

Col 3:22 – 4:1

The New Life in Christ – Servants and Masters

Introduction

This section is still part of instructions to Christian Households. Servants/slaves were a normal part of households during this time period.

The servants or slaves that Paul is addressing are not employees. They are not wage earners but property of their masters. They were in bondage.

- Most commentators say that the principles here do apply to employee – boss relationships.
- But it was interesting to me that Hendrickson, the main commentator I am using did not try to apply it that way. He just explained what these principles meant for the audience this letter was originally written to.
- But I would say that these basic principles if applied in the work place would solve many problems people and companies experience and bring honor to Christ.

Paul devotes twice as much space in this letter to the servant master relationship than he does to the other household relationships. Possible reasons:

- The Roman world was full of slaves – approx 1/3 of the population in Rome
 - Probably a large percentage of members in the Colossian church
 - This group of believers needed some special instructions about how to conduct themselves in their specific situation in life as slaves.
- This letter was sent by the hand of Tychius along with the letter to Philemon which was about his runaway slave Onesimus.
 - He had robbed his master and ran away.
 - In God's providence, he came across Paul, heard the gospel, was converted and became a big help to Paul.
 - With the trip that Tychius was going to make back to Colosseae to take this letter, Paul took the opportunity to send Onesimus back with the letter to Philemon in hopes of reconciliation between the two.
 - Paul begs Philemon to pardon Onesimus and receive him as a brother in Christ.
 - Obviously heavy on Paul's mind – He wrote Ephesians during the same time period and did the same thing in that letter – devoted twice of much space to servants and masters – READ Eph 6:1-9

The institution of slavery

The Bible does not establish slavery as a divine institution like marriage, the family, human government, or church government. Nor does it directly oppose it.

Paul's attitude and handling of slavery

- Col 3:11 – Paul shows indirectly his attitude toward slavery. He says that spiritually there is no difference between slave and freeman. So he lays the foundation that says society should not be making this difference either.

- But he does not condone or attack the system. He does not call for slaves to rise up against their masters and seek freedom nor that masters should let their slaves go free. He doesn't say that as Christians we should rebel against all civil and social structure and customs.
- Instead he took the social structure as he found it and taught principles and taught principles about how to live in it as Christians.
 - Slaves were to whole-heartily obey their masters.
 - Masters were to be kind and considerate of their slaves.
- The result would be that ill-will, dishonesty and laziness of slaves would be replaced by willing service, integrity and industry.
- And the cruelty and brutality of masters would be replaced by love and kindness.
- The idea is that eventually the difference perceived between the two by society would slowly disappear and the whole institution abolished.
- In the meantime, Paul encouraged slaves to see that they were only slaves physically. But in a higher realm they were free and equal in God's eyes with their masters. Of course the masters were encouraged to see this also.

Instructions to Christian Slaves

Work heartily for the Lord

- In all things – all lawful tasks and assignments your master give you – everything except sinning against God – Acts 5:29.
- Work that is done to be seen by earthly master
 - Only done well when actually being watched by the master.
 - Pretending to work hard.
- Work that is done to be seen by heavenly master
 - God sees at all times – sees what is in the heart
 - Done to please the Lord – will be done sincerely from the heart – will be done heartily doing your best at all times.
 - Key is to develop a frame of mind in which you see yourself primarily in all situations as working for Jesus Christ, your heavenly master.

Motivation to work heartily for the Lord

- They will receive the reward of the inheritance from the Lord for serving Him
 - Slaves do not get paid, much less get an inheritance
 - This promise would be a great encouragement to them
 - Eternal life is a gift that we don't deserve, sometime referring to it as an inheritance – 1 Pet 1:3-4
 - But the Bible also teaches about the Judgment Seat of Christ for Christians.
 - 2 Cor 5:8-10
 - Good works will be rewarded in some way in heaven.
 - They are proof that a person's faith was real.
- They will receive the just consequences they deserve for not serving Christ
 - Paul says to serve fearing the Lord – 3:22

- God judges without partiality – their low position as slaves will not protect them what they deserve if they are hateful, dishonest or lazy toward their earthly masters.
- Paul does not want anyone to think that just because he has dealt kindly with Onesimus that he condones what he did to his master Philemon. He just asks Philemon to forgive in him in Christ.

