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TRINITY
BIBLE CHURCH
DALLAS

The Sermon

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Colossians 3:22-4:1

"Workplace Christianity"

August 6, 2023

TRANSCRIPT

We've got a great passage we're going to be looking at this morning. I think you'll find it very relevant and very practical, and it is found in Colossians chapter 3, and I want to begin by reading the passage. It starts in verse 22 and it goes into the first verse of chapter 4. And I need to tell you this, that the verse divisions were not brought about until the 1200s. So for 1,200 years there were no individual verses marked off numbered. And the chapter divisions did not come about until the 16th century. And the first English Bible to have chapter divisions was the Geneva Bible that came out of Calvin's ministry in Geneva, Switzerland; and for the most part, they made the chapter divisions proper, but a few times they've missed it, and this is one of those. And so the first verse of chapter 4 really goes with the end of chapter 3; but it's not inspired, the chapter divisions, it's only the text itself is inspired. So I say that for anyone who's King James only here today, just chill out. I'm a truth-teller, and that's the truth about the way this happened. So for 1,600 years there were no chapter divisions.

So I want to begin reading in chapters 3, verse 22, and we're going to go through chapter 4, verse 1. This is the word of God: "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. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Jesus Christ whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and

that without partiality. Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven." So this is the reading of God's word, and we will spend our time together today looking at this, digging into this and considering what it means in its relevance for our lives today. So let us go to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, as we now come to Your word we ask that Your Holy Spirit would give us illumination and insight that we would have the right understanding of Your word. And I pray that You will challenge us, convict us, encourage us, do many things as we seek to apply this to our lives. So thank You for this text. Thank You for this opportunity for us to all gather together to worship You. And I pray now for Your help as we seek to delve into Your word. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

The title of this message is "Workplace Christianity," and in these verses the apostle Paul addresses a matter of great importance for our Christian lives and it deals with our work life. You could call it your professional life, you could call it your vocational life, but it is a major part of your Christian life, how you carry out your work. The Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over heaven and earth, and He's Lord over your life and my life, He's Lord over every aspect of our Christian lives, and that includes going to work. And it's such an important part of our life that when I meet someone for the first time I often ask them, "Well, what do you do?" I'll say that before, "Tell me about your family. Tell me where you're from." It's just an essential part of your identity and my identity: "What do you do for a living?" And so it constitutes a very significant part of what it is for us to live under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

We can draw from this that your work matters to God. How you work matters to God. Whether you're an employer or an employee, your work is vitally important to God, whether or not you do a good job, or whether or not you treat the people who work for you well. And so we need some historical background for this passage, because you will note it's addressed to slaves and masters. It doesn't say it's addressed to doctors and lawyers. It's not addressed to real estate developers or landlords, or to renters and lessees. This is not directly addressed to school teachers or to secretaries or

administrative assistants, it's addressed to slaves and masters. And in the sense that is being addressed in this text, I'm not aware of any slays that we have here today. And in the sense that it is addressed here, I'm not aware that we have any masters here today. And for that, we can be grateful.

0However, there is application for us, because for most of us here, we do work for somebody; and for some here today, people work for you. And so it really matters how you do your work, it matters to God. And so there is application for us, though we have no slaves or masters here today.

Now I need to give some background for this. As Paul writes this, it's in the middle of the first century, and there are about 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, that's about half the population of the Roman Empire; they were very, very prevalent. One out of every two persons who lived in the Roman Empire was a slave, and work was considered beneath the dignity of Roman citizens, and so they purchased slaves to work for them. Like you would go into a store and buy something, they would go into a slave market and buy a slave to come work in your house, and they were a purchased possession. And they would also be purchased to work in whatever business that you had. And the master had complete control over a slave. And if the slave ran away, that would not be good for that slave, and he would be branded literally, something on the forehead to signify that he is an unfaithful, untrustworthy slave, and he might even be put to death.

