



COLOSSIANS

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And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, Colossians 3:23

Continuing on with his words to bondservants, Paul now tells them quite clearly that “whatever you do, do it heartily.” In the comparable passage in Ephesians 6, he told them that they were to be “doing the will of God from the heart.” The two thoughts mean essentially the same thing. The heart is to be actively willing and eager to perform the required functions necessary to please God. If bondservants “fear God” as it said in verse 22, then they will naturally do their work heartily.

Paul then continues to explain this with his next words. The duties of a bondservant are to be conducted with a friendly and agreeable attitude because it is “as to the Lord and not to men” that this work is actually to be done. We may have earthly masters over us, but we are first and foremost servants of the Lord. It is to Him that we are fully accountable in all aspects of our lives.

As noted in the previous verse, we don't have slaves or bondservants in normal society today, but we do have employers over us to whom we are to submit. And the reason remains the same. We are representatives of Christ, and thus people will make their evaluations of Him based on our actions.

Life application: Who do you feel you are serving when you go to work? A crummy boss? A greedy company? In the highest sense, you are serving the Lord. Therefore, perform your duties to the highest of your capabilities, knowing that He will reward you for your efforts in glorifying Him.

...knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:24

This verse, still being addressed to the bondservants, is a close parallel to Ephesians 6:8 –

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

“...knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.”

As a slave, this is the very last thing that they would ever dream of as coming from their owner. The very nature of being a slave is that they were property, and had no rights to any inheritance. Only a family member would receive such things. If there were no family members, the owner’s possessions would still go elsewhere, the slave included. He would simply be transferred as a part of the owner’s wealth to someone else.

But Paul tells the slaves that they were to conduct their duties in the fear of God because they would, in fact, “receive the reward of the inheritance.” Paul speaks of the inheritance of the saints quite a few times in Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Likewise, the author of Hebrews, as well as Peter, speak of the inheritance of the saints. This promise is not only to those who are free in this life, but it is to be shared by those who are slaves as well. Together, all “serve the Lord Christ.”

There is one heavenly Master for all of the redeemed, and all will share in His inheritance. The share of each will not be based upon earthly position, gender, race, or any other such thing. Rather, it will be based upon what was done for the Lord in faith. Eternal rewards lie ahead for all, if they are but willing to pursue them now.

Life application: Don’t fear that your position or status in this life somehow drives your future inheritance in heaven. It doesn’t. Rather than worry about your status here, look to the future by being productive for Christ now. The highest ranking general has the same number of hours a day as the lowest private. What each does with their time for Christ is what matters.

But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Colossians 3:25

This final verse of Chapter 3 (and the opening verse of Chapter 4) is close in thought to Ephesians 6:9 –

“And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”

Paul has spent the last three verses of instruction on what bondservants were to do and how they were to act while under the authority of their masters. He now sums up the thought with something that will point in both directions – from the bondservant’s perspective and from the master’s – by saying, “But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done.”

ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν·

This is certainly speaking of a master who would abuse his servant as much as it is a servant not being faithful to his master. He is thinking on the same lines in these verses as he was with the congregation at Ephesus, and the longer thought to them can be inferred in this more brief one. This is the reason why the bondservant is to serve his master heartily. Even if the master is unfair to him, he will be repaid for his faithfulness, and the master will be repaid for his abuses. As Paul says, "...there is no partiality."

Slave-masters are accountable to the Lord just as much as slaves are accountable to their masters. Therefore, it is implied that slave-masters are actually accountable to their slaves in a certain way, just as slaves are likewise accountable to the Lord. If the master was unfair to a slave, the Lord would see it and call him to account. There is no partiality in the Lord, and all will be rewarded based on their conduct before Him.

Life application: If you are a boss, the concepts which are true in this verse certainly apply to you. You have charge over subordinates, and you are to treat them kindly and fairly. In this, you will be a responsible Christian and a faithful servant to your heavenly Master.

Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. Colossians 4:1

These words (along with the closing verse of Chapter 3) closely match Paul's words of Ephesians 6:9 –

"And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

Though this thought carries over from the previous chapter, there is nothing wrong with dividing the chapters in this manner. It actually gives an additional highlight to the duties of the master in having it divided in this way. They are to be responsible in the care of their bondservants, giving "what is just and fair."

The word "just" is an adjective which means "righteous" and "impartial." The slaves were not to be deprived a fair hearing over matters simply because they were slaves. The word "fair" is actually a noun, and it is preceded by a definite article. It signifies "equality of treatment," and thus it should be translated as "the equality." It is not an equality of condition, but a brotherly equality which stems from the relationship that arises from being in Christ. Though there is an earthly slave/master relationship, there is a spiritual brotherhood which is to take precedence in the master's conduct.

The reason for this is that the believing master knows that he also has "a Master in heaven." Christ has treated this master of others in the most caring and compassionate manner

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imaginable. He has also shown him the epitome of righteous treatment. Further, He has bestowed upon him the equality par excellence, raising him to the same level as any president or king who has also been saved by Christ. This equality of the brethren is thus to be bestowed upon believing bondservants.

Life application: As noted in other verses, we have a different societal structure than ancient Rome. Instead of slaves, we have employees. But the concepts remain the same. We are to be fair to those we have charge over, particularly to fellow believers. This is because our great Master, Jesus, has shown this to us as the example to follow.