

# Colossians Chapter 3 v 22 to Chapter 4 v 1

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 February 2015

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 0 0 ] of chapter 3, just to give us, again, context. We've been looking at smaller portions over the past weeks, but we're going to read from verse 1 of chapter 3 of Colossians to verse 1 of chapter 4, and you'll see why, I hope, and concentrating on the final paragraph of chapter 3 and into chapter 4. So, Colossians 3, verse 1.

Since then you have been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these, anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge of the image of its creator.

[ 1 : 2 9 ] Here, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Bear with each other, and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord.

[ 2 : 4 5 ] Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it not only when their eye is on you, and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a master in heaven.

So those verses that I want us to be considering this evening are verses 22 through to chapter 4, verse 1, concerning, as Paul calls them, slaves and masters.

[ 4 : 04 ] And we've already been looking, haven't we, at the relationships within the home of wives and husbands, children and parents, and in all these things, looking at what it means to be putting off the old self and its practices and putting on the new self with newness of life.

I left school at 16, like many of you, I'm sure as well, and I started work as an apprentice, working at an aero engineering firm nearby. As part of my apprenticeship, I used to go one day a week to the College of Further Education to learn some of the theory of engineering, general engineering.

The rest of the time, I was in the aircraft hangar, working under the supervision of various older, more experienced men. Their job was to teach me the practical side of air engineering, how to get on with things and do things.

And all of them, to a certain degree, taught me something or other. But some of them also taught me their bad habits and bad attitudes about work.

Without particularly meaning to, they taught me how to do as little work as possible and get away with it, where to hide if you want a crafty cigarette, what items you could steal for your own personal use from the firm, and how to get paid overtime when you hadn't worked the hours, and many other things like that.

[ 5 : 25 ] Now, when I was converted at the age of 18, all their teaching, I'm glad to say, was undone. My view of the workplace radically changed, as did all other areas of my life.

Now, in this final section on Paul's practical Christian living, he gives us both theory and practical teaching on the Christian attitude to work.

And he has been teaching us how vital it is that as children of God, as his chosen people, we are to be those who live out this awesome calling in our homes, in our workplace, in our marriages, and wherever we are.

Always trusting in and looking to the enabling of the Holy Spirit, knowing that it is him working in us and through us that makes the difference. That's why he speaks there about putting off your old self, verse 9, putting on the new self, which is being renewed in the image of the Creator, God at work in us, us revealing the very person of Christ day by day.

And that's to be everywhere and on every occasion. And in Paul's day, he's talking here to slaves and masters. And invariably, the slave would have been in the household with the family.

[ 6 : 54 ] So everything would have taken place within the household that he's been speaking about with wives, husbands, children, parents, slaves, masters. In the first century AD, when Paul is writing this letter, the Roman Empire was split 50-50.

50% of the people were slaves and almost 50% owned slaves. A very large proportion of those who first embraced the gospel and put their faith in Christ were slaves themselves.

Now, none of us here are slaves. We know slavery goes on and it's something of an evil that our forefathers fought against and we certainly should continue to pray against and work against.

None of us are slaves. None of us own slaves. At least, I don't know anybody here who owns any slaves. You may have a few hidden away in the cupboard, but I'm sure you don't.

But there are principles here, helpful principles here for all of us, especially for those of us who work, but not only for those who are employed. Beyond that too, in our own homes, in our schools or in church or in a wider community, each one of us serves others in some capacity or another.

[ 8 : 13 ] And all of us at times employ others to serve us, whether it be the plumber to fix the tap or the builder to build the garden wall or even the person at the supermarket till.

All of those people in one sense work for us. So there's no getting out of it, whether we are employed or not. We are all servants and we are all masters in that way.

So I want us to look at some of the very practical attitudes, particularly towards service and work, and also, of course, how do we live that out. First of all, we have this very clear command in verse 22.

2. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. Consistency is the key to the Christian life.

Not just when we want to do something or when we get noticed for doing it or when it's easy to do it. The Christian life is a 24-7, 365 days a year from the cradle to the grave lifestyle, isn't it?

[ 9 : 21 ] So slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything and do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor. That's very liberating.

It delivers us from anxiety and fear when we work consistently and consecutively day by day. See, those who only work when they're being watched or in the hope of earning some favor have always got to be looking out for the boss, looking over their shoulder in a constant state of anxiety that they'll be caught out.

They've always got to be in a state of readiness to spring into action should the boss appear. Going back to my time in the hangar, in the era of engineering, we had one man, BK we called him, his name was Brian King and he had a very bad habit of smoking a lot so he always wanted to get into the little workshop area to have a smoke.

So he always carried with him a piece of metal so that with the foreman of the hangar came in, he would just immediately put on the sanding machine and be sanding his bit of metal so that it looked like he was working.

But he was always having to be in that state of readiness and fear. So there are many like that as well. But when we have this consistency, obeying in everything, not just when the eye of the master is on you or when you're looking to win favor, we don't have to worry about that.

