

STUDY & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR

MAY 17, 2020

COLOSSIANS 3:22-4:1

<sup>22</sup>Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve. <sup>25</sup>For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality. <sup>4:1</sup> Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

**STUDY IT**

- Review: Define the word “obey.” How does Paul want all followers of Christ to practice obedience to God and one another?
- “Slaves” and “masters”: These words might not be used in our modern society and context. While slavery still exists today, these words speak encouragement to those who find themselves under the authority of another. What do you know about slaves in the time that Paul was writing this letter?<sup>1</sup>
- How are spiritual freedom and socioeconomic freedom related?
- What are some external motivators for service? How are those different than serving out of “sincerity of heart” and “fear of the Lord”? (v.22)
- Hebrew law commanded that bondservants be freed after 6 years. (Ex 21:1-6; Deut 15:12-17) The cost of this freedom: nothing. How did Jesus demonstrate the heart of God when it came to slavery and freedom? (See Matthew 20:28, Philippians 2:7)

<sup>1</sup> Slaves in the Roman Empire: prisoners of war, indentured to pay a debt, abandoned/sold children. Some scholars estimate that this class of citizens made up 60-90% of the Christian church.

- What is the reward for obedience to the Lord? (v.24)
- “Doing wrong” implies disobedience/dishonor to the master. How might a slave/bondservant disobey his/her master? What are the consequences of doing wrong? (v.25)
- If Paul was not as concerned with condemning slavery<sup>2</sup>, what is his ultimate purpose in encouraging mutual respect? (vs.3:22;4:1)
- How might the granting of justice and fairness be an extraordinary act of grace? (v.4:1)

**APPLY IT**

Note: Slavery is emphatically wrong and not justified by Scripture. Wherever God can show his people freedom (literal and spiritual, he does so. These verses offer us an opportunity to see how power and dominion are opportunities for his people to experience God’s peace and life in the Spirit – not wield over another as possessions.

- Who has authority over you? How might God be calling you to a posture of obedience that glorifies Him?
- Who do you have authority over? How might God be calling you to use your authority to be a blessing?
- When you serve another, do you find yourself serving others chiefly out of an external motivation – or an inward one?
- Colossians 3:23 seems to be applicable to all circumstances of work and service. How do you personally apply this verse?
- Do you envision a church community that is made up of different socioeconomic positions? How might these verses help guide you toward God’s vision?
  - Galatians 3:27-28
  - Revelation 7:9

<sup>2</sup> See I Corinthians 7:20-24 – Paul argues for freedom in the Lord, while not forcing a change in social and economic status.