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Unto Christ - Part 2

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The Bible for Today with John Stott - Premier

John Stott explains how our relationships with our colleagues and one another will only be right when we are in a right relationship with God.

Transcript

If we are inactive in face of the agony of a suffering world, then there's no love in our hearts for people. And if there's no love in our hearts for people, there's no love in our hearts for Christ. And if there's no love in our hearts for Christ, there's no faith in Jesus Christ.

The faith without love is bogus. It's phony and faith without works is dead. Welcome to The Bible for Today with John Stot.

There are few evangelicals who have ever influenced the global church in the 20th century as much as John Stott and it was Betty Graham who called him the most respected clergyman in the world. Always remaining faithful to the word of God and unswayed by current trends, the person of Christ blazed from over sermon he preached. Whilst John Stot impacted the church across the world, his home church was always all souls laying in place on the heart of London's West End.

And it's from 600 sermons he preached there that were marking his centenary with some of his most powerful messages. In last week's message on living unto Christ, we saw how our being in a right relationship with God will affect our relationship with one another and even our employer. This week John Stot picks up on the relationship that there should be between a master and a slave or a servant.

John will be referring to numerous passages. So you'll find it helpful to have your Bible to hand and turn to Romans chapter 14. Our relationships at work assuming that we are not one of the unfortunate unemployed but assuming that we have work of some kind, whether indeed at school or university or in a job, an employed job, our relationships at work also come right and are adjusted when we are living unto the Lord.

Here my text, if you'll kind of turn to it, it's a little further on Colossians 3 beginning at verse 22. Colossians 3, 22, "Sla'ed, so be in everything there so are your earthly masters, not with eye service as men pleases, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever your task, work heartily, literally, as unto the Lord." And not unto men or women, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward for your serving the Lord Christ.

And again chapter 4, "There's one mustest treat your slaves justly and fairly knowing that you also have a master in heaven." Now there's no justification in this paragraph for the institution of slavery itself. Indeed, the demand in chapter 4 verse 1 that slaves be treated with justice is a revolutionary principle which led in the end to the abolition of the system of slavery and should have led to its abolition centuries previously. But what we have in this passage is instruction while the evil system lasted, instruction, "Huslaves and slave owners should treat one another." And the principle of their behavior to one another which poorly elaborate is equally applicable to all modern situations of employment.

What is that principle? Verse 22, "Slaves be obedient to your earthly masters, not with eye service, not only when the boss is watching as if your ambition was to please him, but in singleness of heart, fearing and pleasing Christ." Verse 23, "Whatever you do, and slaves had to do some very menial and dirty jobs. Whatever you do, do it from your heart as unto the Lord." And not unto men. Similarly masters, verse 4, "Creat your slaves with justice knowing that you have a master in heaven." Now I'm very anxious that we should all follow quite clearly that the teaching in birth cases is, in principle, precisely the same.

Both the slave and the slave owner had the same master in heaven. And they were to live unto him. And their treatment of one another would be transformed if they lived and worked unto Christ.

It was knowing that which would transform the relationship. Did you notice the repetition of that phrase, verse 24, "Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance for your serving the Lord Christ." Chapter 4, verse 1, "Knowing that you have a master in heaven." So that if only you could both know and remember and acknowledge the truth that you have a master in heaven, then your relationships and your work could be changed. The slave and the slave owner had to see behind one another the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then that treatment of one another would be changed by their treatment of him. The slave would be more conscientious. The slave owner would be more just in his dealings with his slaves.

Why? Because his eye was on Christ. And it's exactly the same in employment today. Just there about a hundred years ago, there was a young boy called Samuel Chadwick

who later became a Methodist minister of Samranan who was converted on a Sunday school anniversary of his church.

Some of you may have heard me tell this story before. And on the Sunday school anniversary, the visiting teacher or preacher said that John Newton had once remarked that if he were a shoe black or a shoe shine boy, he'd be the best china of shoes in the village because he would shine shoes as if Jesus Christ was going to wear them. Now Sam aged 10 in the Sunday school parents tried to get hold of this and tell it to your children later if they're downstairs or somewhere else.

Sam aged 10 pricked up his ears because it was his job at home to clean his dad's boots and he hated it, especially having to clean his wellingtons, his rubber boots. The anniversary Sunday was a wet day and boot cleaning was on Monday morning at its worst. So young 10 year old Sam began with the wellingtons on the principle that you get the worst job done first.

And he got through in a kind of a way and then suddenly they're flashed into his mind what the teacher had said the previous day and he looked at the half finished job and he asked himself would those boots look well on the feet of Jesus. And for an answer he picked them up and cleaned them a second time. And he said in later life that it was the most, it was a very simple thing to do but it was the most important thing I ever did in my life.

I got into the habit he said of learning to do the simplest duties as unto Christ. Now George Herbert got hold of this and to him we're going to sing at the end of the service, "Teach me my God and King in all things thee to see." And what I do in everything to do it unto thee, all may of thee partake. Nothing can be so mean that with this tincture for thy sake will not grow bright and clean a servant with this claws makes drudgery divine, who sweeps a room as for thy laws makes that and the action fine.

