

# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MINISTRY IN THE WORKPLACE

## Col 3:22-4:1

### INTRODUCTION

How should work be viewed??

curse or blessing?

to be avoided or embraced?

a hindrance to ministry or ministry itself?

tolerated by God or ordained by God?

### READ Col 3:22-4:1

In 3:18-4:1, 6 groups of people, in 3 pairs – Submission and Authority – underlying each is the principle of authority

You ladies whose job is Homemaker – way more than a fulltime job → these principles apply

**Propos<sup>n</sup>: 3 Guidelines** for Your Ministry in the Workplace  
**Outward, Inward, Upward**

**So that:** Right understanding leads to.

**1<sup>st</sup> Guideline ...**

**I. Outward 3:22a**

Point – We need to Work Hard and Work Well, to the best of our ability!

**3:22a – “Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth,”**

Could become a slave through: Prisoner of war, convict, kidnapping, purchase, or birth from slave-parents, debt (didn't have escape from financial responsibility through Bankruptcy),

### **Slavery**

Jews had **slaves** – but God governed their treatment and protection

Small % of population were slaves

Rome Large % ~ 1/3 of population

Some say slaves of Attica were 4X as numerous as Roman citizens

Rome dealt harshly with slaves **Slaves** were crucified for far lighter offenses than these.

Roman writer Juvenal records of one wealthy woman who crucified her slave for no other reason than her good pleasure

400 slaves under one roof were killed for the crime of one

Rather than the outside label, Paul appeals to the inside transformation – the single identity of the people of God

→ Lightfoot, 323 – “nothing marks the divine character of the Gospel more than is perfect freedom from any appeal to the spirit of political revolution. It belongs to all time: and therefore, instead of attacking special abuses, it lays down universal principles which shall undermine evil”

Christianity undermines the evils of slavery by changing the hearts of the slave and masters

more space is devoted in Colossians 3 to slaves than any of the other 5 groups

“obey” → Same command to children in v. 22

Wives → Submit, Children → Obey, Slaves → Obey

“masters” comes from the same word as “Lord”

“on earth” – referring to those masters on earth in distinction from the Master in heaven

3:22 – “in all things” – same as children → comprehensive

3:23 – “do your work heartily”

Heartily – Vigorous/Enthusiastic, Jovial/Cheerful, Filling/Nourishing

→ From your Inner Parts! –  – Lit. “out of your soul”

Bad will, dishonesty, laziness are replaced by: Good will, integrity, and hard work

→ when the Lordship of Christ is brought to bear

III<sup>rd</sup> → you can bet Paul was a good tent-maker (Acts 18:3)

**Work** is a **Gift** F/ God

Ecc 2:24 – “There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God.”

Work is a Blessing to be Embraced,

Not a Curse to be Avoided

**App<sup>n</sup>** – being a Christian does not excuse poor or half-hearted work – in fact it makes lazy sloppy poor work inexcusable

Worship, Ministry, Work, Life! → Excellence! → Whole Being

Not Lazy and Undisciplined, ½ Hearted Attempts

Prov 14:23 – “In all labor there is profit, But mere talk *leads* only to poverty.”

Hard work brings a profit (14:23a).

Slack work leads to poverty (14:23b).

**App<sup>n</sup>** –Plans/Processes – Exod 25f;

Gifts/Desires – Exod 31:1-6; 1 Cor 12:11; Psa 37:4

Excellence/Faithful in a Little – Matt 25:14f (emph. 21)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Guideline ...**

## II. Inward 3:22b

Point – → **INTERNAL!** → **NOT EXTERNAL!**  
Obedience from the Heart!

Proof –

**3:22b** – “not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart,”

- “not by way of eyeservice as men-pleasers” (Eph 6:6)

“but with sincerity of heart”

- “in the sincerity of your heart” (Eph 6:5)
- “doing the will of God from the heart” (6:6)
- “with good will” (6:7)

**III<sup>a</sup>** – Onesimus - slave, definitely ran away, perhaps took money  
Onesimus connected w/ Paul in Rome & was converted

– accompanying Tychicus to the church at Colossae  
→ Tychicus and Onesimus brought Col, Eph, and Philemon

=> Onesimus is risking death by going back

Onesimus’ earthly freedom may be of some value, it is of no ultimate significance to him as a Christian.  
In the end, what matters is **obedience** to God. => **Sacrifice** to do what is right.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Guideline ...**

## III. Upward 3:22c-23

Point – Your work is (should be) act of worship!!!!!!!!!!!!

Proof

**3:22c-23** – “fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup>Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men;”

1 Cor 10:31

Col 3:17 → specific application in 3:23

“fearing the Lord” – the beginning of wisdom and knowledge – Prov 1:7

The **calls to submission** are qualified:

Wives – “fitting in the Lord” (3:18)

Children – “well-pleasing to the Lord” (3:20)

Slaves – “fearing the Lord” (3:22)

**3:24b** – “It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.”

**3X → Lord!**

22 fearing the Lord  
23 as for the Lord  
24 It is ...