Instructions to Christian Masters

They are to serve their heavenly Master

- They are under the Lord’s authority just like their slaves are under theirs.
- This should result in a different frame of mind and treatment.
 - Justice and fairness without harshness
 - They will forebear threatening – Eph 6:9
- Golden Rule – they will treat their servants the same way they want their heavenly Master to treat them.
- The principles about judgment and rewards in vs. 23-25 apply to them also.

Col 4:2-4

The New Life in Christ – Diligence in Prayer

Paul now exhorts the Colossian Christians to be diligent in prayer.

Importance of Prayer

- The most basic and natural aspect of being united with Christ. Those who are born again will pray.
- It is the divinely appointed means to obtain from our Heavenly Father all things we need for ourselves and others spiritually and physically, to fight against the flesh, the world and the devil, to confess sin and obtain forgiveness, to advance the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Persevere in Prayer

- “Devote yourselves to prayer”, “persevere in prayer”, “continue steadfastly in prayer”
- Maintain special times for communion with God – privately and publicly
- Cultivate a consciousness of God’s presence at all times.
- Persist in specific request to God – Luke 18:1-7 parable of the widow

Keep alert in Prayer

- “Remain full awake in prayer” – concentrate and guard against wandering thoughts
- Pay attention to needs as they arise and be prompt to bring them before the Lord.
 - Personal, family, friends, church, country, world

Always pray with an attitude of thanksgiving

- A major characteristic of all of Paul's prayers in Scripture
- Probably the one thing we forget the most to do in our personal prayers.
- An attitude of thanksgiving will cause us to always remember God's faithful goodness as we pray to Him.

Paul's special request

- Not some personal need or for comfort while in prison.
- But for success in the spread of the gospel and him and his companions part in it
- Paul already had success while in prison – Phil 1:12-14
- Yet he desired more opportunities to share the gospel (open doors) and to do a good job at it (make it clear in the way I ought to speak).
 - Compare with Eph 6:19-20
 - Communicate in a way that the truth will be understood
 - Communicate boldly without fear
- "The mystery of Christ"
 - Again using the buzz-word of the Colossian heretics.
 - The mystery is that salvation is through Christ alone, the God-man, and that it is for Jews and Gentiles alike.
- Pray for missionaries, preachers, teachers, and evangelist is important and should be a regular part of our prayers – think outside of your little world and include the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Col 3:5-6

The New Life in Christ – Conduct toward Outsiders

Outsiders – those outside of the church, non-Christians – 1 Cor 5:12-13

Be wise

- We represent Christ, God and the truth to the world
- Hendrickson – "Behave wisely toward outsiders, always bearing in mind that though few men read the sacred scrolls, all men read you."
- Our conduct will either bring honor or dishonor to Christ and either hinder or help the spread of the gospel.
- Requires conscious self-control out of desire to be a good witness for Christ.

Make the most of every opportunity

- 1 Thess 4:11-12 – living a peaceful life and being diligent to do your best in you calling and work will enable to be useful in helping others.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities God is giving you to bless others.
- Opportunities to share your faith come many times as a result of just helping others

Gracious & seasoned speech

- Gracious – kind, gentle and courteous – even when wronged, opposed or misrepresented – controlling your tongue (James).
- Seasoned with salt
 - Salt adds or enhances taste so that we will more readily eat the food we are salting.
 - Gracious speech does not have to be dull but can be done in a way that sparks interest and thought about God’s truth in the one we are talking with.
 - The attitude we display about life in our speech and subtle but not preachy references to God and cause spark questions from non-believers.

Know how to respond to each person

- Knowing what to say to each person at the right time
- 1 Pet 3:15 – be ready – how?
 - Know the truth of the gospel
 - Know your testimony
 - Don’t be caught off guard spiritually – maintain a spiritual frame of mind, conscious of serving Christ in everything we do – Col 3:1-2
 - Trust & sense the Spirit’s guidance in what to say – Matt 10:19-20
 - To be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading you need to be walking in the Spirit always sanctifying the Lord in your heart.
- Personal evangelism – live and talk in such a way that will lead to opportunities to share your faith, your testimony and the gospel.