



THE THREAD

weaving Sunday's message through the week

Date: March 14, 2021

Passage: Colossians 3:22-4:1

Main Idea: Paul elevates the lowliest (slaves/ bondservants) as the primary model for followers of Christ.

Paul's view on slavery

- i. Cultural context matters
 - ii. "Slave" or "bondservant" – broad terms of servitude, indicating that one belonged to a master and was bound to live in obedient servitude, though conditions and terms of service varied
 - iii. Paul, James, and Peter use the term "*doulos*" (slave, bondservant, or servant) to identify themselves in relation to Christ (Romans 1:1, James 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1)
 - iv. The gospel transforms all relationships – (Colossians 3:11; see also Philemon 15-17)
 - v. Paul points to those in this lowly state, dignifies them, and sets them up as examples for all believers
1. Obedience from the heart is evidence that one fears God (3:22)
 - a. Slaves were to seek the good of their masters in everything, whether observed or not
 - b. Mere (or begrudging) compliance is insufficient for believers in relationship to those in authority over them
 2. Obedience from the heart is ultimately an act of worship (3:23)
 - a. God observes our lives and we are to work unto him, which should improve the quality and character of the Christian's work
 - b. Submission to human authority is an act of faith and worship
 - c. God's authority stands behind human authority, so long as human representatives do not require behavior contrary to God's character

3. Obedience from the heart flows from a heart set on Christ's kingdom (3:24)
 - a. Every act of submission done in faith will be rewarded by Jesus himself
 - b. Our identity in and inheritance with Christ free us to joyful submission because we have been given the highest status as citizens of Christ's kingdom (1:13)
4. Obedience from the heart entrusts injustice to God (3:25)
 - a. The children of God will not ultimately be taken advantage of
 - b. God will exact justice on all wrongdoing
5. Earthly masters are to represent God's authority to those under their care. (4:1)

God's strategy for accomplishing his redemptive mission in the world is for every member of his church to follow Christ by taking a posture of servitude.

POINT: The humility displayed in the life and death of Jesus Christ is the model of obedient servitude for every believer (David Pao).

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Jesus' humble servanthood enable a posture of servitude among his followers? Take some time to consider the following passages and allow them to lead you in worship of Jesus: Isaiah 53; Mark 10:44-45; Luke 22:42; John 1:11; John 13:1-17; Acts 4:27-28; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 8:9; Philippians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 2:21-25)
2. Are you prone to view "obedient servitude" as a non-negotiable or as an optional ideal for those who follow Christ? Explain?
3. When you consider the implications of following Christ by identifying with a slave, what about Christ's servanthood makes you most uncomfortable?
4. Where are you most reluctant to "willingly condescend" in service to others? (Your home, workplace, the church, your "enemies"?)
5. What would the body of Christ be like if every member willingly took a servant's posture in relationship to their brothers and sisters in Christ? How can you contribute to that kind of body?

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