It was not an easy life to be a slave, and no one would really want to be a slave. And so what Paul is teaching here is really revolutionary. Rather than overturning the entire institution of slavery, he actually tells slaves to, "Obey your masters." And he tells masters to treat their slaves justly and fairly with dignity. Paul's goal is not to overturn the social structure of the Roman Empire and create chaos, his goal is to preach the gospel and to win souls to Christ, one soul at a time, and it will be the gospel that will turn the Roman Empire upside-down as people are being brought to faith in Christ. And so Paul doesn't just run into the Roman Empire like someone would run into a theater yelling, "Fire," and just create all kinds of chaos, he chooses to address slaves right where they are, and he addresses masters right where they are.

Now as we look at this we need to understand that slavery in the first century Roman Empire was not necessarily like slavery in colonial America, nor in the Civil War. And this is no justification for forms of slavery today: child slavery, child sweat shops, teenage sex trafficking. Anything contrary to the word of God is sinful, and all of that would be sinful.

This is also different from the Old Testament. Under the Mosaic Law that was given at Mount Sinai in Exodus, and then later before entering the Promised Land with the giving of Deuteronomy, there was actually the regulation of slavery. And in Exodus 21:16 it was a capital crime to kidnap a person and then sell them into slavery. And it was a capital crime to own a person who had been kidnapped for slavery.

In Deuteronomy 21, female slaves were protected from abuse and sexual assault. And in Exodus 21, an injured or abused slave was to be treated very carefully, even released if the ailment was serious enough. And in Deuteronomy 23, runaway slaves actually had some protection and freedom; there were cities of refuge to which they could run to and find deliverance. And in Exodus 21, slaves who sold themselves because they were indebted and couldn't pay off their debt, they were required to be released every six years, even if there was still a balance on the debt that they owed. And those who were slaves over a long period of time had to be released from their slavery every 50 years; it was known as the year of jubilee. And so under the Mosaic Law, which is no longer in effect today, but nevertheless it does reveal the mind of God, and the heart of God, and the justice of God, and the equity of God, that people created in the image of God were given much protection, more so than in colonial America.

When we come to the New Testament, just one verse I want to comment before we get into our passage is in 1 Timothy 1:10, in which the New Testament prohibits people from being kidnappers. And these who were kidnappers actually kidnapped in order to sell someone into slavery. And that was absolutely forbidden to take someone against their will, and to then sell them to someone else, that they would now become your slave. In fact, it was such a hideous sin to do this, is that people who were kidnappers for slavery are put in the same list in verse 9 of this passage – or excuse me,

they are called ungodly, they're called sinners, they're called unholy, and they're called profane, those who kidnap people and put them into slavery. And those who do so are mentioned in the same verse, verse 10, as homosexuals, and liars, and perjurers, and immoral men. And so Paul condemns this sin of capturing another person and forcing them into slavery against their will, and he equates it with the eighth commandment of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:15, "You shall not steal," and one expression of stealing would be to steal the life of another person and sell them into bondage to someone else.

And so there's so much more that I wish I had time to comment on, and I'm going to have to restrict myself to our passage that is immediately before us, which is slavery in the first century, not the eighteenth century, the first century in the Roman Empire. And so as we walk through this, I think that you'll find a lot of practical application for your work life, whatever it is you do for a vocation.

So the first thing that I want you to note is "the charge to slaves." That begins in verse 22 and extends to verse 23, "the charge to slaves." And he begins by saying, "Slaves." Now, what is the slave? A slave is someone who is under the authority of a master. A slave is someone who does not have a life of their own. A slave is someone who has been bought by a master, or born into the family of a master, or sired by the family through a slave's wife. That's slaves.

It was not an easy life, it was a hard life to be a slave; and as this is addressed to slaves, there's a difference between a servant and a slave. A servant is usually someone who would be like a day worker in the field, and he would be hired in the morning and paid at the end of the day, and he would then be able to go home. And if he wanted to come back to the road and stand there with the other workers and wait for the owner to come and hire for this new day, he could then be hired and he could work another day, or he could have stayed at home. But he wasn't owned by the landowner.

