

Colossians 3:22 - 4:18

Day 1

Slaves and Masters. Read Colossians 3:22 - 4:1

1. What mindset was a slave or servant to have in their work? 3:22

FYI: "Ancient historians estimate that there were some 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empires, or about one-half the population. Because of this, work was considered below the dignity of the slave-owning Roman free man. Practically everything was done by slaves, even doctoring and teaching." - Kent Hughes (129)

2. What higher purpose did Paul give to work? 3:23 What kind of dignity and significance does this give to anything and everything we do?

- What promise was given concerning this? 3:24 How motivating is this? (Cross-ref. Ephesians 6:8)
- How do you think Paul's instructions in 3:22 sounded to a slave? How do you think his statements in 3:23,24 made them feel?

FYI: For you serve the Lord Christ: "The force of this unusual phrase (Paul nowhere else allows the titles 'Lord' and 'Christ' to stand together without the name 'Jesus' as well) could be brought out by a paraphrase: 'so work for the true Master – Christ!'" (Wright) - David Guzik

3. Why do you think Paul felt the need to give the warning in 3:25? See 2 Corinthians 5:10 What does the word "anyone" say about to whom this applies?

4. How would the warning in 3:25 have sounded to both slave and master? (Cross-ref. 3:11)

- In Leviticus 19:15, what did God say about partiality? (How does this differ from honoring one another?)

5. What framework did Paul give to masters in thinking about their slaves? 4:1 (Compare Ephesians 6:9)

- Besides treating someone *right/just*, how might also being *fair (equal/equitable)* change things? (How would this apply to all employers?)

FYI: Right/Just *dikaios* NT:1342 "That which is right...that which is expected as duty and which is claimed as a right because of one's conformity to the rules of God or society." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"Paul asked masters to make a recognition that would undermine the very foundations of slavery...Paul seemed to understand that if he could establish the point that slaves were equals in the body of Christ, full human beings with both responsibilities and rights (that they should be treated in a manner both **just and fair**), then in time the whole structure of slavery in the Roman Empire would crumble – and it did." - David Guzik

"Under Roman law the slaves had no rights at all. So these words had a strange ring to non-Christians and to the newly believing master. Also, given the social condition of the times, this command may have been more difficult to carry out than what was asked of the slaves. The master who attempted to provide his slaves 'with what is right and fair' ran a deep risk of ostracism from his fellow slave owners." - R. Kent Hughes (133)

6. What appeal did Paul make to Philemon about his slave Onesimus? Philemon 1:15-17

- How did Paul feel about Onesimus? 1:10,12-13
- What did Paul agree to do? 1:17-19

FYI: "Onesimus was a slave owned by a believer in Colosse, but he ran away and came into contact with Paul in Rome. There, Onesimus became a Christian and a dedicated helper to Paul." (See 4:9) - David Guzik

7. In what ways would Paul's instructions to both servants and masters help to undermine slavery? (See also Colossians 3:11) What did Paul say about slavery in 1 Timothy 1:10?

Food for Thought: "When we read verses like Ephesians 6:5, Colossians 3:22, and 1 Peter 2:18...we typically think of race-based, chattel slavery in which the slave is the property of the master and lacks any legal rights. This kind of slavery is manifestly among the most despicable institutions ever to disgrace human civilization. It is not, however, what is in view in these texts.

The Greek word (*doulos*) can be translated "slave," or sometimes "servant" or "bondservant," and often referred to people who had a surprising level of legal and social status in the first-century Greco-Roman world. Most were not "slaves" from their birth, or for their whole life, or because of their race—for instance, the Roman jurist Gaius (second century) claimed that most slaves were prisoners of war who actually would have been slaughtered if not made slaves.

Similarly, in the Old Testament, Israelite regulations freed slaves every seventh year (Ex. 21:2), commanded the death penalty for manstealing (Ex. 21:16), and generally sought to limit the institution in protection of the slave. Further, slavery was generally not organized by race but by circumstance and economics (for example, foreigners, debtors, and so on). To be clear, slavery in any sense perverts God's created intention for human beings ...

Philemon was Paul's letter to a slave owner (Philemon) about his runaway slave (Onesimus)... Strikingly, Paul instructs Philemon to receive Onesimus "no longer as a slave . . . but as a dear brother"—and he appeals to Philemon to "receive him as you would receive me" (v. 17).

In other words, Paul dissolves the slave/master relationship, and erects in its place a brother/brother relationship, in which the former slave is treated with all the dignity with which the apostle himself would be treated. Thus, even before the actual institution of slavery is abolished, the work of the gospel abolishes the assumptions and prejudices that make slavery possible.

There are two massive mountain peaks in biblical revelation that must be taken into account: **creation**, which tells us all humans are made equally in God's image (Gen. 1:26–28, 5:1–3, 9:6), and the **gospel**, which tells us God has overcome racial/social/religious divisions at the cross (Eph. 2:11–22; Gal. 3:28), and will one day create a people "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" (Rev. 7:19) who dwell together in perfect harmony..."

8. In 3:17 - 4:1, note all the phrases referring to the Lord. (e.g. vs. 18 "*as is fitting in the Lord*") How would you state the underlying principle that Paul gave in all these relationships?
- How much do you think Paul's instructions changed attitudes toward women, children, and servants/slaves in that day?

Applying the Word: *What jobs do you dislike doing the most? Is there anything from these verses that can help you to have a different attitude about them?*

Day 2

Concluding Instructions. Read Colossians 4:2-6

9. What should characterize our prayer life? 4:2 (See also 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

"devote/continue earnestly" Strong's NT:4342 *proskartereo*; to be earnest, to persevere, be constantly diligent
 "lit., 'to be strong towards' to endure in, or persevere in, to be continually steadfast with a person or thing"
 - Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

10. From the following verses, record what we are warned to be watchful/alert about.
- Matthew 24:42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. NASU
 - Matthew 26:41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." NIV
 - Acts 20:28-31 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. NASU
 - 1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. NIV

11. What prayer requests did Paul make in 4:3,4? What does this say about his focus?

- How does this relate to Paul's prayer for the Colossians? 1:9

12. Considering the circumstances Paul was under, what are some prayer requests you might have expected him to make but didn't? (See Philippians 1:12-14)

Digging Deeper

See other prayer requests Paul made:
Ephesians 6:19,20

Romans 15:30-32

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2

Hebrews 13:18

13. What does Psalm 62:8 say about the privilege of prayer?

14. What instructions did Paul give concerning a believer's conduct toward "outsiders"? 4:5

"conduct/act/walk" Strong's NT:4043 *peripateo*; to tread all around, i.e. walk at large (especially as proof of ability); figuratively, to live, deport oneself, follow

"Making the most of/redeeming the time" NT:1805 *exagoraze*; to buy up, i.e. ransom; figuratively, to rescue from loss (improve opportunity)

"The world cares little about Christian doctrine or ritual, but carefully notes the words and actions of those who profess to name the name of Christ"
- Stuart Allen (162)

15. What other advice about outsiders did Paul give in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12?

16. What did Jesus say about our conduct with the world? Matthew 10:16 (See also Romans 16:19)

- What did Paul say the Corinthians' example represented? 2 Corinthians 3:2

17. What is connected with wisdom in Colossians?

- 1:9
- 2:3
- 3:16
- 4:5

18. Underline what our witness should be like or what effect it should have on others.

- John 13:34-35 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” NIV
- Titus 2:7-8 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. NAS
- Philippians 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, NAS

19. What should characterize our speech? 4:6

- Considering the attributes and uses of salt, what type of speech might “*seasoned with salt*” (4:6) be describing? See Matthew 5:13

FYI: “The word ‘grace’ has, in Greek as in English, the possible double meaning of God’s grace and human graciousness.” (Wright)

- David Guzik

“**Salty**, savory, scintillating...It is thoughtful speech, words with content. It is joyful, even witty, for this is what salty speech meant in classical Greek...This is full communication - speech filled with grace and salt, meeting the other person where he or she is. Let us ‘make the most of every opportunity’” - R. Kent Hughes (138)

Applying the Word: *If you were to pray for wisdom in a particular area of your life, what would it be? Why?*

Day 3

Final Greetings. Read Colossians 4:7-18

20. What do Paul’s descriptions of Tychicus and Onesimus say about their character and Paul’s feeling toward them? What service did they give? 4:7-9

FYI: “When Paul returned ” to Jerusalem...Tychicus was one of the seven who accompanied him as a traveling companion (Acts 20:4)...When Paul was arrested, Tychicus, along with Dr. Luke and others, stayed with Paul through the ‘thick and thin’ of his arrest and imprisonment in Caesarea, his dramatic appearances before kings and governors, his miserable voyage and shipwreck on route to Rome, and his residence in Rome awaiting trial. Thus we see that Tychicus was a man of intense devotion to God and Paul.”

- Kent Hughes (142)

21. What did Paul call Aristarchus? 4:10 What had happened to Aristarchus earlier? Acts 19:29

FYI: Aristarchus "was a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 20:4). He was Paul's travel companion, and was with the apostle when the Ephesian mob seized Paul (Acts 19:29). He was also with Paul when he set sail for Rome under his Roman imprisonment (Acts 27:2)...It seems that **Aristarchus** had an interesting habit of being *with* Paul in hard times."
- David Guzik

22. Who was Mark and how did Paul want him received? 4:10b (See the rift that had happened earlier with Paul and Barnabas and Mark. Acts 15:37-41)

- What did Paul say about Mark later in 2 Timothy 4:11?
- With whom else was Mark connected? 1 Peter 5:13

23. What did having 3 fellow workers with a Jewish heritage (Aristarchus, Mark and Justus) share the ministry mean to Paul? 4:11b

24. What connection did Epaphras have with the church in Colossians? 4:12 (Cross-ref. 1:7)

- What concerns did he have for them? (How does this help explain the content of the letter?)

25. How would you describe Epaphras' character from 4:12-14? How does Paul describe him in Philemon 23?

26. What adjectives did Paul use to describe Luke? 4:14a

- What do you learn about Luke from 2 Timothy 4:11?

27. What happened later with Demas (4:24b)? 2 Timothy 4:10

28. What interesting differences do you observe in Paul's associates?

FYI: "The expansiveness of Christian fellowship is seen in the desire of the six [vv. 10-14] to send greetings to those in Colosse. Most of the six had never been to Colosse, but they loved the believers there anyway. They understood that they were a part of each other."
- Kent Hughes (150)

29. With what other churches did the Colossians have a connection? 4:13,16

FYI: Letter from Laodicea "This was presumably some letter Paul had written and which has either not been preserved or was their copy of what we call Ephesians, that being a circular letter, copies of which may have been sent to certain churches."
- Michael Penny (43)

30. Where did the church in Colossians meet? 4:16 (See also Romans 16:5)

31. What encouragement did Paul give Archippus? 4:17 (Compare Paul's words to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:14-16; 2 Timothy 2:2-4.)

32. How was the letter signed? 4:18a What would this prevent? 2 Thessalonians 2:2

33. What impact do you feel closing with a reference to his chains (4:18b) gave to Paul's letter? What contrast does it give to the content of his letter?

34. With what thought did Paul end? 4:18c (Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:17-18)

35. What had God's **grace** done for Paul?

- 1 Corinthians 15:9,10
- Ephesians 3:7-8

36. What did Paul's life display? 1 Timothy 1:13-16

37. How did Paul say about God's grace for everyone? 2 Corinthians 9:8

Food for Thought: "Paul's final word is, as it is in all his letters, a reference to grace. He considered himself the worst of all sinners (1 Tim. 1:15-16) and the least of the apostles because of his persecution of the church (1 Cor. 15:9). He, who had caused some to be executed and others to be imprisoned, had been forgiven by the One he was persecuting. That was the grace Paul experienced on the road to Damascus and which he wanted so much to share with others."
- Michael Penny (43)

Applying the Word: *Think of those you would name as believers that have supported you. What are some of the qualities or services that you would commend them for?*

Day 4

38. Pick one or two of the following questions to answer.

- *What things about Paul and or the early Christians did you learn/find interesting?*

- *How effectively do you think Paul was able to fight the false beliefs making their way into the church?*

- *What did you take away about prayer?*

- *How were you impacted by Paul's attitude of thankfulness, gratitude, rejoicing, encouragement, love and grace?*

- *What did the idea of Christ's preeminence teach you?*

- *What did you find the most surprising or helpful about studying Colossians?*