**Colossians 3:22-4:1 (Incomplete)**

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching – like those who are strictly people-pleasers – but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, 24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there are no exceptions. 1 Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

**Subject Complement**

22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in every respect, not only when they are watching – like those who are strictly people-pleasers – but with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.

22 The manner in which believing slaves are to obey their earthly masters in every respect and not like people pleasers is with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.

23 Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, 24 because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. Serve the Lord Christ.

23-24The reason that believers are to do anything with enthusiasm as to the Lord and not for people is that we know we will receive your inheritance from the Lord, Jesus Christ as a reward.

25 For the one who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there are no exceptions.

25The amount of people who will be repaid for their misdeeds is everyone.

1 Masters, treat your slaves with justice and fairness, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

1The reason that believing masters are to treat your slaves with justice and fairness is that we know we have a master in heaven.

**Exegesis**

Paul's view was this: It is more important for Christians to carry out their mission as Christians, in whatever social conditions they find themselves, than it is to make changing those conditions the primary concern (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 7:20-22).

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* The Greek word translated “fellow slave” is σύνδουλος (sundoulos); the σύν- prefix here denotes association. Though δοῦλος is normally translated “servant,” the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another. BDAG notes that “‘servant’ for ‘slave’ is largely confined to Biblical transl. and early American times…in normal usage at the present time the two words are carefully distinguished” (BDAG 260 s.v.). One good translation is “bondservant” (sometimes found in the ASV for δοῦλος) in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another. But as this is archaic, few today understand its force. Also, many slaves in the Roman world became slaves through Rome’s subjugation of conquered nations, kidnapping, or by being born into slave households.
* Slaves (or workers) should do their work primarily "for the Lord." They should also do it "heartily," i.e., "from the soul." This view of work transforms a worker's attitudes and performance. Even the most servile (lowly; menial) work thereby becomes a ministry and an act of worship. All jobs can and should be "full-time Christian work." Gideon was a farmer; Dorcas, a seamstress; Luke, a doctor; Daniel, a government official; and Lydia, a business woman—to name only a few. God uses all occupations.
* "If you are lazy on the job, you are not dedicated to Jesus Christ."
* The title "Lord Christ" occurs only here in the New Testament. Evidently Paul coined it here in order to stress Jesus' Lordship. Jesus is the Messiah ("Christ") who, as "Lord," will "reward" the faithful in the future.3 There may be an intended contrast with "Lord Caesar."

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23-24The reason that believers are to do anything with enthusiasm as to the Lord and not for people is that we know we will receive your inheritance from the Lord, Jesus Christ as a reward.

* The present progressive “are doing” was used in the translation of ποιῆτε (poiēte) to bring out the idea that Paul is probably referring to what they already do for work.
* “with enthusiasm” *Grk* “from the soul.” Definition of enthusiastic: having or showing intense and eager enjoyment, interest or approval. (NIV-with all your heart; NASB-heartily; )
* The article τῆς (tēs) has been translated as a possessive pronoun, “your” (*ExSyn* 215). It may also be functioning to indicate a well-known concept (inheritance as eternal life). See BDAG 548 s.v. κληρονομία 3: “common in Christian usage (corresp. to the LXX) (the possession of) *transcendent salvation* (as the inheritance of God’s children).”
* The genitive τῆς κληρονομίας (tēs klēronomias) is a genitive of apposition: The reward consists of the inheritance.
* The form of the term δουλεύετε (douleuete) is ambiguous; it can be read as either indicative or imperative. In favor of the indicative: (1) it seems to explain better the first part of v. [24](javascript:%7b%7d), esp. “from the Lord” which would then read as: “because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as a reward *for* it is the Lord you are serving.” The “for” is supplied to make the relation explicit (it is actually added in many mss—D Ψ 075 M—but the best ms evidence is against its inclusion). (2) With the imperative, one might expect ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ (hōs tō kuriō), as for example in [Eph 6:7](javascript:%7b%7d). In favor of the imperative: (1) an imperative resumes the ἐργάζεσθε (ergazesthe) in v. [23a](javascript:%7b%7d) and forms a chiasm with it; (2) an imperative makes more sense of the γάρ (gar) in v. [25a](javascript:%7b%7d); (3) an imperative relates equally well to the preceding statement; (4) a parallel can be found in [Rom 12:11](javascript:%7b%7d) which uses an imperatival participle δουλεύοντες (douleuontes) with the dative τῷ κυρίῳ. For an elaboration of these points see M. J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon* (EGGNT), 185-86.
* The Lord will reward such service with an "inheritance" (1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12). Imagine a slave receiving an inheritance!
* "The inheritance is a reward which is received as 'wages' for work done. Nothing could be plainer. The context is speaking of the return a man should receive because of his work, as in an employeremployee relationship. The inheritance is received as a result of work; it does not come as a gift. The Greek antapodosis means repayment or reward. The verb antapodidomi never means to receive as a gift; it is always used in the New Testament of a repayment due to an obligation."
* The New Testament revelation concerning the inheritance that believers can merit by faithful perseverance in the faith and good works is extensive. All believers will receive some inheritance, simply because God chooses to bestow it on all (cf. John 3:3, 5, 16, 36; Rom. 5:1, 9; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Cor. 15:53- 57; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-17; 1 Pet. 1:9). Nevertheless believers who remain faithful to the Lord will receive much more inheritance (cf. Matt. 5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; 10:41-42; 16:27; 25:21, 23; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35; 19:17, 19; John 12:26; 15:14; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 6:9; 9:16-18, 25, 27; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 4:1; Col. 3:24; 1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:5, 12; 4:8; Heb. 11:6; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:7; 5:4; 2 John 8; Rev. 2:7, 10, 11, 17, 23, 26-27; 11:18; 22:12).
* The title "Lord Christ" occurs only here in the New Testament. Evidently Paul coined it here in order to stress Jesus' Lordship. Jesus is the Messiah ("Christ") who, as "Lord," will "reward" the faithful in the future.3 There may be an intended contrast with "Lord Caesar."

