

Sunday, October 17, 2021—Colossians 4:1 Believing Masters

### Introduction

- Two weeks ago, we finished our study of Chapter 3 by looking at verses 24-25. The judgement seat of Christ is in view considering the 15 imperative commands that Paul makes in Chapter 3.
- The people Paul address in verses 1-4 are the same people being addressed in verses 24-25.
- This morning as we start Chapter 4, we encounter a verse that many think should have been included in Chapter 4 i.e., many commentators that I have read think the first verse of Chapter 4 should have been included in Chapter 3.
- Colossians 4:1 fits the pattern of Chapter 3 in that it constitutes a 16<sup>th</sup> imperative command. The verb “give” is in the imperative mood. Therefore, Paul is commanding believing “masters” how they should treat their servants.

### Colossians 4:1

- **Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.**
- Colossians 3:22—placed before a conversation about slavery in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman world. We saw that in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the slave/master relationship was part of the economic structure Paul’s day (See the sermon from [9/5/21](#)). Furthermore, we looked at how slavery of any sort or for any reason was not a part of God’s original plan but came about because of sin.
  - Ephesians 6:5-7
  - There were undoubtedly many reasons why a person might find themselves in a position of servitude, such as subjugation resulting from war, indebtedness, or voluntary submission in exchange for security.
  - Therefore, while not condoning the practice of slavery that Bible does recognize its existence and offers instructions to any believers who might find themselves living under its yoke.
  - In addition, we made application of these verses to our current economic system and the role that we operate within as either employees or employers. As such we discussed how God created mankind to work and carry out his instructions and purposes in the earth. Work only became drudgery after the fall.
  - Finally, we discussed how since we have been resorted to a right standing with God because of the cross, our work lives have the capacity to bring glory to God as we seek to follow his word and do things heartily unto the Lord and not unto men.
    - II Thessalonians 3:10-12

- I Timothy 5:8
  - Ephesians 4:28
- **Masters**—the word “masters” in verse one discusses the other part of the relationship that Paul describes in Col. 3:22. In this context, the word “master” means the one to whom a person or thing belongs. So once again, there can be no doubt that slavery is view here when Paul penned this epistle.
  - Paul instructs Christian “masters” to give unto their servants that which is “just and equal.” Masters were to deal with their servants in ways that were just, right, and acceptable to God. Likewise, “masters” were to treat their slaves equally i.e., in a fair and impartial way.
  - Notice that just as Paul did not instruct servants to run away or actively seek their freedom, he does not instruct the masters to free their slaves. Rather he offers instructions to both parties in how to serve God in these various positions.
    - I Corinthians 7:20-24—Paul did not call for believers to instigate the overthrow of the socioeconomic order. Rather, he instructs slaves that they are the “Lord’s freeman” even in a condition of servitude. In other words, because they are in Christ, they can serve the Lord in their servitude. However, if the opportunity for freedom presented itself, they should seek it.
  - Ephesians 6:9—Paul instructs “masters” to do the same things unto their “servants” that he just instructed “servants” with respect to.
    - According to Paul, the master like the servant is really serving God and needs to do things properly as unto the Lord and not unto men. Therefore, “masters” are to forbear threatening their servants. Why? Because God is dealing with the world today on the basis of his grace and not the performance system of the law.
    - According to verse 9, even the “masters” has a master i.e., God almighty. Paul reminds believing “masters” that they have a Master in heaven. The implication is that they to, along with Paul, were servants of the Master, Christ, in heaven. The fact they were slaves on the spiritual dimension and had been mercifully treated by Christ, should stimulate them to show mercy and proper leadership toward their “servants.”
  - Colossians 4:1—once again the application of these verses to our current economic system are quite obviously. If you are a Christian businessperson or in a position of management, you need to as much as possible forbear threatening and pay your workers justly and treat them equally.
  - Being a Christian and being in leadership is an awesome responsibility with great potential for being a witness for the truth of Paul’s gospel.