This is the famous stone that turneth all to gold for that which God doth touch and own cannot for less be told. Now let's apply to ourselves. It is possible to sweep a room, clean a room, as if Jesus Christ was going to visit your home that day.

It's possible to visit another person's home as if you were visiting Jesus Christ, possible to type a letter as if Jesus Christ was going to receive and read it. It's possible to serve a customer in the shop as if Jesus Christ had gone shopping that day. It's possible to nurse a patient in hospital as if Jesus Christ was in that bed.

It's possible to cook a meal as if you were Martha and Jesus Christ was going to eat it. It transforms everything. When you learn to do it as unto Christ, not unto men.

Relationships at work are changed when our relationship to him is right. Thirdly, our relationships in the world outside are also changed. Now we come to the second lesson

that Myrtle Bourne read earlier.

I'd like to ask you to again take the Bible and turn to Matthew 25 in the New Testament. I went and read it again. We call it sometimes the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Matthew 25 verse 31, "The parable is not a parable at all. It is an exceedingly solemn description by Jesus of the day of judgment. And the only parabolic element in it is that the judge will separate the righteous and the unrighteous like a shepherd of a mixed flock who separates the sheep from the goats." Now what does Jesus say in it? He says that a day is coming when he will return in glory accompanied by his angels.

I believe that and I hope you do. He says that he will then take his seat as king and judge upon his glorious throne. And before him all the nations, that is all the people of all the nations will be assembled and he takes for granted the resurrection of the dead.

Then he will proceed to separate people from one another as a shepherd separate sheep from goats, putting the righteous on his right hand and the unrighteous on his left, inviting the righteous to come and inherit the kingdom, prepared for them from eternity and commanding the unrighteous to depart into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and exceedingly solemn description of the day of judgment by Jesus Christ. The fundamental teaching here concerns neither the judge nor the sentence but the evidence which the judge will produce and on which he will base the sentence. It is on that that Jesus concentrates and he says that the evidence will be our attitude to him as revealed in our action or non-action to the least or humblest of his brethren.

So the righteous who will be served have fed him when he was hungry, refreshed him when he was thirsty, welcomed him when he was a stranger and clothed him when he was naked, visited him when he was in hospital or prison because he said verse 40, "As you did it unto one of the humblest of my brothers and sisters, you did it unto me." Whereas the unrighteous on the other hand also saw Christ, hungry and thirsty, a stranger to naked, second in prison, but they failed to minister to his need because they failed to minister to the humblest of his brothers and sisters and they will be judged, Jesus says, "Not for what they have done but for what they have left undone, criminal neglect and scandalous indifference to the sufferings of mankind." Who then are these brothers and sisters of Jesus? Well, I don't have time to go into it in detail but I want to say, I want to suggest anyway to you for your thought, it's not the Jews as if this is the judgment of the nations for their treatment of the Jews as is argued by some Bible commentators because as you read it, the judgment is very evidently a people, a judgment of nations as units is an almost unintelligible phenomenon. This is a judgment of people and of individual people at that. So the brethren of Jesus are not the Jews, nor I think are their Christians as if people are going to be judged by their treatment of Christians.

Mind you, there is truth in that Jesus did designate his followers, his brethren, his

brothers and sisters and people's attitude to Christ is often seen in their attitude to Christians as in the case of Saul of Tarsus who was persecuting the church and Jesus said, "Why are you persecuting me?" He was persecuting Christ by persecuting Christians. So there is truth in this but surely the reference is too narrow that the whole of the day of judgment is going to depend upon whether or how people have treated Christians. Some people have never met any Christians in Heath and Lance.

I suggest know that the brothers and sisters of Jesus are simply all suffering human beings with whom Jesus in his loving lowliness identifies himself. Certainly there is New Testament Warren for this because in Hebrews 2 verse 17 we read that Jesus was made like unto his brethren in every respect by taking flesh and blood. Now his brethren there is humanity and he not only identified himself with our humanity and the solidarity of love but also with our sufferings.

How then are we going to interpret this passage? Well the whole New Testament teaches that although we are justified by faith we are going to be judged by works. That although we come into acceptance before God and are forgiven and adopted by him only for the merit of Christ through faith in Jesus Christ, nevertheless we shall be judged on the last day by the good works of love that we have done because they are the only public evidence that can be produced of the reality of our saving faith which is itself hidden in secret. Jesus said it again and again he said it in the Sermon on the Mount.

He said it's no good calling me Lord Lord. It's no good professing faith in me if you don't do what I say works. He says in Matthew 1627 that the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his father and judge everyone according to his works.