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25The amount of people who will be repaid for their misdeeds is everyone.

* Whereas doing one's work heartily as to the Lord results in a reward, not doing so ("does wrong") will also inevitably result in bad consequences. Paul did not specify what these consequences would be, but lack of a reward at least, and punishment at most, can reasonably be expected (cf. Matt. 25:14-30). Furthermore, the Judge will be impartial.

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1The reason that believing masters are to treat your slaves with justice and fairness is that we have a master in heaven.

* It is a common theme in biblical thought that punishment for sin involves being fully given over to its consequences (cf. [Rom 1](javascript:%7b%7d)), and this is also true of believers. Here Paul’s implication is that believers who sin and disobey the Lord whom they serve will receive the consequences of their actions, which is a fitting discipline.
* "Masters" should remember that they too have "a Master." This view should transform how they regard and treat their slaves—with "justice" and "fairness." Interestingly, throughout history, wherever Christians have constituted a significant segment of the population, and have followed Paul's directions here, the slave system has died. The principles in these verses (3:22—4:1) are, of course, applicable to employer-employee relationships as well.

**Exegetical Proposition**

22 The manner in which believing slaves are to obey their earthly masters in every respect and not like people pleasers is with a sincere heart, fearing the Lord.

23-24The reason that believers are to do anything with enthusiasm as to the Lord and not for people is that we know we will receive your inheritance from the Lord Jesus Christ as a reward.

25The amount of people who will be repaid for their misdeeds is everyone.

1The reason that believing masters are to treat their slaves with justice and fairness is that they know they have a master in heaven.

Slaves -> be sincere from the heart while serving

All believers -> be enthusiastic while doing anything

All people-> will be repaid for their misdeeds

Masters->be just and fair while ruling

Possible EP: Regardless of one’s societal position of authority or lack thereof, the manner in which believers are to do anything is with enthusiasm as to the Lord as we know that God will reward our good and bad deeds.

**EP/Big Idea:**

In view of one’s societal position of authority or lack thereof, the manner in which believers are to do anything is with enthusiasm as to the Lord as we know that God will reward our good and bad deeds.

**Lesson Plan:**

What do I want them to know?

What do I want them to feel?

**Possible Questions for Study:**

1. What are the instructions for employees?
   1. Verse 22
   2. Verse 23
   3. Verse 24 and 25
2. What are the instructions for employers (3:25-4:1)

* The phrase “with all your heart” (verse 23, NIV) literally means “out of the soul,” i.e., genuine and from within, not merely by outward pretense…If more Christian employees today served their employers with genuine concern and as though they were serving God, quality and productivity would increase dramatically…If employers…today manifested this kind of compassionate and impartial care for their employees, certainly their employees’ motivation to work would radically improve. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament,* p. 683)

1. What could be the benefit (present and future) of applying [Colossians 3:22-4:1](javascript:%7b%7d) in a workplace environment?

* This view of work transforms a worker’s attitudes and performance. Even the most servile work thereby becomes a ministry and an act of worship. (*Constable’s* *Notes* *on* *Colossians,* p. 65)

1. God’s word tells us to be enthusiastic in doing anything for Him. How would you encourage someone to obey God’s word who “hates” their job/work?

* Can you hate your job and be enthusiastic about it?

1. Does doing things for the Lord versus people really change your attitude or perspective?

* What changes a person’s attitude?