direction. Now, if you're oriented wrong, if you're oriented 90 degrees, occasionally you might end up at the right place.

But it would be by accident and not on purpose. Occasionally you'll do something right, but it will be completely on accident. And in the end, you will end up in the wrong place.

[1:13] The gospel provides the proper orientation for our work. Now, we said last week that we need to put our work into the context of the gospel story. And we talked about that last week.

We need to look at our work with that set of glasses on. With the gospel story of creation and fall and redemption and the coming of Jesus Christ again.

And the big question, and really one of the most important questions is, well, how do you do that? How do you set your work into that gospel story?

We kind of looked at some things last week, but we don't want to go very much further without just looking at what the Bible says. The Bible doesn't leave us without direction.

It doesn't leave us in the abstract and just thinking and asking these big theoretical questions.

Those are important. And I'm not minimizing those at all. But the Bible doesn't leave us there.

[2:16] Instead, it gives us very practical ways that the gospel and my work intersect. It shows me now that I am oriented properly by the gospel.

Now, what do I do? What does this look like? What should my work look like? And it is surprisingly personal what it looks like.

And what I mean is that it ends up having to do with a person, with Jesus. So turn with me to Colossians chapter 3.

Colossians chapter 3 and verse 22. Colossians 3, 22. And as I read this, I want you to be thinking of a question.

I want you to be thinking, what is the main point? What's the main point? What sums this passage up? If you could sum it up in a sentence, what would it be?

[3:17] So Colossians chapter 3, verse 22. And we're going to read through chapter 4, verse 1. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything.

And do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men.

Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven. So, what was the main point?

In a short sentence, what could you say is the main point of that passage? Anyone? Roger. The Lord is your real boss.

[4:29] Okay, that's pretty good. We could even step back a little bit further, and just to say that Jesus Christ is the Lord. He is the Lord.

And so, our attitude towards him should be reverence. So, reverence for Jesus Christ as Lord is at the center of your work.

So, look again at this passage. How are we to do our work? Verse 22. It says, And then verse 23. What you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord. Verse 24. Our reward comes from the Lord.

Chapter 4, verse 1. You also have a master in heaven. Now, this really is amazing. And I think if we understand this, and if we begin to appreciate it, this could revolutionize the way that we work.

[5:41] Who is at the center of a Christian's work? What is your work about? Jesus. Your work is all about Jesus.

Jesus Christ. He's at the center of the Christian's work. Whether you are a slave or you are a master. Whether you're an employee or an employer.

Whether you're a manager or a team member. Whatever you do for work. Whatever your position in your company. Maybe you're the owner.

Maybe you're the lowest person on the totem pole. Whatever work you do. Whatever role you have in your work. Jesus Christ is at the center. Your work is all about him.

Now, we normally think about work. We said this a few weeks ago. That work is primarily selfish. That's what we have turned it into. So work becomes about me. And the gospel turns everything around.

[6:41] And says, no, the work. Your work is about Jesus. Jesus Christ is the great reality. That dominates everything. If you want a very profitable study.

Read the book of Colossians. And look at where Jesus is the center. Look at where Jesus shows up. In what fields of human life does Jesus find the premier, the primary place?

It's not just at work. It's in the family. And it's not just in the family. It's in the church. And it's not just in the church. It's in your salvation. Not just in your justification.

But in your sanctification. It's not just in the church. It's in the world. It's not just on the earth. It's in heaven. Colossians 1.18 So that in everything, in everything, he might have the supremacy.

Where is Jesus the center? What is he supreme over? Everything. Everything. Everything about your life.

[7:50] Everything about the world. Everything about heaven and about earth. Jesus Christ has the supremacy. So that in everything, he might have the supremacy. So, as you read Colossians, what does it mean to be a Christian church member?

It means that Christ is everything for me in my relationships with my brothers and sisters. What does it mean to be growing in holiness? It means that I set my heart and my mind on things above. Why do I set my heart and mind on things above? Not just because heaven is so great. But because that's where Jesus is. That's where Christ is.

Everything that is not Christ. And then you can look at Colossians 3. And it talks about this.

Everything that is not Christ. Of Christ. From Christ. For Christ. Everything that doesn't line up with that great reality of Jesus Christ.

Then has to die. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Whatever doesn't line up.

