

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
July 6, 2025
COLOSSIANS – Hope of Glory
In Relationship with Christ – part 5
Colossians 3:18-4:1

[Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.]

As I was studying for this morning, I read a story about a woman who worked as a delivery person in Central Florida. All day long, she had to lug packages off her truck, through parking lots, down driveways, up stairways, all the way to customers' doors. One summer day, as she reached the top floor of an apartment building, she was overcome by the heat, dropped a heavy box and lost her balance, causing her to tumble down an entire flight of stairs.

After lying unconscious in a hospital bed for several days, she finally came to. Her doctor was called in and told her, "Ma'am, I have some good news and some bad news. You've had a very serious accident. It's highly unlikely you'll ever be able to work your job again."

The woman replied, "Ok, so what's the bad news?"

Maybe you can relate to her. Going to work isn't always the easiest thing to do. For most of us, there will always be parts of our jobs that we'd rather do without.

But work isn't a bad thing. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us that part of God's good design for humanity was for us to work. When God created Adam, He placed him in a beautiful garden and gave him a job. He created him for work. That's before sin entered the picture. So, work has always been part of God's good design for us.

But sin did enter the picture. And sin tainted everything. The world became a harder place to work. Gardens produced weeds and thorns. Even more, people would sin against each other in ways that would distort every level of human relationship and society. So, while work is a good, God-honoring thing, we are working in a world gone wrong. And it will be like that until Jesus comes again and sets everything right.

So, how do we approach our jobs when we are working alongside broken people in broken cultures and broken economic systems?

That's what our next passage of study is about. We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through the book of Colossians. Look with me at our text for today.

Colossians 3:22–4:1 (ESV)

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. 4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

This is the word of God for us this morning.

One of the first things that jumps out from our text is that most of it is written to slaves. That's what the word "bondservant" means in verse 22.

And some people point to passages like this and others in the Old Testament Law and say the Bible is endorsing and promoting the institution of slavery.

So, how are we to consider the Bible's approach to slavery?

This can be a very long and complicated conversation. I'm not a scholar in any regard but especially ancient cultures and local or global economies thousands of years ago. So, there are many others who are better equipped to navigate this topic. But I don't want to simply ignore it. So, let me give you a few, brief thoughts that have been somewhat helpful to me and I hope will be to you, too.)

1. Let's start with the Old Testament Laws. It's true that there are regulations about slavery in the Old Testament Law of Moses. Some apologists rightly point out that the system referred to as slavery in the Old Testament had significant differences from the system of slavery we had in our nation's early history. Many times, individuals voluntarily became bondservants to pay debts or to avoid starvation. Even then, the Old Testament called for slaves to be freed after 6 years of service and to be taken care of financially. It expressly forbade taking (kidnapping) people and trading or trafficking them. If you were found doing this, the punishment was the death penalty (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7)

Those things are true, but the reality is that slavery in the ancient world was still an arrangement of ownership. So, how are those regulations not an endorsement?

Jesus gives us some insight into this in Matthew 19. He is talking about the Law of Moses where government regulations of the nation of Israel are found. Specifically, he is talking about the regulation of divorce in ancient Israel. And he says the regulations were there because the hearts of people were hardened by sin. God's desire for marriage has always been one man and one woman for one lifetime. But God knew the nation of Israel would be made up of citizens who would not follow His design and desire for marriage. He knew their depravity would lead to chaos if there weren't restraints. Jesus is saying that the regulation of divorce was not an endorsement of divorce – as though God wanted or desired divorce as though it was a good thing. Jesus says it reflects something contrary to the heart of God for people – but it was necessary in the national government because the hearts of sinful people would need to be restrained as much as possible by civil laws.

I think that's important insight and a principle that helps us understand other civil laws of the Old Testament, like regulations on slavery. These laws were regulating a culture trapped under the curse of sin and are intended to restrain sin without endorsing it.

2. The full teaching of the Bible undermines the institution of slavery. Throughout the Bible, God calls people to a higher law than the civil laws of human government. Where civil law restrains the heart of sinful men, God's moral law reveals His heart as a good and holy God. For instance, one of the two great commands of the Bible is to love other people as you love yourself. And that command runs throughout the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:34-40). Ancient Israel was called to love strangers and aliens and to treat them with kindness and respect

(Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:19, and Exodus 22:21). The call to love is expanded even more in the New Testament. Jesus tells us to love and honor and do good to everyone, including people who would naturally be our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Galatians 3:28 says “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Racism, partiality, and preferential treatment according to socio-economic class are all inconsistent with the expressed teaching of Scripture. (Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34-35, and James 2:1)

These Biblical truths and others like them were primary factors in the lives of abolitionists like William Wilberforce. Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the group of believers who authored the 1688 Germantown Quaker Petition Against Slavery.

