

CHRISTIANS AT WORK

TEXT: COLOSSIANS 3:22--4:1

INTRODUCTION:

1. Colossians 3:22--4:1 deals with "servants" (slaves) and "masters" (3:22; 4:1). Slavery was a big part of the Roman Empire. In fact, almost half of the population was slaves.
2. Therefore, this passage of Scripture does not directly apply to us today, but we can apply it to our relationships at work.
3. The apostle Paul never advocated the abolition of slavery. Here is an interesting quote from W.H. Griffith Thomas -- If Paul "had denounced slavery, he might, humanly speaking, have created so gigantic a social revolution that his influence and even his doctrinal teaching might have been hindered. By way of illustration, it is well to note that Abraham Lincoln's initial attitude to the question of slavery took into account a similar danger. He would have preferred a more gradual approach rather than an immediate and total abolition, because he knew how alarmingly the economic situation in the southern states would react if all the slaves were summarily liberated. In point of fact, Mr. Lincoln actually proposed as an alternative plan that the slaveholders be recompensed for emancipation by the Federal government to help them over a difficult transition. But the measure was repudiated by his own cabinet, the members of which, it was said, seemed in this case to prefer the expenditure of human life to that of money. Thus we cannot but compare Paul's way of treating the subject of slavery with the manner in which it was finally met by the United States government during the Civil War" (*Studies in Colossians and Philemon*).
4. President Lincoln's cabinet apparently preferred "the expenditure of human life to that of money." And what an "expenditure"! Hundreds of thousands died of disease, and roughly 2% of the population, an estimated 620,000 men, lost their lives in the line of duty.
5. Today, we can apply this passage of Scripture (and Ephesians 6:5-9) to employer-employee relationships. Some Christians are supervisors, and some are employees, but regardless of one's position, he or she should do it as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23).
6. The best employees ought to be Christian employees, and the best workers should be Christian workers.
7. Someone once asked a businessman, "How many people do you have working for you?" He replied, "Oh, about half of them."

8. But Christian workers should not be lazy, or tardy, or undependable. They should be industrious, punctual, diligent and loyal.
9. We read that in the early days of Christianity, employers sought out Christian workers because they knew that Christians were honest and hard-working.
10. And Christian employers should be fair, and thoughtful, and generous.
11. If we had more Christian employers who operated on Biblical principles the unions would go out of business.

I. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE WORKERS (3:22-25)

1. God has much more to say to the workers than to the bosses. This is because there are a lot more workers than bosses.
2. This passage is addressed to "servants" (3:22). If someone is giving us a paycheck then we are to "serve" them.
3. Unfortunately today many people think the world owes them a living. This "entitlement" thinking is promoted by the government, and the politicians, and the unions, etc.
4. While reading the autobiography of Ulysses S. Grant, I noticed he often ended his letters with these words: "your obedient servant."
5. But it was not only General Grant. Most of the generals in both the Northern and Southern armies used it.
6. President George Washington was known for signing all his letters, "Your most humble and obedient servant." But today most people are not humble, and they are not obedient, and they do not want to serve anyone but themselves.
7. "Not with eyeservice" (3:22). Some people start working only when the boss is watching them. But as soon as the boss leaves, they start slacking off.
8. But whether or not the boss is watching, God is watching. Proverbs 5:21 says, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings."
9. Therefore we should work diligently, "fearing God" (Col. 3:22b).
10. Colossians 3:24 and 25 refer to the judgment seat of Christ. God is watching us and God keeps an accurate record.
11. If a person is paid for working eight hours but he actually only works seven hours, then he is robbing his boss, and the Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).

12. If a person is getting paid to work, but he is goofing off on the Internet or texting, etc. then he is robbing his boss, and the Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15).
13. Recently it was reported that federal employees were caught watching up to six hours a day of pornography at work. CBS found one federal employee who had 7,000 pornographic files on his office computer. But because these employees are in a government workers union, they cannot be fired.
14. Some bosses are a joy to work for, but some are harsh. Nevertheless we are to obey them just the same (cf. I Peter 2:18).
15. The Bible gives us examples of good workers: Joseph working in Potiphar's house, and Joseph working in prison, and Joseph working for Pharaoh.
16. Daniel was another good worker. Daniel 6:3 says, "Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm."
17. And just like God placed Joseph and Daniel; He has placed us where we are.
18. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23; cf. 3:17).
19. Ephesians 6:7 and 8 says, "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."
20. When we consider these verses we realize there is no such thing as "menial work." Whether a man is a street sweeper or the CEO of a billion dollar corporation, he is to do his job "as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23).
21. First Peter 2:21 says our Lord left us "an example" that we should follow His steps. The example He left us was the example of an obedient servant. In the book of Isaiah, the Messiah is referred to as the LORD'S "Servant."
22. Our Lord Himself said, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (to serve), and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).
23. In John 13:4, 5 we see that our Lord laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded himself; and poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

24. He probably washed the feet of Judas Iscariot as well as all the other disciples.

II. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BOSS (4:1)

1. Some bosses are very powerful, with thousands of employees. But they have someone over them -- God (4:1).
2. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal..." (4:1). Masters are to be fair.
3. There is an important Biblical principle, and we see it throughout the Word of God. Our Lord referred to it in Luke 10:7, "The labourer is worthy of his hire."
4. Paul does not spend much time with the relationship of the master over his servants, but there are many other Scriptures which deal with this important matter (cf. James 5:1-6).
5. The industrial revolution brought great progress but it also brought much greed and corruption. Giant corporations were often formed by stockholders who care more about profits than people.
6. Workers were considered expendable. Conflicts arose between management and labor. In the midst of all this turmoil, wicked men like Karl Marx and his followers brought in the horrors of communism.
7. Between 1900 and 2000, nearly 100 million people were murdered by communists in China, the Soviet Union, North Korea, Cambodia and Vietnam. Millions were killed in other countries as well.
8. Today Marxism has spread all over the world, into Africa and many Latin American countries such as Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua.
9. Communism and socialism and is even entrenched in the USA and is spread by so-called progressives and liberals. In fact, the Communist Party USA stopped running their own candidates years ago and instead they have been endorsing the Democrat Party platform and candidates.
10. Here in New York State, we have Como-ism.
11. Perhaps this nightmare of communism could have been averted if employers followed Biblical principles (Col. 4:1).

CONCLUSION:

1. Ecclesiastes 2:24 says that a man "should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God."

2. Ecclesiastes 5:18 says it is good and comely for one "to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion."
3. Ecclesiastes 5:19 says man is "to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God."
4. Colossians 3:23 says, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."
5. A man walked by a construction site and saw three men working. He stopped for a minute, and asked the three workers what they were doing.
6. The first man said he was cutting stones for the building, just as he had been told to do.
7. The second worker said he was working so he could get a paycheck and pay his bills.
8. But the third worker pointed up toward the unfinished building and said, "I'm building a cathedral for the worship of God."