[8:55] Whatever doesn't fit in. Whatever doesn't submit to Jesus as Lord. Paul's answer is, it has to die. Jesus Christ is life. Everything else is death.

You put it to death. So what does it mean to be a Christian family? You can see it in verse 18. And wives submit as fitting in the Lord.

Children, obey because it pleases the Lord. What does it mean to be a Christian worker then?

That's what this series is about. It's this.

You work with reverence for the Lord. Reverence for the Lord. Now let's talk about reverence. Now I said, as I said earlier, it's this idea of reverence for the Lord that is at the heart of this passage.

So give me some synonyms for reverence. What are some other words that we can use for the word reverence? Anyone?

[10:01] Obedience. Obedience. Respect. Respect. Esteem. Esteem. Keep going. Pardon?

Fear. Fear. Obedience. Okay. Obedience. Submission. Go on. What's that? Awe. Awe. Awe.

Respect. Esteem. Honor. And that issue is in obedience. Reverence is a, it's an emotional state, isn't it? It's an emotional state that engages your whole mind, and so you're taken with the greatness of someone.

And so you are humble, you respect, you're in awe of them. Now, reverence works itself out at work.

Reverence for the Lord means you work for his eye, not for men. It means you're looking to his reward. It means you entrust yourself to his judgment. You provide what is fair because of him.
[11:04] It's because you fear the Lord that you do these things. Do you see what I'm saying when I say it's surprisingly personal? Surprisingly intimate. How you work has everything to do with how you relate to Jesus Christ.

How you relate to Jesus Christ. So what kind of fear is this? What kind of, another word, there's sometimes the word terror, the word awe. So what kind of fear is this?

Well, it's not a fear that necessarily drives you away from Jesus so much. There is an element to that where you want to distance yourself from him because of his greatness.

But at the same time, that fear has now been tempered by the knowledge that he loves me.

Remember, this Jesus that we fear and awe is one that has poured out his love for us.

He has shown he's gone to the greatest lengths to say, I love you. Now, I just read this morning a quote from Octavius Winslow.

[12:16] He said, he was so, Jesus Christ was so committed to saving his people that he made a tree that he would die on. And he nurtured men for years.

The very men that would put him to death. He fed them and gave them life. Why did he do that? Because he was set on saving his people.

And so it's an awe. It's a reverence for his person. And for what he's done for you. Remember, this is not so much a fear of just terror.

It's awe and respect and esteem. It's an awe inspired by the gospel. So what do I mean by that? I mean, it comes from recognizing that God has forgiven me all my sins.

So I esteem him highly. And he took that sin away from me. He took that guilt away from me. And he did it in this most awesome and wonderful way.

[13:20] He did it by sending his son to die and to bear that punishment. And so that doesn't make me esteem him less. That makes me esteem him more and respect him more.

And so this is a reverence, though. It's for the Lord. It's recognizing that Jesus took my sins upon himself. He bore my sins on that tree. He humbled himself to the grave for me.

And he rose again. And he's seated at the right hand of God for me. God exalted him to the highest place and gave him a name above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth below.

It's taking in the gospel and letting that weigh heavily upon your mind. And then as you think about the gospel, you say, Jesus is an amazing Savior.

An amazing Savior. And so this reverence isn't a terror that drives me away from God. It's not a terror that sends me back to my sin and my sinfulness.

[14:29] That is there at the beginning. Whenever someone is being convicted of sin, there is that fear. So think about it. Isaiah, he saw the Lord Jesus.

He saw him. And what was the first thing he thought of? My sin. But he didn't stay there.

Remember an angel sent, came with a coal from the altar and cleansed him. Now, his sins are forgiven.

His sins are burned away, blotted out. Does Isaiah fear the Lord any less? No. Now, he wants to serve him with all that he has.

And so his heart is throbbing with joy to obey him. Not only because he's so great and so holy, but because he's so good. So good to me.

[15:34] Now, he's not only glorious because of who he is, but because he's what he's done for me. He's atoned for my sins, Isaiah could say. And so Isaiah didn't fear him any less because his sins were forgiven.

His fear and his reverence grew. His esteem grew. There was higher glory, higher respect. Now, that is the reverence that Paul is talking about.

It's a reverence that is now, it's seen its sin, but the sin has been atoned for. It's a Christian's reverence. It's a Christian's fear.

Because of the gospel, the Christian holds Christ in higher esteem. In higher respect. He loves and cherishes and wants to honor him more, not less.

Because his sins have been dealt with. And so the psalmist in Psalm 130 says, But with you there is forgiveness. Therefore, you are feared.

[16 : 36] The world only knows the fear of the Lord when he's convicting them of their sin. And then he's a terror to them.

And then they respect him and they're afraid of him. But the Christian knows what it is to fear the Lord because all of his sins have been forgiven. The gospel produces a fear that sin and guilt and shame can never produce.

Because it produces a fear that's higher, that's better, because it's mixed with love. It's a fear and a terror that's now infused with love.

Now, what produces this kind of fear? Well, believing the gospel in its fullness. Believing and feeling the weight of who Jesus is.

Believing and feeling the weight of what Jesus has done. Believing and feeling the weight of what Jesus has done for you personally. There's no reverence in the abstract.

[17 : 45] No one ever reveres the Lord if those things are just out here, but they've never come into his heart. So none of this is impersonal. Reverence is intensely personal.

It's intensely intimate. He loved me and he gave himself up for me. And so I fear him. He's my savior. He's my Lord.

I want to please him. I want to serve him because of what he's done for me. And so when Paul gets to Colossians 3 and he comes to this matter of work, he doesn't leave the Lord behind.

You can't leave Jesus behind. Because Jesus has taken center stage. He's preeminent in everything. Jesus takes center stage. He's the beginning and he's the middle and he's the end of your work.

Whatever you're doing, he's the beginning, the middle and the end of your work. Why? Because he's the beginning and the middle and the end of everything. And he becomes that to you personally.

[18 : 52] He becomes your everything when he saves you. And so in everything, he has the preeminence. He has center stage. Now, if we're going to understand this better, we have to see what Paul is contrasting this to.

Paul isn't just saying these things without any context. So we need to think about what it meant to be a slave in the Roman world. Okay? What was the story that the Roman culture told the slaves? And most people were slaves back then as far as the percentage of population goes. What was the story that slaves were told? What was the story that they were encouraged to think of?

How were they supposed to identify themselves? What was their biggest problem? What was their biggest hopes? Those questions that we asked. What were their fears? What were their idols? What was at the center of their heart?

What? Well, the slaves were under the power of their master. They were under the legal power of their master.

[20 : 05] You were under the law of your master. And you were not a person. You were a thing. And that's hard for us to understand. But in the Roman legal system, there were two basic entities.

There were persona and res. People and things. Everything fit under one of those two categories. You were either a person or a thing.

And when they went to talk about slaves, slaves got put into the category of things. Things. You could be bought and sold.

You were under your master's complete control. They could kill you. They could throw you away like you throw a lamp away when it doesn't work for you. Now, think with me.

Put yourself into that place. Put yourself into that position. How would you feel about that? What would some temptations?

[21 : 10] What would some common emotions? Where would that put you in your heart? What were the things that you feared? That you hoped for? That you felt?

Anyone? If that was you, what were some of the common things you would feel? You want to be free.

You wouldn't feel free, though. You'd feel trapped. Go on. Pardon?

Worthless. Yeah. You're just a thing. Be bought and sold. Okay. What else? Mistreated. Could be. If you had a bad master.

Angry. Angry. What else? Just anger. Fear. Fear. Sad. Would you be anxious?

[22 : 16] Who would you be worried most about? What would you wake up thinking about? Yeah.

You'd be worried about the master, wouldn't you? Where would your hope be? In your master? Where would your anxieties come from? Your master.

Where would your fears come from? Your master. Who would you be angry or delighted with? Your master. Whose favor would you seek? Whose reward would you look for?

The master. Who's at the center stage of a slave's life in that world? It was the master. And that's the story that the world told slaves.

This is who you are. This is what you are. This is what you need to be worried about. Your salvation comes when you're free. But now here Paul comes with the gospel.

[23:18] And he puts a new master in place. He changes the story all around. And now Christ is at the center. And so instead of taking your identity from the Roman legal system of thinking of yourself primarily as a thing, now you take your identity from Christ.

So instead of thinking of yourself as a thing, as something to be bought and sold, as something that needs to please the master at all costs, now your identity, your motivation, it now comes from Jesus Christ.

And so 1 Corinthians 7, 21 and 22, let me just read this to you. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you.