So let's take this with solemnity. If we, if you and I in this comfortable well-lit, well-appointed church in London today, if we are not concerned to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and heal the sick and care for refugees and orphans and prisoners and the oppressed, if we have no social conscience, if we have no compassion for the deprived and the dispossessed, if we are inactive in face of the agony of a suffering world, then there's no love in our hearts for people and if there's no love in our hearts for people, there's no love in our hearts for Christ. And if there's no love in our hearts for Christ, there's no faith in Jesus Christ because faith without love is bogus.

It's phony and faith without works is dead. Whereas if we truly trust in Jesus Christ, as our Savior, we shall love Him and if we love Him, we shall love His suffering brothers and sisters in the world with whom in the solidarity of love He identified Himself. And if we love them because we love Him, we shall demonstrate our love for them by serving them and Him in them.

There is nobody today who has exhibited this better than that young girl called Agnes, born in Yugoslavia, brought up in an Albanian home who left home when she was 16 years old for India and has become known to the world as Mother Teresa, who founded in

1950 her order missionaries of charity. One biographer writes this single frail woman in a white sari, this enthusiastic well scrubbed dynamo, began to bring food to the starving, clothes to the destitute, medicines to the sick, compassionate care to leprosy sufferers and refugees, love and education to abandon children, dignity and comfort to the dying. Until within a quarter century, she had nearly a thousand sisters in her missionaries of charity and about 185 brothers as well on six continents.

What is the secret of that work of compassion? Well, it's this, on a board in the parlor, in the mother house in Calcutta, are inscribed her own words. Listen, let each sister see Jesus Christ in the person of the poor. And the more repugnant the work or the person, the greater also must be her faith, love and cheerful diversion in ministering to our Lord in this distressing disguise.

Desmond Doyk, the biographer I'm referring to, describes his first memory of Mother Teresa in Nirmal Hridé, her home for the destitute dying in Caligat under the shadow of a great Hindu temple to Kali. Mother Teresa had just admitted into this home a dying man. Stripped of his rags, he was one appalling wound alive with maggots.

She dropped on her knees by his side, and with quiet efficiency she began to clean her, and she talked to him caressingly in Bengali. A young Indian, Christa Das, joined her and took over, and when he'd finished he said, "When I cleanse the wounds of the poor, I'm cleansing the wounds of Christ." He'd learned that from Mother Teresa who said, "I see Christ in every person I touch." Because he said, "I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was naked, I was sick, I was suffering, I was homeless." And Mother Teresa said, "It is as simple as that. Every time I give a piece of bread, I give it to him." Now, the conclusion is this, to live as a Christian is to live unto Christ.

There is not any right in itself because Jesus is our Lord and we have a responsibility to him. It is also a wonderfully liberating experience and a wonderfully integrating experience because a right relationship with him naturally leads to right relationships with others. In the church family we shunt reject one another, we'll accept and respect one another because Christians are not responsible to us, but to him we are not responsible to them, but to him.

Again, at work we should be conscientious whether we are employers or employees because our eyes are on the heavenly Master and out in the world in all its pain and hurt. We shall seek to love and serve the needy because Jesus called them his brothers and sisters and in serving them we are serving him. Now, the great need do you see is to learn to see Jesus in every situation, to learn to see Jesus in every relationship.

Don't put him in a corner, don't lock him up in a cupboard, don't restrict him to religious things like churches and bibles and prayer meetings and the religious bit of life. No, no, no, we have to welcome Jesus and discover Jesus in every part of life and every moment of life. And the way to do that is to pray that the Holy Spirit will manifest Christ to us

because it's his particular ministry to do that.

Then we have to be disciplined in meeting him every day and every Sunday and as would discipline in seeking his presence and seeking his face gradually and increasingly his presence will pervade the whole of our lives until it becomes a natural thing to turn to Jesus, to talk to Jesus during the day until we see him in others and behind others and treat others as we were treat him and so learn what it is to live all our lives until Christ. Well, let's remain seated for a moment and be quiet in prayer. We want to pray for ourselves and each other that we may learn to live unto Christ.

Let's pray that at home, at work, in the church and in the world. Lord Jesus, we thank you together for the marvelous fact that you want to share every part of life with us. Homeschool University work, factory shop, office, hospital, privacy, public life, every part of life.

Help us. We pray in private and in public to live unto you for the glory of your great known. You've been listening to the conclusion of a message by John Stott on how we can be a Christ-centered Christian based on Romans 14.

This was one of 49 sermons that John gave on the letter to the Romans and you can listen to the rest by visiting our website. John also wrote over 50 books in his lifetime including his best-selling "The Radical Disciple" which deals with much of what we've heard today. Details of this and all his books can be found by visiting premier.org.uk/JohnStott. The legacy of John Stott lives on and is growing touching every level of society across the world.

Today, Christian leaders throughout the majority world are being equipped to provide pastor training and resources in their own countries thanks to the vision of John Stott who donated all his book royalties to support this ministry through Langham Partnership. To find out about this and other ministries, John Stott founded, go to premier.org.uk/JohnStott. Join us at the same time next week for more from The Bible for today with John Stott.

[Music]

(upbeat music)