

# *The Christian in the Workplace*

## Col. 3:19-4:1

### INTRODUCTION:

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

Colossians 3:22-4:1 (NASB)

<sup>22</sup> Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

<sup>25</sup> For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

4 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

#### Prayer

I am glad to see that all of you have returned after last Sunday when we talked about the "submit" word.

### ILLUSTRATION:

There was a sign in a store window that read "**No Help Wanted**". It caught the attention of two guys walking by. One said to the other, "You would be perfect for that job!".

It is our human nature to not **WANT** to work. We work because we want to eat and provide for ourselves and our family. Rarely will you ever hear someone who works a Monday through Friday 8 to 5 job say, "I am **SO** excited because tomorrow is **MONDAY!**"

But as Christians, we are commanded to work.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-15 (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. <sup>12</sup> Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. <sup>13</sup> But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good.

<sup>14</sup> If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. <sup>15</sup> Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Paul tells us in this passage how and why we should work.

Once again, I would like to go back to verse 17 because it prefaces the whole passage. It says this...

**Colossians 3:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

The first thing that He is telling us is that we are to do everything to glorify of God. This includes your home, your workplace, and everywhere else.

You will notice that verse 22 in our passage this morning starts with the word "**slaves**". Before we begin, I feel that we should define what a **slave** was in context of Paul's world. Slavery in Paul's day was different than the slavery we knew in early America.

#### **A.**

American slaves were kidnapped and forced into slavery and labor.

The Bible condemned kidnapping and forced slavery.

**Exodus 21:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup> "He who **kidnaps** a man, whether he **sells him or he is found in his possession**, shall surely be put to death.

**1 Timothy 1:8-10 (NASB)**

<sup>8</sup> But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, <sup>9</sup> realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers <sup>10</sup> and immoral men and homosexuals and **kidnappers** and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

So if the OT Law forbade forced slavery, where did the slaves come from? When a person needed work because of economic reasons, they would sell themselves into slavery. Others who were captured during war would sell themselves to slavery to avoid being killed or be made a refugee of war.

**Joshua 9:24-27 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants that the LORD your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore we feared greatly for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. <sup>25</sup> Now behold, we are in your hands; do as it seems good and right in your sight to do to us." <sup>26</sup> Thus he did to them, and delivered them from the hands of the sons of Israel, and they did not kill them. <sup>27</sup> But Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, to this day, in the place which He would choose.

#### **B.**

Secondly, the slaves in Paul's day were not fueled by racism. In America some whites thought that the blacks were inferior to them.

#### **C.**

Third, the slaves in Paul's day were not the lowest social economic class as in America. Many slaves in the Old Testament and Paul's day were well educated, well treated, and held

high positions. Joseph was a good example. When he was sold into slavery by his brothers, he became a slave of Potiphar and won his respect and became overseer of his house. Then he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and was made a ruler of Egypt.

Most slaves could also purchase their freedom, if they chose and had the economic means.

The lowest social economic class were the day laborers. They were hired for the day when a need arose and paid at the end of the day. Many of them, no doubt, went hungry that day when they were not hired. We see an example of this in Matthew 20 about the Laborers in the Vineyard parable. The landowner hired laborers at different hours of the day for the day and paid them all the same amount of money at the end of the day which the laborers who had worked all day complained about.

The point is that God is not as concerned about our political and social freedom as we are. We want a direct condemnation of all slavery. We want to hear that slavery is evil period! But, the New Testament addresses masters and slaves frequently and it doesn't say anything like that. God put laws in place to regulate slavery, not forbid it!

God realizes that our **REAL SLAVERY** is not physical, political, or social. It is **SIN!** So, let's look at what Paul says about The Christian in the Workplace.

## **BODY:**

### **I. We are Called to Work.**

Colossians 3:22-23 (NASB)

<sup>22</sup> Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

There are **three** truths I would like to consider concerning **WORK**.

#### **A. Work is a Part of the Character of God.**

I do not know if cleanliness is next to Godliness, but I do know that working is next to Godliness. God at His very nature is a worker.

Genesis 2:1-2 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup> Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. <sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

God created the heavens and earth and everything on earth. He is constantly working to bring about His will. He invents, designs, plans, builds, uses, and governs.

#### **B. We Were Created to Work.**

It was not a result of the curse. Before the fall Adam and Eve had tasks that were assigned to them.

Genesis 2:15 (NASB)

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden to work, even before the fall. The curse of sin added thorns and thistles to the workplace, but work was not the result of the curse. If you are not working, you will not find fulfillment in your life because you are not doing what God designed you to do.