Wow, how do you say that? Don't let it trouble you? Although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freed man.

Similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. The world's identity of you and Christ's identity of you could be totally two different things.

[24:35] The gospel changes the way the slave and the master identify himself. Now my identity isn't dictated to me by the world but by Christ. Now think of that.

Brothers and sisters, what does the world say about you because of your job? What do they say about your position and your importance? What you're worth? What you need to be worried about? What does the world say about you? Now bring yourself to Jesus Christ. What does he say about you? You a master? He says, you're my slave.

You're a slave? He says, no, you're my freed man. Do you see what I'm getting at? Jesus Christ has taken the center stage. The master, the human masters, they've been shoved aside because Jesus Christ has taken the place, their place.

And so because I respect and I fear him, it changes the way I look at myself, it changes the way I think about my work, it changes the way I do my work. Now, how does that work itself out?

[25:39] Practical details. So Jesus Christ is at the center. He's my orientation. He's my north. Now what does that mean? Well, four things.

First, you have a new audience. You have a new audience. Who did a slave work for before he worked for Christ? His master's eye. When he was around, I worked really hard.

When his eye is on me, I work really hard because I'm working for his favor, I'm working for his eyes. Does that go on at your work, men? Women? Oh, the boss is here.

What happens? The solitaire gets shut down and everyone starts getting busy about working. Everyone's busy. The water cooler is left without anyone holding it up. And everyone's busy, busy working away.

There's nothing new under the sun. That goes on now. It happened then. And Paul says that way of working is done for the Christian. Because you're not working for them anymore.

[26:36] You're not working for their eye. You have a totally different audience. Jesus is your Lord. He's your master. And so you're not, I'm not working for their eye to win their favor.

I have a new master and I want to work to please him and his eye is always on me. Now, isn't that wonderful? What job do you have?

You can win the Lord's favor. You can win his smile. You can please him by doing a good job at your place of work. Jesus takes the Christian garbage man, his work, and he says, that's mine. You're doing this for me and I'm pleased with it. The lowest job Jesus takes pleasure in when it's done for him. He sees it. He knows it.

And what a thrill. You're not on the roller coaster of the boss is there. The boss is not. You're going for a new audience. There's no distinction.

[27:46] Jesus has his eye on you. And so Paul says, work with sincerity of heart. Sincerity. That's the opposite of duplicity. Means, so when the boss is there, I work really hard because I want to look like I'm a good hard worker.

But when the boss is not there, I don't work very hard because it doesn't really matter. No. Sincerity of heart. The same now. The same then. The same always. Not pretending to work when others are watching, but not really caring.

Jesus is watching and I work like it. I want to please him and so I work for him all the time. This is a test of your reverence for the Lord.

This is a test of your relationship with Jesus Christ. This is a test of your godliness. Not so much how much you read and how much you give, but how do you work?

Does reverence for the Lord change the way you work at 2 in the afternoon, 3 in the afternoon, 10 in the morning, when no one is around and you're working hard because I fear the Lord.

[29:03] So we have a new audience. Then we also have a new motivation. Verse 23. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men.

So what's our motivation? This sort of overlaps with what we just talked about. We're working for the Lord, not for men. So who does the Christian serve? He serves Jesus.

Jesus. We talk about Christ's kingdom. Is Christ's kingdom at your work? Well, Christian, if you're there, it is.

Christ has invaded your workplace. He's taken over management and he's saying, you work for me now. Yeah, you work for them, but you work for me. I'm the master.

Now, this is motivation. This is so, I think this could, this is what I'm saying could really revolutionize, could really change the way you work. I'm not working anymore primarily for those guys who don't appreciate me.

[30:06] I'm not working for those bosses who are cruel and unkind, who don't deserve my hard work. I'm working for the Lord. Jesus has come to my workplace and he said, you're working for me now.

So, moms, your work is for Jesus. Your husband might not appreciate it like he ought to. Your children might not appreciate it like they ought to.

But you aren't working for them primarily. You're working for Jesus. Jesus has come to your house. He set up his kingdom. And he said, do your work for me.

I'm the master in your life, in your job. Well, how would we work then? Verse 23 says we work with all of our hearts. That's all that we are.

All our mind, all our hearts, all our strength, all our emotions. How much does Jesus in the gospel call forth from you?

[31:07] How much is he worthy of? How much is he earned? How much does he deserve? All that you have. And this is the power of reverence.