3. The Bible, particularly the New Testament, is pointing us toward the hope and restoration that only comes through a personal relationship with Jesus. The Bible isn’t written to organize mass groups of people for political, social, or economic reform. It’s written to transform individuals through personal faith in Jesus. And, as individuals are transformed, they influence the people around them. As enough individuals are transformed in a culture, you begin to see Jesus transform that culture. But the focal point is the work of Jesus in individuals as He does the work of building His church. He alone can redeem and restore people. He alone can break the curse of sin and set people free. When He returns, He will establish a Kingdom of perfect peace and freedom on this earth. Until that day, we are called to live in the power of Jesus within the broken and sinful kingdoms of this world. And for the recipients of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, that was the Roman Empire of the First Century where millions of people were bondservants.

And that’s what this section of Colossians is all about. It’s about how Jesus will transform our lives by His power as we trust in Him. Our text is about how Jesus will transform our approach to work.

Here’s the big idea from our text:

BIG IDEA: AS WE LIVE IN THE POWER OF JESUS, OUR WORK BECOMES WORSHIP.

When Jesus comes to live in us, He changes the focus and the purpose of our work.

- **3:17 – And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**
- **3:22 – *[work] with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord***
- **3:23 - *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men***
- **3:24 - *You are serving the Lord Christ***
- **4:1 - *you also have a Master in heaven***

Whatever you do, your work is intended to be service for the Lord...that makes it worship. If you are a student, going to school is your job. If you are a retiree, volunteering is your job. Whether you are a teacher or a police officer or a doctor or a stay-at-home mom (which means you are a teach and a police officer and a doctor) – whatever your work, Jesus desires to live in you in a way that makes your work an act of worship that displays His glory to our world.

Howard Hendricks, a seminary professor and author, wrote about an experience he had on a flight. One of the passengers on the flight was being demanding and obnoxious to the flight crew. One of

the flight attendants took it upon herself to try and calm him down as best she could. She was patient and kind and went over and above to diffuse the situation – with little success.

Once the flight was over, Hendricks stopped to talk with her. He explained that he had been flying that airline for decades and had the highest tier of frequent flyer miles. He asked if she would give him her full name so that he could write a letter to the people she worked for and commend her for a job well done.

Her response was a bit unexpected. She said, “I don’t actually work for American Airlines.” She must have noticed a confused look on his face, so she clarified what she meant. She said, “I don’t work for American Airlines, I work for Jesus Christ. I just happen to be assigned at American Airlines.”

That’s what happens when you understand our text. Jesus desires to live in us in a way that displays His glory as He makes our work worship.

And in our text, we find at least four ways our work becomes worship by the power of Christ in us.

1. Work as Worship is done OBEDIENTLY.

3:22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,

The primary command for employees is to obey their employers. I know this is really profound, but your job is to do your job.

It honors God when you honor the authority He has placed in your life. And your boss is a God-ordained authority in your life. And notice how Paul describes the way we should obey...

3:22... not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

We don’t just obey by way of eye service. That means we don’t just go through the motions when the boss is watching. He says do your job with sincerity of heart. That word “sincerity” translates a word that refers to personal integrity. Paul is saying we should do our job with integrity.

If your job is to dig ditches, then dig ditches while you are on the clock. If your boss is watching, dig like he’s watching. If your boss is not around, dig like he’s watching.

Your job is to do your job while you’re on the job.

And I understand many jobs have downtime or scheduled breaks. Some jobs allow you to multi-task and talk casually with your fellow employees or even check your phone while you do your work. But, if those things keep you from doing your actual job, then turn your focus to your work and do the job you’re being paid to do.

Obey your boss and work with integrity. But notice that Paul puts a short qualifier on our obedience at the end of verse 22: fearing the Lord.

Since our work is intended to be worship, our obedience to our boss is an act of reverence to the Lord. The Lord is our ultimate Authority. That means if your employer tells you to do something that is dishonoring to God, then you had better obey God rather than man.

That actually ties in with the second way our work becomes worship...

2. Work as Worship is done WHOLEHEARTEDLY.

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

The word “heartily” comes from the Greek word “psyche.” That word refers to our soul or our inner life. So, when Paul says we should work “heartily,” he’s saying we should put our whole heart and soul into whatever we are doing. Have you ever seen someone doing their job half-heartedly and just barely going through the motions? Christ-followers should never work like that. We are called to put our heart and soul into whatever we do.

And verse 23 says the best way to deeply care about what we are doing is to do it for the Lord.

Just think how it would change your work if you stopped working for your boss or your customers and started working for the Lord.

