

## **Colossians Series - #23 - "Work At It!" The Employer and Employee Colossians 3: 22 - 4: 1**

**Introduction: IL-** An anonymous author developed the following scale to determine how devoted you are as a worker. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5: 1- Leaps tall buildings with a single bound; 2- Must take a running start to leap over buildings; 3- Can only leap over short buildings; 4- Crashes into buildings when attempting to leap; 5- Cannot recognize buildings. If you're a 1 or 2 you love your work!

**Paul's teaching in this brief text is applicable to our lives in the work-a-day world of 2023!**

**The setting in ancient history:** Let's take a moment to consider the historical background of slavery. The Bible does not endorse slavery nor does it advocate overthrow of such evil forces. A believer in Paul's day, slave or free, is not to protest a particular government but rather to passionately promote a close and intimate walk with God!

**In the first century Roman empire-** In first century Rome and its territories slavery was commonplace. Historians tell us that there were approximately sixty million slaves in the empire and that one of every three citizens was in some way bound to a master.

**In early Colonial America-** We often think of the plague to slavery here in our country hundreds of years ago. **IL-** The first black slaves, twenty of them, were brought here from Angola, Africa on the Mayflower in September of 1619, and that historic ship landed in what is now Virginia, with more slaves to come over the next two hundred plus years. The Apostle Paul is very direct in admonishing the believers, slave and free, in his letters. From his Roman prison cell he sends a letter to the Colossian church and it aligns with what the Spirit prompted him to write to other first century believers. Just a couple of verses from each key text in your notes...

### **The Bible and its teaching about work:**

1 Corinthians 7: 17-24- <sup>21</sup>Were you a bondservant<sup>(b)</sup> when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) <sup>22</sup>For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. <sup>23</sup>You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. **1 Corinthians 7: 21-23**

Ephesians 6: 5-9- <sup>5</sup>Bondservants,<sup>(b)</sup> obey your earthly masters<sup>(b)</sup> with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ. **Ephesians 6: 5**

1 Timothy 6: 1, 2- <sup>2</sup>Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved. **1 Timothy 6: 2**

Titus 2: 6-10- <sup>9</sup>Bondservants<sup>(b)</sup> are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, <sup>10</sup>not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. **Titus 2: 9-10**

Philemon 10-19- <sup>15</sup> For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup> no longer as a bondservant<sup>Ⓜ</sup> but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

#### **Philemon 15-16**

**1 Peter 2: 18-21-**<sup>18</sup> Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. <sup>19</sup> For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. <sup>20</sup> For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. <sup>21</sup> For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **1 Peter 2: 18-21**

One expositor calls these texts the “household code” because they connect, in some of these texts, with the teaching on husband and wife, parent and child relationships and responsibilities. Paul was concerned to spread the Gospel and not to debate social issues! He did not endorse rebellion but rather a responsible work ethic on a day by day and life-time basis! IL- Warren Wiersbe- “The heart of every problem is a problem of the heart!” and so the principles we can examine help solve issues and problems and put first things first- GOD first!

#### **The timeless principles to put into practice:**

**Worship brings all of us together in the Lord-** verse 24 makes it clear- “you are serving the Lord Christ!” Our privilege Monday through Saturday is the same as when Sunday morning rolls around- worship takes place on a one-on-one basis while we are on the job or meeting joyfully with our church family. In 1 Timothy 6: 2 Paul is explicit that he is focusing his instruction on those who are “believers and beloved”. All of us who love God and worship God and serve God are also obligated to obey God in every area of our lives, jobs included! Why is this so important? Because man’s relation to God is paramount- for unbelievers to be impacted by godly Christians on the job and in the community. And Christians are to represent our Savior well through secular work as much as in the church auditorium I worship on the Lord’s Day!

**Walking in obedience honors the Savior-** We are to work with “sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.” (verse 22). With a keen sense of our own short-comings, we do our very best, under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be the best worker or the best boss we can be to the glory of God. IL- 2 Chronicles 25: 1-2- Amaziah “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but NOT with a hole heart!” Paul here is promoting doing our best with a whole heart!

**Submission to authority is rooted in submission to God-** “As for the Lord” is a wonderful way to approach our daily time on the clock, without our eyes constantly on the clock. God is not honored by laziness. IL- GRSBM student at the KV Print Shop. Masters are to represent the interests of the slave since both master and slave work under THE Master in Heaven. (4: 2) Paul gives both slave and master wonderful incentive- “you will receive the inheritance as your reward.” If issues between boss and worker can’t be resolved here and now they will be there and then!

**Work is God's will and ultimately we work for Him-** God designed mankind to work clear back in the Garden of Eden when He gave Adam a job to do- Genesis 2: 15- "The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it." That tells me that work is good for you and me and it is good for a community to thrive on order and discipline. Work is also best for our co-workers if we make it clear to them that we know Jesus as Savior. But we need to do that on our own time and not company time if our boss is not a believer. We must not be lazy and thus give co-workers reason to ignore our testimony and to justify it with "those Christians"! **IL-** GRSBM job, co-worker who got fired for sitting around, doing nothing other than reading his textbooks and talking non-stop!

**God gets all the glory for devoted work-** Since God is the Author of work that should give our job high priority. **IL-** Dorothy Sayers- "Work is not primarily a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do!" We could learn a lot about devoted labor if we could see how employees react when the boss isn't around Joseph in the book of Genesis, chapters 39 to 41, is a marvelous example of a godly worker. His master, Potiphar, knew he could trust Joseph with everything because he saw him at work regularly. Pharaoh had the same reaction to Joseph's work ethic and put him in charge of everything on the entire kingdom, second in command and first in respect to Pharaoh! And he worked that Number Two spot for eighty years!! We can identify that we are working for the Lord and doing our best if we are eager to give it our all without being compelled to do so! In the process of our hard work, done with excellence and enthusiasm we can prove that we are honoring our Master in Heaven and building up the family of God to the glory of God!

**Conclusion:** Money can buy the so-called 'good life' but not eternal life! If you need to turn to Jesus, confess your sin, thank Him for shedding His precious blood for you on the Cross, then call out to Him in prayer today before you leave church and today claim forgiveness and new life through Him. The, as a new believer, you can begin to make a difference on the job and among your co-workers and your boss. Christian, let me address you in closing. I mentioned earlier that college student who came to work each day but didn't actually work. All of us are going to answer for how we honored God on the job, boss or laborer. Paul says, in verse 23, that we are to "work heartily as for the Lord and not for men." What our boss thinks of us is very important, but not nearly as critical as what the Lord Christ thinks of and knows about us!! Let's be modern day Josephs 'til at least age eighty!

**Colossians 3: 11-** "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all!"