“**Lord Christ**” – only place where 2 appear together without Jesus  
→ “Lord Christ” → Master and Messiah

Your **Work** is Your **Ministry** F/ God

Prov 22:29 – “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.”

Witness of your Life and Work AND provides a platform for the Gospel

Qualifications for Biblical Leadership – “good reputation with those outside the church”

### Your witness is at stake

2 purpose clauses (ἵνα) given to slaves

- so that the name of our God and our doctrine may not be spoken against (1 Tim 6:1)
- so that you may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect (Tit 2:9-10)

Work is a blessing, a gift from God, to be embraced

Work was ordained by God before the Fall

Your work is one of your ministries

Your work is your mission field

### Christ is your example (1 Pet 2:18-21!)

**Trans<sup>n</sup> – 2 Motivations:**

Focus on the Future	Reward in Heaven
Fear Failure	Judgment Now

**1<sup>st</sup> Motivation ...**

**IV. Reward in Heaven 3:24**

Point – → RECEIVE REWARD – There will be Payday Someday.

**3:24a – “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.”**

“**the inheritance**” – the life of the age to come – cf. 1:12

1:12 – inheritance (κληρονομία) is a gift – not earned – it is God who makes worthy  
subtle nuance! → different, but related words

inheritance in 3:24 (κληρονομία) “the law of inheritance” is earned

Even more powerful is the concept of a slave receiving an inheritance! The idea of a slave receiving is unthinkable to the Roman mind

$\frac{3}{7} \dots \frac{3}{7} + \frac{3}{7}$  **intensify** → **most certainly will receive!**

2 Cor 5:10 – the Judgment Seat of Christ

**App<sup>n</sup>** – Our current Economic Recession → business slowdown, decreasing profits, massive layoffs and joblessness, the bursting of the housing bubble, foreclosures, bankruptcies, bank failures, investment company collapses, the loss of retirement funds.

God is sovereign over these things, he foresees them all, he causes or permits them all, and when he causes or permits something, he does so with purpose and design.

He intends to relocate the roots of our joy:  
in his grace rather than in our goods  
in his mercy rather than our money  
in his worth rather than our wealth.

1 Cor 1:1-2

If the recession can assist that relocation, it will have done the most important thing possible. Because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. (John Piper)

**Trans<sup>n</sup>** – slave has both Encouragement and Warning, Reward and Punishment

**2<sup>nd</sup> Motivation ...**

**V. Judgment Now 3:25**

Point – RECEIVE JUDGMENT Now

**3:25 – “For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality.”**

Salvation is according to Grace  
Judgment is according to Works

Proof – God is our Father and righteous Judge. When it comes to Judgment on Works, there is no partiality in God.

**Heb 12:4-10**

**Trans<sup>n</sup>** – Bad Chapter Break: Verse numbers/chapters not inspired

**A Word to the Masters (Employers)**

**Justice and Fairness! 4:1**

**4:1 – “Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.”**

3<sup>rd</sup> time the group with authority is addressed – Husband, Father, Master

Paul does not focus on the injustice of slavery  
He does not focus on the Symptom, but the Cause

He addresses the center issue – slaves are human beings too – redeemed by God

“no distinction” → Col 3:11

To speak of justice and fairness in relation to slaves was extraordinary to most slave-owners of the ancient world

Emphasis on Justice and Fairness by placing at beginning of clause  
Lit. – “Masters, justice and fairness to your slaves (you are to) grant”

### Proof

“**justice**” – **צדק** – righteousness, just, justifier – Rom 3:26  
conforming to the standard, will, or character of God; upright, righteous, good; just; proper; fair, honest;

“**fairness**” – **צדקה** (isosceles triangle) – fairness, equity

rooted in biblical knowledge!

“**knowing that you too have a Master in heaven**”

slaves – “knowing” – 3:24 – ... that from the Lord ...

masters – “knowing” – 4:1 – ... have a Master ...

**III<sup>a</sup>** – Paul upholds the **duties** of slave and master. He sends the runaway slave Onesimus back to his master, Philemon. Paul asks Philemon to treat his returned slave with kindness and forgiveness—restoring the relationship to its divine design.

→ Not a social/political gospel!

### **CONCLUSION**

“During the hidden years of His adolescence and young adulthood, and certainly during His ministry, Jesus had seen much social injustice, much economic inequity, much deprivation and poverty, and much oppression and cruelty by the Romans. But His mission never focused on those things, because they are not man’s greatest problems. It was the far more severe problem of sin that Jesus had come to conquer. Men’s problem with God is infinitely greater than their problems with other men.”

– MacArthur, 21:12a, 267

“Instead of attacking Rome, Jesus attacked Judaism. Instead of being a conqueror, He was a confronter. Instead of promoting revolution, He preached righteousness. And instead of clearing out the enemy without, He cleaned out the enemy within.”

– MacArthur, Matt 21, 274