[ 10 : 52 ] We just get on with doing what we're doing. Now this command, of course, to obey the master in everything goes in line with what we've said before about submitting to your husband and so on.

That does not mean that we are to do everything that our boss tells us to do if it is sinful, if it is law-breaking. So if your boss or somebody who is over you, whether it be your teacher or anyone else asks you to live on behalf of them or steal on behalf of them or the company or to falsify a document, that's where as Christians we disobey this command.

It's common sense, isn't it, in the Scripture? It isn't telling us that we are to obey those things which are unlawful and wicked. But in every other way, even if the job isn't a pleasant one, even if the command isn't an easy one, we are to obey in all things.

And we'll understand why in a little while. Well, the attitude that we are to act with here is that we're to obey with sincerity of heart. I talked about the heart this morning and it crops up here, but with sincerity of heart.

What does that mean? Well, this word sincere is a word that comes from the Latin word meaning without wax. Sin meaning without seer, from wax.

[ 12 : 12 ] And unto pottery of the day, there would be stamped the words without wax to show that that crockery, that pottery, had none of its cracks or holes filled in with wax to make it look perfect in spite of the fact that it wasn't.

And a very careful buyer of pottery would hold up the pot to the light to see if there was any light shining through where the wax repair had been. Sincere, without cracks, without wax.

Whole. In other words, what Paul is meaning here is there is to be honesty in the way that we deal with our bosses. There is tend to be integrity.

There is the idea of giving beyond what is expected of us. Sincere hearts. A bit like the teaching of our Lord Jesus. Remember when he taught, he spoke about going the extra mile.

If someone asked you to go one mile, go two. The Christian in the workplace, the Christian in the school, the Christian who is serving in some capacity, we should not be those that put a limit upon our service and say, well, we'll only go so far.

[ 13 : 21 ] We've done our bit. We've done our job. We've done our quota. There's an attitude within the Christian heart and we'll again come to the key to this, the secret to this in a moment.

But we are those that are different because we are without falsehood falsehood. The attitude of just doing the minimum we can get away with is not to be in the Christian's character.

We're to give our best, do our best. Now our best may not be the best that they possibly could be, but it is to be the best that we can do. We're not to overburden ourselves either in the wrong sense of the word by actually doing something which we cannot do or breaking ourselves in that sense.

That is not the sense here. It's doing it with sincerity of heart, but also with reverence for the Lord. Reverence for the Lord.

Where does the Lord come into the workplace? Well, in every way. The Lord's eye is upon us all the time. The boss's eye may be on us just some of the time, but the Lord's eye is upon us all the time.

[ 14 : 31 ] And this word reverence is translated in other translations with fear. We're to serve with fear. We're to live out our lives as those who have a healthy fear, not of men, but of God.

We're not to be fearful of our bosses or our employers in that sense, but we're to be fearful of the Lord. And the ultimate reason we are to rightly fear Him is because He is our great Master, our ultimate Master.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

It is the Lord Christ you're serving. This is the truth. This is which makes all the difference. In everything we do, we are to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the one that we are serving. He reminds those who are masters themselves of this truth as well later on. That will affect everything that we do. Every aspect of our relationships with others is to recognize we are first of all serving the Lord.

[ 15 : 43 ] How does that impact my life when I serve the Lord? It means that everything I do, I do for Him firstly rather than others. Now, that doesn't mean that when I'm working for somebody, I shouldn't think, well, I'm working for them and I don't care about the standards that they may have.

I don't care about how they judge my work. Yes, we should do. We should look to have high standards in the workplace or in whatever we do in service, but our first judgment, our first boss is Christ.

Christ. He's the one we're ultimately aiming to please. He's the one we're ultimately aiming to serve. See, the whole world operates upon the basis of who's watching me.

The whole world operates on the basis of, you know, who am I, I need to please somebody or win somebody's favor. From the greatest in the land, the politicians of our day, all of them, what do they act like?

They act as those who are concerned about the latest popularity polls. They're concerned about how the media presents them. They're concerned about winning votes at the next election. Right down to the little child playing in the playground.

[ 16 : 53 ] Anxious that her friends will like her. Trying to please them. Trying to win them over. All people live for the approval of others except for the Christian.

We live for the approval, if I can put it that way, of the Lord. Now we know we're approved, we know we're accepted, so it's not about winning his approval in that way, but it is about having him as our judge.

Having his iron upon us. Wanting to please him. Even when sometimes that means that we don't please others. Politicians are doing those things to serve their own interests.

I say that in a broad sweep, and that may be an unfair thing, but in one sense that's the case. They're doing it to keep themselves in a position of power. They're doing it to please the majority.

So the worker does his best to keep the boss on his side. He doesn't want to lose his job. He doesn't want to lose his pay rise. He wants to be kept in the company.

[ 18 : 02 ] He hopes to impress and maybe move up the ladder. It's a terrible slavery to live and to work seeking to please other people.

That goes across the board. Maybe you're one of those people. Maybe you're somebody here who in your life, you've always been trying to keep everybody else happy. Trying to please people.

There's that saying, isn't there? You can keep some of the people happy all of the time and all of the people happy some of the time, but you can't keep all the people happy all of the time.

