

Who is Your Master Monday to Friday?

Colossians 3:23-4:1

Pastor/Elder Phil Layton, GCBC, March 21, 2021

Last week we looked at slavery in Col 3, today we'll finish the chapter. Last week I also was reminded of a young man who was captured and sold as a slave for 6 years on one of the islands of the UK. It was 1500+ years ago, and in those years, he was no saint, but God saved him as a slave and that began to change how he spent his days in the field. He wrote: "God's love and fear grew more and more within me, and my faith and spirit became strong. In a single day I would pray as often as a hundred times..." Years later he was able to get free from slavery but his changed heart wanted to spend his life evangelizing the pagans on that island from false religion.

His missionary efforts were so successful they called him an apostle for that part of the world. He wrote God 'bestowed His grace on me so largely, that many people were born again to God through me. The Irish, who never had the knowledge of God and worshipped only idols, and unclean things, have now become the Lord's people, and are called sons of God.'¹ He got a new name: **Patrick**, and later got a holiday named after him (last Wednesday). FYI Patrick was Scottish, and probably didn't wear green or use shamrocks to teach the Trinity (sorry:). But he's a great example of a slave who knew the gospel that transformed pagan masters as he labored for Christ the Lord.

That's the point of our text in Col 3, by the missionary apostle Paul

Col 1:2 is for saints in Colossae, some were slaves. **Col 1:18** says Christ is to have supremacy or first place in all things. Listen to **St. Patrick's prayer**:

"Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger."²

That prayer of a former slave sets up well **Col 3:23**, to slaves: *Whatever you do, work heartily, as **for the Lord and not for men**,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. **You are serving the Lord Christ.**²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. ¹ Masters, treat your bondservants (slaves) justly and fairly, knowing that **you also have a Master in heaven.***

Last week we saw Bible verses against the modern slave trade (online).

PAUL DIDN'T ATTACK THE NT VERSION OF SLAVERY – BUT HE PULLS OUT PLANKS LIKE JENGA, IT LATER WOULD COLLAPSE.

Paul wasn't a warrior for social justice, he was a witness for salvation in Jesus. His focus was the gospel applied to transform from the inside out.

Who do you serve? Who's your master? Everyone has a Master. Paul wrote this in a Roman prison, but Caesar wasn't the ultimate master of his fate, the heavenly Master of the universe was. Paul was in bonds and he's writing to bondservants or slaves under earthly masters to do work for their heavenly Master, not for man.

I talked last week about **NT slavery as different than American plantations**. Don't think cotton-picking in a field, he's writing to a range of jobs, household chores, accountants, tutors, stewards, managers. Some were educated or educators, teachers of kids, some cooked, sewed, etc. (maybe some of you moms think that sounds like a day in your life!).

Actually what Paul says here does have application to stay at home moms or seniors or students or spouses caregiving as well as the 60-hour-a-week job. It has application for us in serving the Lord or His church, the Lord's work.

None of those are exact parallels but the principles of this text apply to all.

Last week we focused on slavery in v. 22, this week application in v. 23ff.

- Outline:**
1. **Work Hard for Your Master Jesus (v. 23)**
 2. **Don't Be a People Pleaser (v. 24)**
 3. **Serve as Christ's Slave and Witness (v. 25-4:1)**

1st work hard for your master Jesus.

²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord...* [Greek kurios, the same word translated 'master' in 4:1].

Who's your Master? One company ad 'a lunch and learn seminar: Who's Controlling You (Get your manager's approval before attending).'³ Who's in charge at work? What do you do Monday-Friday? What do you live for?

The weekend? The vacation (assuming the virus doesn't interfere, again)? For those in the workforce, do you define yourself and find your identity in what you do for a living? Is there **something you're trying to master** in life?

Everyone here works in some way and serves someone or something. You?

There's an old theologian by the name of **Bob Dylan**, here's how he said it:

you're gonna have to serve somebody ...

You may be a business man or some high-degree thief

They may call you doctor or they may call you chief ...

You may be a construction worker working on a home

You may be living in a mansion or you might live in a dome

You might own guns and you might even own tanks

You might be somebody's landlord, you might even own banks ...

You may be rich or poor, you may be blind or lame

You may be living in another country under another name

But you're gonna have to serve somebody, well it may be the devil,

Or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody.

Bob Dylan was right, at least on that. But a better theologian wrote in Ps 12 'who is master over us?' **Paul wrote Col 3 to answer who or what we serve, is our master.** Even today, jobs can rule us, but Jesus must rule us. In work for earthly masters (v. 22), he says work 'as for the Lord and not for man' (v. 23). Paul also wrote 'I will not be mastered by anything' (outside of God and His word) and '**sin shall not be master over you**'⁴ if you're under grace. He said 'I worked hard...though it was not I, but the grace of God...in me.'⁵

Eccl 9:10: Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength⁶

BALANCE? v. 16 (personal & corporate time with God), v. 18-21 (family).

Workaholics need to work harder on v. 18-21. Your home is your job, too.

Titus 2 - 'workers at home' – husbands/dads need to clock in, not clock out (I've been guilty, convicted).