I know many of you have heard me tell this story before, but this truth transformed my work while I was in college. For six years, I worked my way through school by painting and hanging wallpaper. After several years, I began to feel a little frustrated because I knew God had called me to preach and I just wanted to get the opportunity to tell the world how awesome Jesus is. So, one day, I was laying on the ground painting baseboards and daydreaming about the day when I would be able to preach in a place like this for the glory of Jesus. That’s when the Spirit brought 1 Corinthians 10:31 to my mind...”so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

It was as if the Holy Spirit brought this question to my heart: What makes you think you will glorify Jesus in your preaching if you aren’t glorifying Him in your painting?

It was an “aha” moment. I started painting for the glory of Jesus by painting as though every house I painted belonged to the Lord. I even started painting the tops of door frames. No one paints the tops of door frames because no one is ever going to see the top of a door frame. But, I thought, “That’s the first thing God sees when He looks down from Heaven.” Just kidding...I did paint the tops of door frames, but not because that’s God’s view from Heaven. It’s because there were only two people who would likely ever see the tops of door frames: I was one and God was the other.

Mechanics, how would you work on a car if it belonged to Jesus? Food service employees, how would you make a meal or serve a table if Jesus was your customer? Our work is worship when we do it as though we are doing it for Jesus and put our whole heart into it.

3. Work as worship is done HOPEFULLY.

Colossians 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Do you remember your first job? When I was 15, I spent the summer working for a guy who had two jobs – which meant I had two jobs. During the day, we built wooden fences. My job was to carry 2x4s and stacks of pickets around the jobsite and then help my boss put it all together. I’d go home for dinner, then at night my parents would drop me off at a trucking depot where I would help my boss load trucks that delivered frozen pizzas to local grocery stores. They were long days. I spent all day in the hot, summer sun. Then, I’d go and spend several hours at night in a freezer. It wasn’t a lot of fun. But there was one day I really liked each week. It was called payday. When I was struggling to make it through the day, I would just think – payday is coming, and I’ll be glad I did this.

And Paul says there is more than one kind of payday. One day, the Lord Himself will reward us with an eternal inheritance. Paul isn't saying our salvation is based on our works, he is saying that our salvation includes an eternal reward for every good thing we do in this life through faith in Jesus. Jesus sees and knows everything about your life. He sees everything your boss might miss, and He will reward everything your boss might overlook. So, we can work with hope that an eternal reward awaits us when everything is said and done.

Ultimately, this is a call to work with eternity in mind. Don't make getting rich your ultimate aim. Don't make career advancement your primary goal. Spend your life laboring for something that will last forever, namely the glory and kingdom of God.

Imagine what would change about your career if your ultimate goal was the kingdom of God and not a cushy retirement.

For instance, if God is stirring your heart to serve the poor or to be a missionary in a third-world country, it is highly likely that you will never earn a big payday, at least not until you step foot into the kingdom of Heaven, but, what a payday it will be when the Lord Jesus looks at a life lived for His glory and says, "well done my good and faithful servant." Paul says to work for that day...work with the hope that no matter how little or much you earn on earth, Jesus will give you eternal reward when your work is worship.

This is also a word of hope for those of you who have to work jobs you don't love so that you can care for the people you do love. It's fine to look for another job. But, until you find a better job, you can have hope because Jesus sees and cares about how you do a job you don't like. And He will reward you with eternal treasure one day. It really will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Now, let's look at the final way our work becomes worship.

4. Work as Worship is done RIGHTEOUSLY

4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

For those of you who are in a position of authority in your work, Paul says the way your work becomes worship is when you treat the people under your authority justly and fairly.

The word 'justly' is a word that basically means righteously. In other words, do what is right and fair for your employees. Pay them a fair wage. Give them fair expectations. Don't show favoritism. Be just and fair.

That includes everything that is right and good in verses 12-17: compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forgiveness, love ...those things are righteous and the right way to treat the people who work under your authority.

But notice what Paul lays down as a fundamental truth for employers, it's the last phrase of verse 1: knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

Do you see what he is saying to bosses? He's saying, "You might be A boss, but you aren't THE boss!" Jesus is THE Boss.

You have a Master who is watching over you. He is keeping an account of how you conduct your business. And one of the primary things He is taking into account is how you treat the people who work under you.

What if our bottom line wasn't measured in the amount of money we made this year but in the amount of good we have done for the people under our authority? That's what pleases our Master in Heaven.

That makes our work worship.

So, whether you are an employer or an employee, I pray you'll go to work tomorrow with a brand-new goal for your work to be worship as you work obediently, wholeheartedly, hopefully and righteously.

The only way for you to live like that is as Jesus lives in you. Only Jesus can transform our lives. That's why we need Jesus.