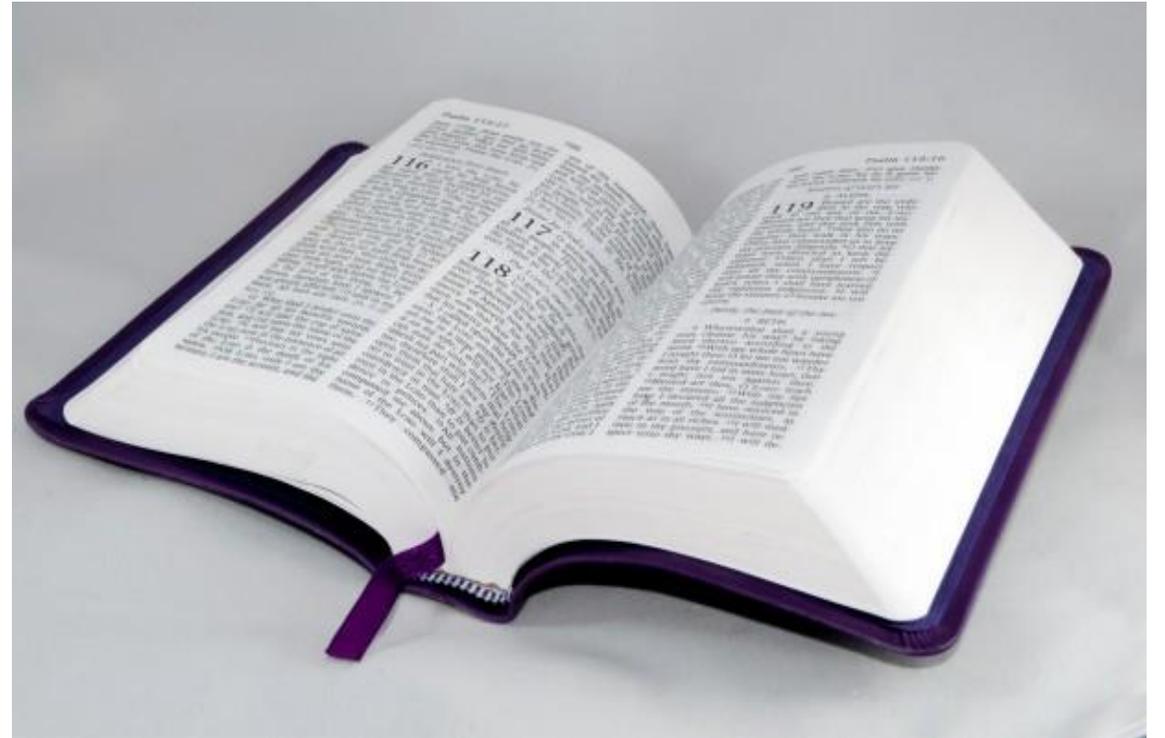


BIBLE STUDY

**HILL CHAPEL
BAPTIST CHURCH
ATHENS**



BIBLE STUDY



WITH PASTOR BENJAMIN E.V. LETT

LESSON 11

Working God's Way (Colossians 3:22-4:1)

April 17, 2024



Colossians 3:22-4:1

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

What comes to mind when you hear the word *slave*?



SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Paul has addressed immediate family members in the prior verses, including specific instructions for husbands, wives, and children. Here, Paul begins a set of instructions for a “slave” or “bondservant.” This is from the Greek term *duolos*, meaning a person under the command or obligation of another. What modern people think of when they see the term “slave” is not quite how it was practiced in Paul's day.

In this context, bondservants were considered part of a person's household, yet did not enjoy the same level of freedom as their masters.

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

Rather than teaching Christian slaves to rebel, Paul instructed them to obey. Paul elsewhere sought freedom for a bondservant named Onesimus, recorded in the book of Philemon. However, Christianity's unique success against slavery would come through changes to society, rather than rebellion.

¹⁵ Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— ¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. (Philemon 15-16)

MORE TO TALK ABOUT

The Jewish experience of slavery both in Egypt and later in Babylon illustrates the national curse of large-scale bondage in a foreign land. Israel had tight social and legal controls on servanthood in part because of their memory of Egypt (Lev 25:42-43, Deut 15:12-18). In a similar manner, the Jewish captivity was understood as punishment for national sin, including that of enslaving other Hebrews (cf. Jer 34:8-22). Israel's experience of slavery in both situations is primarily one of bondage and degradation, so there is a strong biblical caution against reproducing such a state of affairs in Israel.

MORE TO TALK ABOUT

Jesus often used masters and servants in his parables (Mt 24:45-51, Lk 12:35-48, Lk 16:1-13, Lk 17:7-10); however, it does not follow that Jesus was approving of earthly slavery or of the way that vicious masters treated their servants, especially under Colonial rule here in the United States. Rather, Jesus is using this historical and cultural reality to speak of ethical and spiritual conditions (Lk 7:1-10). Likewise, when Paul enjoins slaves to be obedient to their masters, and masters not to mistreat their slaves (Eph 6:5-9, Col 3: 22-4:1, I Tim 6:1-2), he is not commending such a system; rather, he is appealing for Christians to exemplify Christ in those situations. Paul does suggest that if slaves can obtain their freedom they should (I Cor 7:21-23). Indeed, Paul was quite willing to intervene and play a role in a slave's freedom (Philemon).

WORKING GOD'S WAY

A matter of relationship and respect

God's way for the
Employees

Colossians 3:22-25



God's Way for the
Employers

Colossians 4:1

GOD'S WAY FOR EMPLOYEES

Colossians 3:22-25

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Slaves - bondservants

GOD'S WAY FOR EMPLOYEES

Colossians 3:22-25

22 Slaves, obey..

What does it mean to **obey** under the relationship between the employee and employer?

22 ... and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

What should the attitude of the employee look like?

GOD'S WAY FOR EMPLOYEES

Colossians 3:22-25

Positive attitude -

Do everything without grumbling or arguing, (Philippians 2:14)

Not goofing off -

One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys. (Proverbs 18:9)

GOD'S WAY FOR EMPLOYEES

Colossians 3:22-25

24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank (Proverbs 22:29).

A FINAL THOUGHT ON THIS

Why does God want us to be respectful of our employers?



GOD'S WAY FOR EMPLOYER

Colossians 4:1

4 Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

What does it mean to *provide ... what is right?*

What does it mean to *provide ... what is ... fair?*

WORKING GOD'S WAY

A matter of relationship and respect

God's way for the
Employees

Colossians 3:22-25



God's Way for the
Employers

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