

THE PRISON EPISTLES: NURTURE FOR OPPRESSED BELIEVERS

II. Colossians: Nurture In Living Focused On The Supremacy And All-Sufficiency Of Christ

J. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Our Walk

5. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Servant-Master Relationships (Colossians 3:22-4:1)

I. Introduction

- A. If the believer must focus on his positional certainties in Christ in the heavens to offset the trials he faces from evil pressures on earth as Colossians 3:1-4 with its Colossians 2:1-23 context teaches, he is **also** obligated to **function righteously** in his **servant-master relationships** as **opposed** to living in **worldliness** in that realm.
- B. Colossians 3:22-4:1 gives practical instructions on this subject, and we view it for our insight and edification:

II. Nurture In Applying Christ's Supremacy And All-Sufficiency To Servant-Master Relationships.

- A. Under the control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), the believing servant was to focus on his heavenly position in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4) to relate well to his master, Colossians 3:22-25:
1. Using the same verb "obey" he chose in calling children to obey their parents, Paul told servants to "obey" (*hupokouo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 845) their masters "in all things" (*kata panta*), the same expression used for the children, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 701; Col. 3:22a, 20.
 2. Paul clarified that this servant-master relationship dealt only with the worldly institution of slavery, that a slave was not to view his earthly master as ruling above the rule of His spiritual Master, Christ, Col. 3:22b.
 3. Though the servant-master relationship in Colossians deals with the institution of slavery that is outlawed in many nations today, it applies in principle to employee-employer relationships we know, so God calls employees to obey their employers in all things in the workplace where they serve their employers.
 4. This obedience is to be administered not with *ophthalmoudoulia*, "eye-service . . . that is performed only to attract attention" (Ibid., p. 604) as "one who tries to please men at the sacrifice of principle" (*anthropareskos*, Ibid., p. 67), **but instead** (*alla*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) with "sincerity" (*haplotes*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 85) of heart, fearing (respecting one's accountability to) the Lord, Col. 3:22c.
 5. Paul gave this directive with the understanding that the servant [employee] was to do his assignment from the *psuche*, the "soul, inner man" (Ibid., p. 901-902) as to God, not man, the master [employer] (Col. 3:23), for the servant [employee] was to know that from the Lord would he receive the "inheritance as the reward," Colossians 3:24a ESV. In reality, the servant [employee] serves the Ultimate Master [Employer], Christ, so he will give an account to Christ for his service to his earthly master [employer], Col. 3:24b.
 6. Paul may have referred here to the judgment of the believer's works at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15), but God also reimburses believers in this life according to their work on the job, Psalm 62:10-12.
 7. However, Paul warned that he who does wrong will "get for himself" (*komizo*, Ibid., p. 443) repayment from the Lord for the wrong he has committed, and that without partiality, Colossians 3:25 ESV.
- B. Similarly, under the control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), the believing master [employer] was to focus on his heavenly position in Christ (Col. 3:1-4) to relate well to his servant [employee], Col. 4:1 with 3:23-25:
1. Paul directed believing masters [employers] to "grant, show" (*parecho*, Ibid., p. 631-632) what is "just" (*dikaios*, Ibid., p. 194-196) and "fair, equitable" (*isotes*, Ibid., p. 382) to their servants [employees], knowing that they also had a Master [Employer] in heaven, that Master being the Lord Christ, Col. 4:1.
 2. Since Paul referred to the earthly believing master [employer] as a servant [employee] unto his heavenly Lord, the statements made in Colossians 3:23-25 apply to earthly master [employer] parties as follows:
 - a. Earthly masters [employers] must not oversee their servants [employees] with eye-service, trying to please men at the sacrifice of principle, but function sincerely in respect unto the Lord (II, B, 3 above).
 - b. Earthly masters [employers] must function in their roles from the soul, inner man as unto God, not man, for from an impartial Lord will they receive reward or loss in accountability to Him (II, B, 4-6 above).

Lesson: *As believing masters [employers] and servants [employees] are alike subject to Christ, and will give a full account to Him with impartial reward or loss of reward for how they function in their respective callings, each one must focus on his heavenly calling in Christ and thus on his accountability to the Lord to show respect for the other party in the institution involved, and serve in their role to the best of their ability from the heart as unto God.*

Application: *As we employees and employers alike are accountable to an impartial Lord for all we do in the roles we have on the job, may we function in those roles in wholehearted excellence and respect for others as unto God.*