### **C. We Will Work for All Eternity in Heaven.**

The parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25:23, 29-30 (NASB)

<sup>23</sup> His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

<sup>29</sup> "For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. <sup>30</sup> Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We will be rewarded for our faithful service and work. The faithful servant will be put in charge of many things apparently in heaven. This call to work is to ALL of us. Many of us are retired. The work we do does not have to be for earthly pay. It could be volunteer work, providing or caring for the family, or just serving Christ.

The key according to verse 23 is to work heartily for the Lord rather than for men.

## **II. Christ Will Judge Our Work.**

Colossians 3:24-25 (NASB)

<sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. <sup>25</sup> For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.

As we learned from the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25 this passage seems to indicate that we will stand before Christ and be judged based upon the work we did during our life.

We should not confuse this, however, with our salvation. Our salvation is not determined by our work, it is based upon whether our name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Our eternal destiny is dependent upon Christ's death on the cross for our sins. We must be saved by God's grace through the repentance of our sins, being obedient through baptism, and having faith in Jesus Christ.

For a Christian, the judgment is not for the purpose of searching out sin for Christ to punish. If we have accepted Christ in faith, Christ has taken away our guilt and sin and absorbed our punishment for it.

Romans 8:1-2 (NASB)

<sup>8</sup> Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

It appears that part of the judgment for the Christian will be to determine what rewards we will receive in heaven for our work on earth for the Lord.

## 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NASB)

<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

"Whatever we do in word or deed, do ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus." God gave us talents to use for His glory. We must not waste or bury our talents. We must use them and let them multiply for when the Lord comes again!

### **III. Caution to Bosses.**

#### Colossians 4:1 (NASB)

4 Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

Bosses, you are to treat your employees fairly.

- Give them fair pay based upon their skill and work ethics.
- Place fair demands on them. Be an example. Do not leave at 4PM and expect them to work until 6PM. Don't force them to meet a deadline in which you will receive a bonus if it is met and not share the bonus with them.
- Place fair expectations on them. Don't expect them to do a two month project in three weeks. Don't expect them to do work efficiently when you have not provided the proper tools to do it.

Why? Because you also have a master in heaven. Just as your employees will have to report to you for their performance, you will also have to report to God for your performance and fairness. How you treat them will be judged impartially (v.25).

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

There is a story of a man in a hot air balloon and he realized that he was lost. He reduced his altitude and spotted a woman on the ground below. He descended closer and shouted "Excuse me ma'am, can you help me? I promised a friend of mine that I would meet her an hour ago, but I have no idea where I am."

The woman below responded "You are in a hot air balloon about 100 feet above the ground. You are between 40 and 41 degrees North latitude and 59 and 60 degrees West longitude."

The man in the balloon said "You must be an engineer".

"I am", replied the woman, "How did you know?"

"Well", the man said, "Everything that you just told me was technically correct. But, I have no idea what to do with the information that you just gave me. I am still lost. Your information was not much help to me at all. You have only delayed my trip and I am still lost."

The woman paused and said, "You must be in management."

"Why, I am", he replied. "How did you know?"

She said, "Well, you don't know where you are going and you do not know where you are at. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise to a friend that you can't keep and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is that you are exactly in the same position that you were in before you met me and yet somehow it now is my fault. That is a manager if there ever was one!"

## **CONCLUSION:**

Many people go to work and tolerate it. Many go to work and hate it. Wouldn't you like to go to work and love it? You can!

**Colossians 3:17 (NASB)**

***17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.***

This is why we "Whistle while we work!" It is why we get to work on time. It is why we are honest with our time cards. It is why we work past our quitting time to finish a task. If you don't make your boss look good, then you don't look good. If you don't look good, then Jesus Christ does not look good through you. That is the principle of submission and authority in the workplace.

Your attitude concerning work should be influenced by knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The ultimate purpose of our work is to glorify God. That is what is supposed to motivate us. It is not men that we seek to please. It is God!

**The reason we work hard when no human is watching is because the one who matters IS watching.**

I would ask you to consider if you do your job heartily. If the answer is no, consider these three things.

- Is your heart right with God? Are you working to glorify Him?
- Consider your gifting. Is there is another job that you could do that would be more satisfying.
- Don't just quit your current job, but search for another job that you can pour yourself into as a service for Christ.

If you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior, I invite you to come. Don't wait until you have cleaned up your life. **You don't clean yourself up to come to the Christ; you surrender yourself to Christ, to let Him clean you up!**

**He Is Lord!**

He is Lord, He is Lord. He has risen from the dead and He is Lord.  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord.