

Exegetical Notes, Colossians 3:22-25

“Laboring For God”

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Colossians 3:22-25

Verse 22:

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.

- These words are addressed to slaves. Specifically, slaves were persons who were owned by another as property. Paul does not address the moral correctness of owning slaves in this passage. In fact, that problem is not specifically addressed anywhere in the New Testament. He accepted the institution of slavery as a given in the day and culture in which he lived. In these verses he is dealing with how slaves ought to behave towards those who own them. In Colossians 4:1 he speaks to the behavior of those who own slaves.
- While slavery is a settled issue in our culture and is no longer legal, scholars are agreed that this passage, and others like it in the New Testament, now speak directly to the way Christians should relate to those for whom they work.
- In that sense then, Paul tells us to obey our employers. That would mean that we are to do what they request us to do and that, not just when they are watching, but even when they are not looking. He says that we should attempt to “win their favor.”
- However, there are conditions placed on this winning of favor. It is to be done with a sincere heart out of respect for the Lord. Thus, if what we are asked to do by our boss is immoral, dishonest, or would displease God, we cannot do it for it could not be done with sincerity of heart before God and with reverence for him.

Verse 23-24:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

- The phrase, “whatever you do” means whatever job you perform. This is without exception. It does not matter what your job is. You could be President of the United States or a cage cleaner at the local zoo. It does not matter. Every job is now included.
- Whatever job you do, you are to do it as if you were doing it for God and not simply for the boss. This means that the higher standards should be applied. Every job that we do should be done as if it was an offering to God. There are no extenuating circumstances. Everything we do should be as if it were done for the Lord.
- Paul says that work done in offering to God receives a reward, an inheritance from God. He means that work so done may go unnoticed by our earthly boss, but it is not missed by God. This is because such work is done as an offering to Christ, himself, who gave his life to save us.

Verse 25

Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.

- If you are mistreated by your boss, God knows and your boss will be held accountable for this mistreatment before God. It need not be the worker’s concern. In his time and his way God will handle the situation. Trust it to him.
- However, if you do not do you work as unto the Lord, you will be held accountable for your failure. There is no favoritism. Each one will be held accountable before God for his own behavior.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Laboring For God*.. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)