

Discussion Guide Col. 3:22-4:1

Opening Prayer

Thank God for our new life in Christ and the joy of belonging to Him. Pray for hearts that seek to obey Him even in difficult circumstances. Ask God for hearts that work, not to please man but please God. Ask for fairness and righteous rule of those in our charge.

Recap

Paul encourages the slaves in the church at Colossae to obey their masters in all things. This obedience is to be done in the fear of the Lord and with sincerity. He roots their obedience in their submission to their Master in heaven. Paul encourages slaves to work in light of their eternal inheritance and warns of rebellion. Paul also commands masters to treat their slaves with fairness and grant them justice, grounding the righteous treatment of their slaves in their own submission to God.

Understanding the Text

1. Did Paul outright condemn slavery in this letter? If not, why not?
2. Why does Paul address external service and man pleasing in verse 22?
3. What is the meaning of fear of the Lord in this passage and elsewhere in scripture?
4. What is meant by heartily? Does it refer to the level of our work or the source of it?
5. What is the reward or the inheritance?
6. What are the consequences of wrongdoing for the unbeliever? What are they for the believer?
7. Why is it important that God is not impartial in his judgment when considering masters and their slaves?

Practical Application

1. In what areas are you tempted to work with “external service”?
2. Is the fear of the Lord an element of your sanctification? How can you better revere God in your understanding of who He is?
3. Do you find yourself working for the approval of men? How does this passage help you to realign your heart with joyful service of the Lord?
4. The idea of rewards in heaven is difficult to understand since even our good works are enabled by God. Do you believe that God will reward your faithfulness in heaven?
5. How can those in authority submit to God while still maintaining their rightful position of authority? What might justice and fairness look like in the workplace?

God Has More to Say

Slaves:

Ephesians 6:5-9

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ;

6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

1 Tim 6:1-2

1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against.

2 Those who have believers as their masters must not be disrespectful to them because they are brethren, but must serve them all the more, because those who partake of the benefit are believers and beloved. Teach and preach these principles.

The Fear of the Lord

Ps 111:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Acts 9:31

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

God's Impartiality

Duet. 10:17

For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

Acts 10:34

Opening his mouth, Peter said:

"I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality"