

## Rules for Saints at Work (Colossians 3:22-4:1)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/6/2014)

### Introduction

1. The text addresses the conduct of those who profess they are Christ's.
  - a. Not that their conduct makes them saints or maintains their relationship to Christ
  - b. But because they have Christ's life in them and keeping these rules evidences that new life
  - c. Saints are to be controlled by the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit as they live out Christ's life before the world for the glory of the Lord.
2. *Everything* in life is to be done in the *name* of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17).

Husbands and wives, parents and children are to manifest and promote the *power*, the *glory*, and the *authority* of Jesus in how they relate to each other in the family. That is what His *name* signifies.
3. Today we want to examine this principle in the *workplace*—the relationship of worker and boss.
  - a. The language of the text specifically references the *slave/master* relationship, but Paul's instruction pertains to all work or *service* relationships.
  - b. Of these specific instructions the greatest space addresses slaves, but only one verse admonishes masters.

### I. The Mindset of Service

1. How we must regard our place of service
  - a. We are slaves of Jesus Christ (Eph. 6:6).
  - b. Slavery has a very negative connotation.
    - 1) Society prides itself on individual liberty.
    - 2) The history of the issue and fight for freedom has given slavery a vulgar meaning.
  - c. The Bible is criticized not only for its failure to condemn slavery but for its apparent acceptance (to counter, see 1 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 18:13).
    - 1) Thus, translators seem very reluctant to translate *doulos* as *slave*. They prefer *servant*.
    - 2) The word for *servant* is *diakonos*, *deacon*.
    - 3) All are slaves of sin until salvation; then the saved become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18).
    - 4) Jesus calls His own to be His slaves (Matt. 20:25-28; Luke 17:7-10).
2. The Bible and slavery
  - a. Canaan, the grandson of Noah, was cursed with slavery (Gen. 9:25, 26).
  - b. The descendants of Abraham were slaves in Egypt; yet the Law merely assumes slavery as a fact, commanding concern for the welfare of slaves.
  - c. The New Testament follows the OT but elevates that concern for slaves.
  - d. Most converts to Christianity among the Gentiles were slaves, thus, Paul's attention to slaves.

## II. The Manner of Service

1. Self must be subjugated to genuine *sincerity of heart* for the success of one's employer.
  - a. *Obedience* (*hupakouo*, from *under* and *to listen*) is learning the intentions of an authority and fulfilling his desires.
  - b. To obey, self and self-interest must be set aside.

We must not seek our own success and welfare but find it in the success of the one we serve.
  - c. Selfishness is easily spotted in the workplace.
    - 1) Self seeks the approval of others regardless of whether that approval is deserved or not.
    - 2) Paul calls this desire for notice eye-service and people-pleasing.
      - *Eye-service* is working only when under observation or when seeking attention.
      - *People-pleasing* is working only to earn favor and appreciation.
      - True service is not people- but *project*-oriented.
2. *Sincerity of heart* or singleness of *mind* means working with one goal or purpose—the accomplishment of the project.
  - a. Every boss deserves respect as to his position and authority. That respect is shown by the *nature* of the work one does.
  - b. Thus Paul admonishes, “*Whatever you do, work heartily*” or work with *soul* (v. 23) — put your whole being into the work. Give it everything you have.

## III. The Motive of Service

1. The *motive* for service must be the *fear of the Lord*.
  - a. True servants are to fear the Lord in their service to earthly masters.
    - 1) The fear of the Lord is much regarded in Scripture but little understood by Christians.
    - 2) The reason for the confusion is that we have sought to tame the Lord and make Him predictable and manageable.
  - b. While Jesus is kind, He is also Lord and Master— One to be regarded with *fear and trembling* (Eph. 6:5).
2. Our service must ultimately be *for the Lord*, not our earthly masters. We are serving (slaving for) the Lord Christ (Eph. 6:6).
3. Our service will be judged by the Lord (Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15).
  - a. We answer to earthly masters, but there is a greater accountability.
  - b. From the Lord we will receive our reward of inheritance and will be “paid back” for wrong doing.