

The New Man at Work
Colossians 3:22-4:1
May 20, 2012

Introduction

Here Paul tells us of another relationship that the new man has an effect on. We've studied how this new man affects the wife-husband relationships, and how it also affects the children-parent relationship. Paul then talks about the employee and employer relationship. He tells us of the slave and master relationship, but we can extend this to employees and employers.

Work is a Christian duty and it is something that Scripture commands us to do. We know from the Bible that laziness is not tolerated.

***Proverbs 10:4** Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.*

***Proverbs 26:15** A sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

***Proverbs 20:4** Sluggards do not plow in season; so at harvest time they look but find nothing.*

***Proverbs 21:25** The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.*

***1 Thessalonians 3:6, 11-12** In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ¹¹We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹²Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

It is that way when we work. To work is a Christian duty. God gave Adam a job in the Garden to name the animals, and after the Curse, God told Adam that he would have to work the ground to get food. We work today to earn money to support our families.

What we see today after the Curse is that the employee and employer relationship is full of friction and distrust. Employers want more money, so they order more production and productivity from their workers with the least amount of money loss as possible. Employees want better pay and better working conditions with better benefits. There is friction between the two. When we have placed our faith in Christ and have died to the world and buried with Christ in baptism and risen with Him as new creation, we have a new identity in Christ where we can have an effect on the world for Him.

As Christians, we should rejoice when we work because we are working for the Lord. Thus Paul tells us to obey our masters with our whole heart and do the work the best we can.

***Colossians 3:22-4:1** Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. ¹Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

Ephesians 6:5-9 *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. ⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with Him.*

1 Timothy 6:1-2 *All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. ²Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.*

Titus 2:9-10 *Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, ¹⁰and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.*

1 Peter 2:18-21 *Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. ²⁰But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.*

I. Masters and Slaves in Bible

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything

Over the years, Christians have been accused of supporting slavery, and that was certainly the case when it happened over the years because of what Paul says here. There have been fingers pointed at Jesus and Paul for not doing enough to abolish slavery or to state explicitly that slavery is bad, but the critics and some Christians have missed the point of Paul's arguments here. Neither Jesus nor any of the NT writers have ever advocated Christians to organize a political party and overthrow the government. None of the NT writers ever advocated social justice programs because such work does nothing for the human heart. Therein lies the beauty of what Paul writes here.

Notice that Paul gives slaves equal standing with the masters. He tells them that they are complete in Christ, and in Him, they are seated with Him in the heavenlies. What Paul is interested in is their spiritual walk—how do they show Christ in what they do. Thus Paul says to be submissive, to obey their masters. Peter says that when they do that, they are an example of Christ because they are suffering as He suffered.

II. Attitudes of Employees

- Be obedient
 - Obedience from the heart
 - Sincere (**Col 3:22; Eph 6:5**)
 - Respectful (**Eph 6:5; 1 Tim 6:1; 1 Pet 2:18**)
 - Pleasing your boss (**Titus 2:9**)
- To which boss?
 - Good ones only?

- Harsh bosses (1 Pet 2:18)
- Christian bosses (1 Tim 6:2)

III. Actions of the Employees

- Work hard
 - Work with all your heart

Ecclesiastes 9:10 *Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*

Note: Working with all your effort—giving it 100 percent from beginning to end. If you are paid for 1 hour, then work the best you can for 1 hour. This is an attitude thing. You are doing for the Lord. Sometimes there might be times that your 100 percent is not good enough for some companies, and they let you go...do not let this worry you because you are doing the best you can for the Lord.

- Work even when they are not watching you
- Work not to impress them
- Work for the Lord
- Keep your mouth shut (do not complain or talk back to employer)

1 Thessalonians 4:11 *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you.*

- Don't steal from your employer
- Why are we commanded to do this?
 - The gospel would be proclaimed. (Titus 2:10; 1 Tim 6:1)

IV. Rewards for the Employees (and Employers)

- Under God's watchful eye
- We are Christ's servants
- We receive an inheritance
 - OT inheritance = promised land
 - As Christians, we inherit the kingdom of God

Note: The kingdom of God is here among believers. Jesus Christ is our king. It is separate from the world. The consummation of the saints into His Kingdom occurs at His Second Coming.

- We inherit salvation

1 Peter 1:4 *and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you,*

Note: Look past all of the earthly troubles and look to what God has in store for us. Eternal life, righteousness, joy, peace, perfection, God's presence, eternal face-to-face relationship with Christ. All these are inheritances that we have that will never fade away. As employees, we endure bad times here for a short while to obtain the inheritance He has promised us. Paul is telling us to keep all what we do in perspective.

V. Attitudes / Actions of the Employers

- Do the same thing
 - Your attitude and actions should reflect Christ—thus be a good witness as Paul commands the employers to do
- Do the right thing
 - Treat your employees fairly
 - Treat them with respect worthy of God
 - Do not threaten them (**Eph 6:9**)
 - You treat your employees as Christ treats you

VI. Warnings for Both Christian Employees and Employers

Note: This only applies to Christian employees and employers. Those who are not in Christ, they do not know any different

- God does not prefer one over the other
- What God is concerned about is what we do and how faithful we are to the Word
- By not doing what He wants, we are subject to His discipline
 - Being lazy
 - Not respecting
 - Being harsh to employees
 - Talking back to employer
 - Stealing from employer