

"Christian living in the world"**Part 1****Colossians 3:22-4:1**

Introduction: Two weeks ago, we were looking at how Paul instructed the believers at Colossae to live within the family. He addressed wives, husbands, children, and fathers. Those instructions are very important because the family is an earthly picture of our spiritual relationship with our Lord. Tonight, as we move on Paul is going to address how believers are to conduct their lives in the place of employment. Paul presents this section as conduct between a slave and his or her master. We shall apply it the place of employment as we examine these verses.

➤ **Our testimony through employment.**

Let me begin by saying that one of the most important ways we represent Jesus Christ is in the place where believers earn a living. There can be some very trying situations that believers face when working in the secular world. We must deal with people who are unsaved. They are often people who care little about others, some may carry hatred for followers of Jesus Christ, many only care about making a name for themselves and many are only there for a paycheck so they care little about what a fellow worker may be going through. Therefore, in the secular world you have no idea what you will experience. But God knows and he places His people in the midst of some very trying situations so that He will be glorified through our lives.

2 Corinthians 5:19-20

¹⁹ *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

²⁰ *Now then **we are ambassadors for Christ**, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

The way we react and the way we treat others is a part of our responsibility as ambassadors.

1 Peter 3:11-16

¹¹ *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

¹² *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

¹³ *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

¹⁴ *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*

¹⁵ *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

¹⁶ *Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

Notice Colossians 3:22

Servants here is a reference to slaves. In the Roman Empire there was believed to be more slaves than there were free people. Notice some history on slavery.

"Barclay says that in the Roman Empire there were upwards to sixty million slaves, largely because the Roman citizen considered it beneath his dignity to work. Vincent adds that "in many of the cities of Asia Minor slaves outnumbered freemen". Thus practically all work was done by slaves. This was so pervasive that even doctors, teachers, and secretaries of the Roman emperors were slaves! Although some masters were kind to their slaves, that appears to be the exception rather than the rule."

Now people today would deny that there are modern day slaves but as a side note I want to say that there are many people who are enslaved today and do not even realize. People are enslaved to sin and many are enslaved to debt. But there is another way in which people are slaves today which they are not aware of. Consider a few thoughts about a slave.

- **They depend on their master for food.**
- **They depend on their master for housing,**
- **They depend on their master for protection.**
- **They depend upon their master to take care of their family.**
- **They depend upon their master to make decisions for them.**
- **They depend upon their master to decide what is best.**

This list could go on and on but you get the idea of the dependance of a slave. This by the way describes people who are on welfare and depend upon the government. There are many people today who are slaves and do not even realize. Now let us get back to the slaves in the Roman Empire.

Notice Colossians 3:22 again.

The slaves were to obey their masters in all things. They were to endure the difficulties of what was appointed to them and they were to serve and not with eyeservice which means, not just when the master is watching. Let me show you an example of what this would look like.

Genesis 39:1-6

And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

² And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

³ And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

⁴ And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

⁵ And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

⁶ And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

Joseph was in a place where he did not desire to be and he had been treated very unfairly, but while he was in Potiphar's house he served him with everything he had. He glorified God wherever he was at. This is exactly how we are to live in this world.

To serve the master with "singleness of heart" means to serve sincerely. I learned over the years in my life that it is best to accept what God has given us to do and give your best while you are there. It took me many years of struggling to come to that point. There was a time when I was miserable in the construction field but after I was saved and then I came to understand that this was where God wanted me to be I then accepted what was before me. There was peace in the surrender and then I was able to focus upon being the best I could be at what I was doing. Notice the words of J. Vernon McGee.

"There should not be any taint of duplicity. There should be no two-facedness. There should not be the licking of the boots of the employer when he is around and then stabbing him in the back when he is away. Such action should never be in the life of a Christian. "

Notice Colossians 3:22 again.

We are to do our best "fearing the Lord." The word "fearing" does not mean "shaking in terror." It speaks of a reverence for the Lord. This comes as we realize that God has placed us where we are and this is an opportunity to serve him as we serve the employer.

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

Wherever a believer works, that place and opportunity is part of the good works which God has given us to do.

Acts 17:28

²⁸ *For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*

I show you this verse because we owe everything to God. He gives us strength, knowledge, wisdom, and life. He has placed us where we are and He has given us what we need to serve Him and to glorify Him.

Notice Colossians 3:23

Here is the key to being an exceptional employee. As we serve let us do everything as unto the Lord.

H. A. Ironside, the late beloved pastor of the historic Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, Illinois, used to tell his students of the maid who was asked how she knew she had really become a Christian. She replied, "I know I'm a Christian because I sweep under the rugs now!"

When the old man is put off and the new man is put on it changes many things in our lives and one of the changes should be the way we conduct our lives in the secular workplace. The slaves of Paul's day may have done everything with a grudge and complained at every command that was given to them. They had no desire to please anyone. But once they were saved that was to all change. Notice the words from the Daily Bread.

"The life of slaves in the Roman Empire was not easy. They were regarded as "things," and they had no rights. Some had good masters and challenging work, but most were given menial tasks to perform. They worked long hours with little rest. Christians, however, could catch a glimpse of glory in the grind. Whether slaves or masters, they could do their work with dignity. They were Christ's servants, and they represented

Him in the marketplace or the home. Each worked for his Master, Jesus Christ, and labored for a commendation that would ultimately come from Him.

Someone captured the heart of this truth when he observed, "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that the hosts of heaven will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.'" Your work may be tedious. You may have an employer who doesn't appreciate you or pay you what you're worth. You may want to quit. But you are working for Christ. Do your daily work so that your Master in heaven can one day say to you, "Good job. Well done"."

Notice Colossians 3:24

We must keep in mind that if we do not get paid what we are worth there will come a day when God rewards us for our service here on earth.

Proverbs 11:18

¹⁸ The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.

Ephesians 6:8

⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

God misses nothing that we do. He watches and one day He will reward us for our labor. It is also important to know that how we labor here determines what is entrusted to us as we will serve in the Kingdom.

Luke 19:12-19

¹² He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

¹³ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

¹⁵ And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

¹⁷ And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

¹⁸ And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

¹⁹ And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

Notice Colossians 3:25

On the flip side of being rewarded for faithful service is the chastisement for defrauding the master or the employer.

Hebrews 12:6, 9-11

⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Conclusion:

Notice Colossians 4:1

Paul exhorts the masters/employers here to show no partiality and to give the workers what they deserve.

Someone would say that I do my work but the boss is so unfair. Do I still need to do my best? Yes! We will answer for what we do and they will answer for what they do.