But a slave is something different. A slave, a *doulas*, is someone who has actually been purchased and bought by another person, and you now are to obey him in all things, as this text says. As he says, "Slaves," it's addressed to Christian slaves, those who have come to faith in Christ and who, nevertheless, still are under the authority of their master; and a relatively smaller percentage of the 60 million, a very small percentage would have been Christian slaves, you'll notice in the plural, and so it's referring to all Christian slaves.

Paul says, "In all things, obey your masters on earth." When he says, "obey," it's a Greek word that means to listen under, meaning you're under the one, your master, who's over you, and you are to listen to everything he tells you to do, and you are to do it. The idea is to listen up, it's in the present tense; you are to always be obeying him. And it's in the imperative mood. It's a commandment from, really, the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the apostle Paul.

"Slaves, in all things obey your masters on earth." "All things," that's very all-encompassing. It's very comprehensive: all things, except whatever is contrary to the word of God. When he says, "all things," he means all difficult things, all demanding things, all unpleasant things, all menial things, because how you obey your masters is very important to God, and it is a very important witness for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He says, "to obey in all things," he says, "those who are your masters on earth." This indicates you have a master on earth; and if you're a Christian, you have a master who's in heaven who is Jesus Christ Himself. So you have one on earth, you have one in heaven, and your obedience to your Master in heaven in part is fulfilled by your obedience to your master on the earth.

The word "master" here is he may be a Christian or he may not be a Christian. He probably would not be a Christian. You probably would have had an unsaved master. And this word for "master," it's *kurios*, is the very same word that is translated in this passage seven times as "Lord" with a

capital L, referring to Jesus Christ, the very same word as Paul writes this, which indicates the extent of authority that a master has, very much like the authority of Jesus Christ over our lives as a believer. And now he gives specifics on what this obedience to a master should look like. He states it first in the negative, and then he will state it in the positive; so what we call this is negative denial and positive assertion. And master teachers understand this; there's no way to misunderstand what he is saying. And you usually begin with negative denial, then you proceed to the positive assertion as a pedagogical means of teaching, and that's what Paul does here.

So he begins with a negative and he says, "not with external service." So in other words, you could obey and go through the motions of what is required of you, but you only do it with external, superficial motivation and attitude. So you could do the right thing a wrong way. And "external service" is just one word in the original language and it literally means "eye service." In fact, it comes into the English language as ophthalmology, a doctor who looks at your eyesight; and the idea here is that as you obey your masters, you are not to do it only when he's looking, that if he's in another part of the house, if he's out in the field, if he's gone on a trip, you should obey what he has given you to do just as though he was standing there. And your motivation should not be simply he's checking up on you, because you have a master in heaven who sees everything and who knows everything, and he is watching you from heaven.

And so, "not with external service." In other words, just going through the empty motions. We would say today punching a clock and showing up and doing kind of your work and then going home, where you're not really in it. Jim Elliot the famous missionary to the Auca Indians said, "Wherever you are, be all there." And that's kind of what Paul was saying: "I want you to obey your masters and I want you to be all in it, with a full attitude and fully motivated, not with mere external service."

And then he adds at the end of verse 22, "as those who merely please men." In other words, don't be a people pleaser. Don't be a man pleaser. Don't be one-dimensional. Don't have limited vision on who you're serving. You

must serve someone greater than your earthly master, you must serve the Lord Jesus Christ. So that's the negative: "Don't be one with external service."

Now the positive. He says, "but with sincerity of heart." Sincerity of heart means, literally, singleness of heart, one without a divided heart, a single-mindedness, and the idea is you're all in when you come to work. You're not half in, half out. You don't have your body in one place and your mind someplace else. Your body is not on the job, but you're daydreaming and you're someplace far away. No, you're to be focused – is another way to say this – and to do your work energetically and wholeheartedly.

And then he adds at the end of verse 22, "fearing the Lord." You need to take God very seriously in this. You need to have a reverential offer, Christ; and "Lord" here refers to Jesus Christ. You need to have a reverential awe for Jesus Christ, and it will be evidenced by the way that you do your work. If you're half in, half out at work, it's because you're half in, half out with Christ. And if you're all in at work, it is a reflection for a Christian that you're all in with Christ. So the fear of the Lord is a powerful and positive motive.