So there he is. He is this great Lord. And I'm impressed. I respect him. And so now I give him all of my work.

Calls for my whole heart. Calls for all of your, all of that you are. So does your boss, does your company call for your whole heart? Probably not.

And so often that's what kills incentive to work. Because when all you're thinking about is how unfair and how cruel or how silly and how stupid and how unwise and how short-sighted these bosses are, how unfair they are, then you say to yourself, why work?

Why work so hard? But you're not working for them anymore, Christian. You're working for Jesus. And there's nothing unfair or cruel or silly or stupid or anything bad about him.

[32:18] He's altogether glorious. He's altogether good. And he's laid down his life for you. What kind of master do you have? You have a kind of a master that will lay down his life to save you.

And so you have the most unselfish, the most loving, the most wise, the most thoughtful master in the world. You're working with Jesus. So work with all of your heart. Instead of looking at your human bosses and then judging and saying, well, I think they deserve my work or they don't deserve my work.

Jesus deserves your work. So you have a new audience. You have a new motivation. And you have a new reward. That's our third thing, a new reward. Slaves of that day were looking for a reward from their master.

Better treatment. Better pay. Slaves in those days got a small payment. And so they worked for their reward.

Paul says no more short-sighted rewards. If you're working for human masters, you're inevitably going to be disappointed. But verse 24 says, you know.

[33:28] You know. That you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. We aren't working for perhaps I can do something for you.

We're not working for the idea of, well, if I work really hard, then perhaps he'll give me a raise. Or I'll work really hard and maybe I'll be honored and they'll recognize me.

There's no maybes. There's no perhaps about it. Paul says, you know. You know. You know. The reward from the Lord is coming. You aren't working for something that just might happen.

But something that will happen. Have you ever been told that by a manager? Well, I'll see what I can do. I'll see what I can do for you. We'll see about it. There's no we'll see about it.

It's the Lord Christ you are serving. He rules over angels. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness and everything in it. He's rich. And he's willing.

[34:32] He laid down his life for you. And so look at the cross. See him dying for you. Is he going to give you a small reward? Is that where his heart is? They just work for me and I'll just give him.

A vacuum cleaner at the end of the month. Whatever. Some cheap reward. This is a new reward you're working for. So instead of looking for the maybes and the perhapses of your boss.

You're looking to Jesus and his sure reward. And then there's a new protection. A new protection. If your master mistreats you.

Back then. What recourse did you have? If you had a cruel and unkind and unfair master. What could you do about it?

Well the only chance of justice that you had was to repay them back yourself. Rob them. Hurt them. Don't work so hard for them.

[35:34] You know. Fudge on things. Slack off. You. All you had. If that's the mindset that you're working with. Is you just have this small petty little revenge.

That was your one little hope. But Christian. Paul says. Don't worry about getting back at them. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

Anyone. Anyone. Even if he's a great and mighty master. Will be repaid for the wrong that they do. There's no favoritism. There was favoritism back in those days.

Just like there is now. Money could. Get you all sorts of. Injustice. To protect you. You pay the right people. And you get better treatment. Jesus doesn't give two hoots about how much money you have.

Money can't save you on the day of wrath. It was the rich who oppressed him after all. Do you think he's going to. Fawn all over them.

[36:38] So don't worry Christian. Anyone who does wrong. Will be repaid. Leave your vengeance to the Lord. He can do a better job at it than you can. And then masters.

He gives another word. For the masters. Says provide for your slaves what is right and fair. Why? Because you have a master in heaven. So now we're talking to anyone with management.

Anyone with people underneath them. And Paul is saying. In other words. Treat them how you want to be treated. Because while you are their master.

You're his slave. And he's the judge. And how you judge. That's how it will be judged upon you. You want generous treatment.

Then generously treat them. So how does the gospel intersect. With our work lives. Paul says it comes to us in a very personal way. It comes to us in the person of the Lord Jesus.

[37:40] And he changes everything. And so I was forced to ask myself. And I think you would do well to ask yourself. How much do you love and respect Jesus?

How much of the reverence for the Lord is controlling you? Your work will show it. It's a litmus test. Let no one think that they're religious or godly.

If their work is shabby. Their work is. Paltry. Small. The way we work.

Shows what we think of Jesus. Well we are dismissed.