Col. 3:17: *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him...*²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord...*

'So whatever you do' in context covers all of life (don't compartmentalize).

Not just Sunday morning worship to the Lord, Monday to Friday is to Him.

Maybe a new bumper sticker (TGIM)? Monday thank God as v. 17 says. Tomorrow is a day the Lord has made to rejoice, be glad, and glorify Him!

If the Lord spoke to you personally with a task for tomorrow, how would you do it? Half-hearted or heartily for Him? He *has* spoken to you in v. 23.

This goes **against our culture** that says do it *for yourself*, look out for #1.

Sinatra: I did it my way. Burger King: have it your own way.

But Christians say:

**'Lord, Have Thine own way, Search me and try me, Master today...
Hold over my being absolute sway... Though art the Potter, I am the clay
Mold me and make me after Thy will, While I am waiting yielded and still'**⁷

How many of you drive to a job where you work at least 20 hours a week? That changed a lot one year ago this week (15 days to flatten the curve)?

If you work from home, including housework or homework, raise a hand?

Kids – homeschooled or doing school from home – would you do home- work or assignments differently if Jesus asked you to do it for Him? Do it heartily as if Jesus was in the living room, as if you'd turn in in to Him! As you do chores or what parents ask, do it as if Jesus asked you to (He does).

Moms – how might your day look different if Jesus was your house guest?

Any of you working from home – no boss watching – do it as for the Lord.

Men or women working outside the home – what would you do different if it was take God's Son to Work Day? If Jesus, the Son of God was with you on your job site, in the next cubicle, would you work harder? Differently?

If we believe He's with us, we'll talk with Him during the day, ask His help, and want to honor Him in how we talk to others, give Him credit where due.

Whatever you do – speaking to coworkers on Zoom, submitting schoolwork on Canvas, sweeping a floors, sending an email, stacking logs, or scrubbing a toilet - whatever you do, do it as if for the Lord Jesus who washed feet.

Think of His work on the cross for you, His love calls you to work for Him.

**O Master, let me walk with Thee, In lowly paths of service free;
Tell me Thy secret, help me bear, The strain of toil, the fret of care.
Help me the slow of heart to move, By some clear, winning word of love...
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, In trust that triumphs over wrong.**⁸

Howard Hendricks tells the story of being on a flight where an obnoxious man loudly complained about every minor grievance he could think of. Most people would have told the guy where the exit door was, but each time the stewardess responded with kindness and grace. After watching this for some time, Hendricks called her over and complimented her on her good attitude with this difficult man. He asked for her name so that he could commend her to the president of the airline. He was taken aback when the stewardess responded, "Thank you, sir, but I don't work for American Airlines." She looked like she worked for American Airlines. She had on their uniform and nametag. "You don't?" [he asked] "No," she explained, "I work for Jesus Christ. American Airlines just pays the freight." Wherever you work, if you see that you work primarily for Jesus Christ, the job takes on new dignity and meaning as you see yourself serving the Lord, not man⁹

APPLICATION—back of note sheet, church opportunities / workers needed.

Paul spent many daytime hours working with his hands as a tentmaker and he said in Acts 20: '*In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*' (v. 35)

So we work hard for the Lord but also to be able to help give to His people and bless others. King Hezekiah blessed Israel as he *'did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. And every work that he undertook ... seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.'*¹⁰

2 Cor 5:9 *So whether...at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.*

And that takes us to the **2nd point: Don't Be a People-Pleaser**

End of **v. 23** *'...for the Lord and not for men.'*²⁴ *knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord...*

So **it's Christ we want to please**, it's for His reward, not men. Jesus talked about those who do works to be seen by men, they have their reward in full. Look at middle of **v. 22** *'...not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers...'*

As you serve earthly masters, don't do it for their eyes, serving so they see and celebrate you. The rest of v. 22 says you need a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. That's the opposite of the fear of man, or focus on favor from man.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause. Other translations say *'not with external service, as those who merely please men,'* or *'not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor'* (NAS, NIV). **'Eye-service'** in the ESV is the Greek word ***ophthalma*** (eye, like ophthalmologist) with ***doulos*** (**slave**), literally it's a slave to the eye of people. Don't work for what the eye of man sees, that's a type of bondage. Don't be enslaved by what others think.

You can't live by how others view you. You can't let that control you or be your master. This has really come home for me in my work as a pastor in a pandemic – you can't please everyone! You will be misjudged by what men see who don't know your heart – that's ministry – but not my master. When I fear man, I have to confess that, make sure my heart is sincere, fear God.

Rom 14:4 *'Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.'* Jesus is the Master to please.

You should care what people think who you work for or with, but Paul says don't be held captive to that. Don't covet good impressions in the eyes of others (you shall not covet). Don't crave appreciation by what people see or say about you. Don't call attention to your work so all eyes will be on you. Man sees outward appearances, God sees hearts. Is it sincere, fearing Him?

In the pandemic working from home has unique challenges

Maybe you've seen Zoom call fails when they thought the camera was off?