Well tragically, we live in a day and a time in which the fear of the Lord is missing in general in society, and it's missing in churches who just want church to be a happy place. We don't want the fear the Lord. And so because there's very little cultivating of a deep, sober, reverence for Christ, it really affects the marketplace. And that is why you have workers today who cut corners, because they don't have the fear of the Lord. Why even Christians are not putting in a full day's work for a full day's pay because they lack the fear of the Lord. And this began sometime back, maybe a hundred years ago in our culture and in our society, and we've been on a downhill slide; and as we look around now, we see it all around. There is very little fear of God, and so therefore it's hard to find good people to hire, who will do a good job, who will do a turnkey job, and who will have the best attitude. But the fear of the Lord produces that. Why? Because you're ultimately serving the Lord.

Well, verse 23 really is a restatement of verse 22 with just different words, and it's Paul's way of reinforcing what he just said by stating it a second time. And so in verse 23 he says, "Whatever you do," well that parallels in verse 22, "in all things." "Whatever you do" is a restatement of "in all things," and it implies "whatever your master requires you to do." And as a slave, you really don't have a vote. You don't really have a counter proposal.

"Whatever you do," he says, "do your work heartily." This verb "do your work" means labor hard, work hard, exert much energy, put yourself into it. And when he says, "heartily," that parallels the previous verse where he said, "sincerity of heart." "Heartily" is just another way of saying that. And the word "heartily" really means soul, your eternal soul. And what he is saying here is, "Do your work as it arises, as your passion for it arises, as your commitment for it arises, out of the depth of your soul." The totality of your being is how you should do your work, wholeheartedly.

And then he adds, "as for the Lord." Why? Because the Lord is the one ultimately who is your Master in heaven, and you are actually serving the Lord. I mean, 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." No matter what you do, it's to be *solī Deo gloria*, for the glory of God, whether you eat or drink, or whether you go to work. And your ultimate employer is the Lord. That's what Paul is saying here, it's clear as a bell.

And then he says, "rather than for men." That parallels in verse 22, "pleasing men." So I think you can see how Paul is just saying the same thing a second time. And so what Paul is expecting of every slave in the first century, and we can make the extended application to today in the twenty-first century, is that Christians who were slaves in the first century or workers, employees in the 21st century should be the very best worker down at the office, should be the very best worker down at the factory, should be the very best. In fact, your boss, even if he's an unbeliever, should look at your life and draw the conclusion, "You know, these Christians make the very hardest working people I've ever hired; I need some more Christians in this company. They are so honest. They are filled

with integrity. They give me their very best. They don't cause troubles. They have the best attitude. I never have to worry if they're going to steal. I don't have to worry if they're going to create dissension or division with the other workers. They're always pulling their load. They show up on time. They give me a full day's work. I need some more Christians in this organization. We do best when we have believers. They don't loaf. They're not procrastinators. They don't shade the truth. They do their very best."

And so it is by no coincidence that wherever the gospel has gone forward, the Christian work ethic has always been raised. Wherever Christianity is at a low ebb, so is the work ethic at a low ebb. And it is by no coincidence that during the Reformation in the 16th century there was developed what is known as the Protestant work ethic, sometimes known as the Calvinistic work ethic. And before the Reformation there were just trade guilds and trade unions, and so those who worked really were trying to get by with as little as possible. They would ride the coattails of some of the other workers who were also working.

And then in the Reformation, the gospel exploded in Europe. And suddenly the productivity from workers rose dramatically, because they believe that on the last day when they stand before the Lord that their work will come up for review by their heavenly Master, and He will evaluate your work that you did here on the earth. And that is one reason why the great watches of the world are still, to this day, made in Geneva, because they believe that on the last day that every one of these watches is going to be appearing, and Christ will judge the quality of the work that is done in making this watch: Was it done with precision, was it done with accuracy, was it done with beauty, because it's a reflection of their commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. But if you do a sloppy job, it's because you're lukewarm towards Christ. And so what Paul has to say here is of utmost importance even to us today, that whatever it is that God has called you to do, you need to do it well.

I'm going to tell you one more thing that came out of the Reformation while we're talking about this is before the Reformation, the church, the Roman Catholic Church, taught that the only people who are called by God are the

priests; and all the farmers, and all the blacksmiths, and all the moms, and everybody else, you're just down here. But only the priests are called by God.

Well, out of the Reformation came the resurgence of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer that all believers are priests, and all believers are called by God to their vocation. So just like the preacher is called by God to preach, so the businessman or the factory worker or the school teacher also has a vocational calling from God; and so therefore, your work is sacred to God, and it is important to God, and it is a part of your bringing glory to God, and your witness for God. So whatever it is you do for a living, that's important to God, and it should be important to you, that you show up on time, that you do what you're asked to do, that you do more than you're asked to do, that you have a great attitude, and you do it with all your heart, even if you have a crummy boss. You're actually serving the Lord Jesus Christ who trumps him significantly. So this is the charge to slaves. Slaves who had no right of their own, who had been bought, yet were to obey their master.

Second, I want you to see "the compensation of slaves," and that's in verse 24, "the compensation of slaves." Paul understands that such obedience by slaves to unsaved masters is going to be a challenge. It's easy to teach this, it's hard to live this. And so Paul, knowing human nature as he does, seeks to help motivate the Christian slaves who find themselves in a difficult place.

So he begins verse 24 - it's actually the continuation of the same sentence, but it introduces a new thought. And verse 24 begins with the word "knowing." "You you've got to know this. You must keep this at the forefront of your mind. You cannot lose sight of what I'm about to tell you, especially when you have a master who is overbearing and unreasonable, "knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance." "The Lord" here refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Lord of lords and King of kings. And this Lord that we serve in heaven, He will do us right.

Earthly masters may short-change us. Earthly masters may be unreasonable. Earthly masters may be too demanding and too hard-headed at times and not take care of us; but you have a Lord in heaven, who sees it all and who knows it all, and is keeping inscrutable, impeccable books. And you're going to stand before Him on the last day, and you will have a performance review by Him; and if you have been faithful by His grace to give yourself even to unsaved boss, what does he say here? You will receive the reward. The word "will" is a note of certainty, not you might receive. Yeah, you could receive; we'll find out once we get there. No, you will receive the reward.

Now I need to comment on the word "reward," I think you'll find this very important. It doesn't say, "You will receive the gift," because a gift is given to someone who's done nothing to deserve it. Salvation is a gift; we've done nothing to deserve it. Christ has done everything for us, so it's freely given, not on the basis of my performance, but on the basis of Christ's submission to the will of God. That's how I'm saved and is given to me as a gift. I haven't worked for it.

But this isn't talking about a gift. This is a different word. It's a reward. And the word literally means a payback for work that is done. It means a recompense, it is what is due. It's like a paycheck. It's like receiving a salary. It's what you have coming to you, and you have earned it by the sweat of your brow with hard work. And what this is saying that the day is coming, even if you are undervalued and underappreciated here on the earth by your earthly master, Christ is going to make it up on the last day. And He is a just judge, and He will reward his servants among Christians, and it will be worth it on that last day. He will pay you well with reward on the last day. And so it says, "receive the reward of the inheritance."

Well, let me just tell you. In the first century, slaves did not receive an inheritance. You've got to be a family member to have an inheritance. It gets passed down from generation to generation, it gets passed down from grandparents to parents, to then sons; but slaves? They don't have an inheritance. You know, the old saying, "Wherever there's a will, there's a relative." So, glad to know your pain point.

No, you've got to be in the family to receive an inheritance; and because we have been adopted by the Lord Jesus Christ and brought into the family of God, and we've been born again and we now are children of God, that we have an inheritance coming to us; and if we will work hard here on the earth and do what is required of us, there will be a great reward on the last day, I promise you that. We are saved by grace, we will be judged for works.