1st century slaves could be tempted to work differently when the master was watching, or when others walked by. That can happen with your boss today but it can also happen at school or on social media (how many "likes" you get or don't can be addictive). We can be a slave to our phone's dings and pings and wanting to please people by how quickly we reply to their texts!

It can happen on Pinterest or by peer pressure, or parents wanting others to be pleased with their parenting, etc. **Jesus warned** about those who *'loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God'* (Jn 12:43). He said ***'no one can serve two masters'*** (*doulos*, lit. be slave to 2 masters, Mt 6:24).

That's true of God vs. wealth or God's favor vs. what people think of me.

Paul said in **Gal 1:10** *'am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ [doulos].'* You can't serve

or be slave to two masters. How does that look like in how we talk? **1 Thess 2:4**: ... *we speak, **not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.*** ⁵ *For we never came with **words of flattery...*** ⁶ *Nor did we **seek glory [or praise] from people...***

Bottom ? of note sheet insert in bulletin: Where are you tempted to be a "people pleaser" (**v. 22**)? How might that verse and **v. 24** help you? Bottom of sheet says for further study: *Pleasing People: How Not to be an Approval Junkie*, By **Lou Priolo**. *When People are Big and God is small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Co-Dependency, and the Fear of Man*, by **Ed Welch**.

Don't be a people-pleaser...

now #3. Serve as Christ's Slave and Witness

²⁵ *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.* ¹ *Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that **you also have a Master in heaven** [i.e., we're all His slaves]*

Eph 6:6 says we're all to **serve 'as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart...** ⁸ *knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.* ⁹ *And **masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.***' (NAS)

All Christians have the same boss. To be saved is to be a slave of the Lord. Our heavenly Master always sees and hears, when we do good or do wrong, and we reap what we sow. Partiality or injustice or unfairness or threatening or mistreating those we work with must stop. Treat well those you work with. Discussion question #4 in your bulletin handout: Are there any wrongs you need to make right in how you speak to or treat those you work with?

Titus 2:9 says **don't be 'argumentative'** (ESV), don't talk back to your boss (or behind his back). Instead it says workers *'must show themselves to be entirely trustworthy and good. Then they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive in every way. For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people'* (**v. 10-11** NLT). This is how we can make teaching about the Savior beautiful and the grace of the gospel believable.

An OT Jewish slave girl did that for the Syrian general Naaman

This is for our witness. **Col 4:3** *At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word ...* ⁶ **Let your speech always be gracious.** The reason Christian masters were to treat fairly and all of us are to speak graciously is that's what our heavenly Master does for us. He's gracious to us impartially and equally. He doesn't threaten us or be harsh with us. **He's a loving Lord, a merciful Master, a compassionate King** to tell others about.

Breakpoint had an article "**Drawn to the Light - Why Muslims Convert to Christianity.**" Dr. Woodberry, a professor of Islamic Studies, studied how throughout the world Muslims have been turning to Christ. He was curious the reasons why -- especially in countries where the cost of converting is so high.

To find the answer, he created a detailed questionnaire. Over a 16-year period, some 750 Muslims from 30 countries filled it out ... The number one reason Muslim converts listed for their decision to follow Christ was the lifestyle of the Christians who worked and lived among them.

Steven Cole: 'Wherever you work, you have opportunities to be a witness to people that no pastor or missionary has contact with. Many of your co-workers never read the Bible, but they read you every day. Even if they don't yet know that you're a Christian, they should be able to see that there's something different about you. You don't laugh at the dirty jokes. You don't join the guys in

commenting on the finer points of a woman employee's anatomy. You don't join the gripe sessions. You don't run others down behind their backs. You're honest and trustworthy. It's because you view yourself as a missionary and your job as your mission field. Pray for opportunities, whether through your work habits or your verbal witness (not on company time!), to tell your fellow workers about the Savior.¹¹

He says 'well done, good and faithful slave. **Enter the joy of your Master.**'

But be sure to tell people **He must be Lord of your life**, Jesus is the Master.

- to become a Christian isn't adding Him to your plans or part of your life, it's acknowledging Him as Lord of all or He's not your Lord at all. He's not to be tacked on to your life, He's to take over your life. He's Master.
- You must confess He is Lord/Master to be saved, **Rom 10:9, Acts 16:31.**

Luke 12:37 "*Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.*" The Master Himself will serve His slaves! Jesus served as a slave in **John 13.**

He is coming, maybe soon (I hope so), let's enter the joy of our Master now.

Q. 5 ON NOTE SHEET - talk to someone after: "How should remembering you are Christ's slave and witness affect your mindset starting this Monday?"

¹ This intro adapted from Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, vol. 1, p. 337-38.

² Poetic version by Cecil Alexander, <http://www.joyfulheart.com/stpatrick/breastplate.htm>

³ *Reader's Digest* 9/98, p. 24.

⁴ Romans 6:14, 1 Corinthians 6:12 NASB.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:10.

⁶ HCSB translation.

⁷ Adelaide Pollard, "Have Thine Own Way."

⁸ Ana Lara, "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee."

⁹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-27-christ-lord-workplace-colossians-322-41>

¹⁰ 2 Chron 31:20

¹¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-27-christ-lord-workplace-colossians-322-41>