And 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "We shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each man may receive the recompense that is due him for what is done in his body, whether good or bad." And so what an encouragement to slaves in the first century. They've been cut out of everything. They don't receive anything, except a roof over their head, some menial clothes on their back, some, probably, inferior food. But on the last day, you have a master who's going to take care of you, and it's going to be so worth it. And just to reinforce this, he says at the end of verse 24 - just to drill this down, it is the Lord whom serve.

So, I don't know what your vocational calling is here. I don't know if you work in a factory. I don't know if you teach in a school. I don't know if you are a policeman, a fireman. I don't know what you do. But I want you to know it is the Lord whom you serve, and it is the Lord who will reward you. And this life is so short, that whatever injustice you might suffer here from an earthly boss, it will be more than made up for on the last day.

And so we come to verse 25, and it's "the caution to slaves." Verse 24 was the positive motivation, the compensation. Verse 25 now is kind of a negative motivation; it's the caution.

And so he issues this strong word of admonition, verse 25, "For he referring to the Christian slave, who does wrong - now let's just stop right there. This word "wrong" is the word "righteousness" with a prefix in front of it, meaning no. So it's unrighteousness. Righteousness means conformity to a

Standard. And so doing wrong is unrighteousness in serving your master, and it is a sin. And it takes many different forms.

It is disobeying your master's orders. It's wrong. It is giving less than full effort; that's wrong. It is giving - it is serving with a wrong attitude. That's wrong. It is stealing from your masters. That's wrong. It is lying to your master - that's wrong. It is being divisive with the other slaves in creating a poor work environment. That's wrong, and that is sinful.

So what will be the result of doing wrong at work? Well, Paul tells us right here in verse 25: "You will receive." You were going to receive something else. You will not receive the reward, "you will receive" - it says here - "the consequences of the wrong, which he - referring to the Christian slave - "has done." These will be painful consequences; you will be paid back something else. Rather than being paid with rewards, you will be paid with retribution, you will be paid with rebuke.

And he adds at the end of verse 25, "and that without partiality," meaning it doesn't matter what your lot in life is, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter who your master is; Christ will not depart from this standard of giving painful consequences to wrong working.

Now this comes from both an earthly master and a heavenly master. From an earthly master, it may receive painful discipline. I mean, in the first century it could be a flogging. It could be withholding privileges. It could be a lack of trust from the master. It could be withheld promotion to another place in the house or within his property. But you will receive the consequences if you have done poorly. But also with your heavenly Master, there is discipline that comes to our lives as Christians when we violate the word of God.

In Hebrews 12:5-11 talks about, "The Lord chastens those whom He loves, and every son whom He receives, He disciplines, quoting Proverbs 3. And so in this lifetime we can be chastened by the Lord for not giving our all at

work. There can also be loss of joy, loss of peace, loss of stamina, loss of health, and then on the last day there can be loss of reward. Second John talks - I think it's about verse 8 - talks about, "You could have had a reward, but then you fall off and you lose the rewards you would have received.

So these this is the caution to each and every one of us here today. And even moms here today, I think we can safely say your job is raising children, your job is caring for the home. And this applies to you as well, to do your very best and to be all in.

And so finally, we come to verse 1, "the command to masters." Paul now addresses the masters of the slaves, and we should ask the question, "Paul, why would you take four verses to address slaves and only one verse to address a master? And I think the answer is "because it is so much harder to be a slave than it is to be a master." And masters needed more servants, slaves need more encouragement, and more motivation, and more specificity.

So we now come to the one verse for masters. It's the Greek word *kurios*, which is the same word translated "Lord" seven times in this passage for the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time you see a capital L, it's the very same word as "masters" here referring to an earthly master. And a master was one who had bought the slave, or the slave was born in his house. The master is the one who is owed absolute obedience by his slave, and who provides for the needs of his slaves. So he says, "Masters," - and by the way, it's in the plural, referring to all Christian masters - "grant" - meaning supply or provide - "to your slaves justice and fairness, justice and fairness. The word "justice" here means righteous treatment or just treatment. In other words, treat them right.

And then the word "fairness" means equity; and do what you say you will do. And included in this is, "Do not be overbearing needlessly, and do not be cruel needlessly." In fact, what the Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Every

master needs to take that into consideration: "How would you want to be treated if this was reversed? That's how you should treat them.

And then he says in verse 1, "knowing that you have a master in heaven," knowing, just like in verse 24, the slave must know this, certain things. Now in verse 1, the master must know. And what must he know? He must keep this ever mindful that you have a master in heaven.

Every earthly master needs to be reminded that the day is coming, because he has a heavenly Master, that he will stand before this heavenly Master and he will be reviewed, his life will be audited, his leadership will be inspected, his H&R department is going to be inspected and how he has treated those who report to him; and he will either be rewarded or he will be rebuked. And it will be painful to be rebuked on that last day by the One who matters most, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, you may not be a slave to an earthly master, but I want you to know that everyone in this room is a slave. There is not a free person in this room. Everyone here and here and here is a slave. You are either a slave of sin, according to Romans 6, and held in the chains of sin, and live in the dungeon of sin and darkness, or you are a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ and under His lordship. But no one is living in no man's land. No one is living in neutral territory. No one is without a master. And sin is a cruel master, sin is a cruel tyrant, and this tyrant of sin will destroy your life, and give you impulses, and give you lust, and give you orders that will destroy you and lead you to the destruction, and ultimately will lead you to damnation and hell. You need to be freed from this master: sin. He cracks a painful whip, and He beats and flogs His slaves.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is a master. He's a good master. He's a benevolent master. He is a loving master, and He takes care of His slaves, and everything that He requires of His slaves is for their ultimate good, and every command that He gives to His slaves lead into the abundant life that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Every commandment that says, "You shall not," He is an all-wise master who is saying, "Don't hurt yourself. Don't harm

your life. Do not do this." And every positive commandment that He gives, He's pointing you to the fullness of blessing for your life. What a good master He is.

And so today, most of us have been freed from this tyrant of sin by faith in Christ, and we have entered into the kingdom of God, and we know the pleasure and the joy of serving Him. But as you find yourself here today, perhaps you're coming to the realization for the first time that "I'm not a slave of Christ. I'm still living in sin, I'm still living for sin, I still love my sin, I've never been set free from sin, and I still have the weight of guilt upon me," if that's where you find yourself, you can be delivered from this cell of sin, this prison cell of sin. If you would just call upon the name of this Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, He would come to your rescue, He would break into your prison cell, and He would cut the chains, and He would take you to be His own, and He would lead you into His kingdom, and He would forgive you of all of your sins, and He would lead you into the very best possible life you could ever know; and when you die, He'll take you home to His palace in glory. That's what it is to be a Christian; you're no longer a slave of sin, you become a slave of Christ.

So we're all slaves here today, it's just who's your master. Is sin your master telling you what to do, how to live, and you find yourself just obeying sin, or is Christ your Master, and do you find yourself now following Him and obeying Him? If you've never been released from this dungeon of terror and darkness, I would urge you to call upon the name of the Lord today. We're not going to ask you to stand up or walk forward or raise a hand or sign a card, I'm just going to encourage you to do business with Christ in your heart. And if you will call upon His name, I promise you, He'll spring you loose. There will be an exodus. He will deliver you from a life of sin, "and if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed," - Jesus said, John 8 - "and you will live life abundantly." If you've never called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, today is the greatest day for you to do that, and today could be the greatest day of your life. Let us pray.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, we love Your Son. We love that You sent Your Son. We hate where we once lived in sin, we love where we now live in righteousness. We are so grateful that Christ is a mighty deliverer, able to save even the chief of sinners. I pray that He would set the captives free even today. So, Father, we owe everything to You. You have given us everything, and we now pledge ourselves afresh to You, in Christ's name. Amen. [End]

For the closing benediction I read from Revelation chapter 1, verse 5, "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood – and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." God bless you.