That's probably one of the best bits of advice you can give a pastor coming into the ministry because it's just not possible. But they do try. We do try.

But there's a binding sense upon the life, a slavery, isn't there, upon the life where you're seeking always to keep other people happy. But for the Christian, we've been set free.

[ 18 : 58 ] We've been brought into a liberty that comes purely because we know that the only person who we really have to give an account to is the Lord himself. We belong to him.

And we have a wonderful incentive to serve him. Wonderful incentive to work for him. And it's here in this passage as well. It's that particular incentive to work at it with all your hearts.

Why should we work at what we do with all our heart? Why should we serve with all our heart? Well, we're serving Christ, our great Master, our Lord. But the incentive is beyond that.

Not only does it liberate us from serving men, but it brings us into this place where we know we have something waiting for us at the end of our labors. Since you know, verse 24, that you'll receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

At the end of your labors, there's a reward. It's not a golden handshake when you retire or a new watch or something like that. It's something which is out of this world.

[ 20 : 05 ] Paul, sorry, Peter speaks about it when he writes his letter to the Christians in 1 Peter in chapter 1. In his great mercy, that's God's great mercy, he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this, you greatly rejoice. As Christians, we have a pension pot that nobody can filter away. We have a reward that cannot be touched by the taxman.

We have not the consequence of our working, not wages for our duty, not something that we've earned, but an inheritance, something that is ours through the death of someone else, namely Christ.

We are working and laboring for a wonderful, glorious reward that our Master has set aside for us, not because we deserve it, but because He has purchased it on our behalf.

And this wonderful grace of God, which is for every believer, everyone who owns Jesus as their Master, everyone who seeks to serve Him, is a reward that we shall certainly receive from our Master one day.

[ 21 : 50 ] But, somebody might say, well, if it's a gift of grace, if it's not something we earn, if it's not something that we merit, if I can put it that way, then does that mean it really doesn't matter how we live?

It doesn't matter whether we work conscientiously or not, with all our hearts. No, says Paul here, anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there's no favoritism.

Grace is not carte blanche for living idly or wickedly as if God doesn't care about our lives. He does. No, He is just, and He is the judge of every person's life.

To live for Christ as our Master is the normal Christian life. It's the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work within us. It's the evidence that we are Christ's. But there are those who profess Christ, those who call themselves Christian, but whose lives deny their profession and are not converted.

And so Christ promises they too will be repaid as they deserve. Don't just trust in a word or a thought or a belief.

[ 23 : 06 ] It must be a change of heart and life. It must be evidenced. There must be fruit. There must be an attitude of serving Christ Jesus.

But finally, says Paul, what about those who are masters? Yes, there were lots to say to slaves because, as I said, nearly all the believers, a majority of believers, were slaves themselves in the first century.

But he speaks to masters as well. He doesn't say, in this context, that all slavery is wrong. Because in one sense, in those days, slavery was more to do with a job for life, working within an environment.

But he does say to masters that those who are Christians should also act in an honorable way. That, again, covers us and includes us.

For in a multitude of ways in our lives, we are employers of others. From the men who take out our rubbish once a week, to the teachers who teach our children in the school, we are those who are, one sense, their employers.

[ 24 : 16 ] And we must act towards them rightly. We're to treat them rightly with respect and honesty. Masters, provide your slaves what is right.

They're to respect them. And we're to respect them as well. We're not to treat those who work for us, whether it be the person on the till or whoever they are, we're not to treat them as our lackeys, we're not to treat them as beneath us, as if somehow we're better than them, we're not to treat them as somehow that we have power over them, we're to treat them with courtesy, with politeness.

We're to recognize that we're indebted to them for doing what we cannot do for ourselves. They serve us. The very least we can give them is kindness and right respect.

Do we do that? What's our attitude to those who serve us? We're also, in that sense, to treat them fairly, says Paul here.

Provide your slaves what is fair. No, let's pay for the work that they've done. I remember speaking to a plumber who had put in a bathroom into somebody's house and the person there who had the work done was a dishonest person and he said, I'm not going to pay you.

[ 25 : 43 ] If you don't want it, you can come and take the bath out. He said, it's not worth it. It's more time and effort and money for you to take the bath out. I just have to leave it. That's terrible, isn't it? But as Christians, of course, that mustn't be the way.

We aren't to be late in paying our bills. In fact, be early in paying them if you can. Don't drag it out to the end of the month or over a few days.

Those people who work for us and serve us depend upon the money that we pay them for their families, for their needs. We're to be fair towards them. Expectations are to be realistic towards them.

These are all common sense things but they're all things sadly lacking in the world and things that mustn't be lacking for the Christian. And once more, there's that controlling principle.

For you know, you also have a master in heaven. For the slave and for the master, for the servant and the Lord, for the worker and the employer, it's the same thing.

[ 26 : 41 ] For the Christian, it's exactly the same. We are under the mastery of Christ. That's the factor that controls our attitudes to everyone. We have to give an account to someone higher than ourselves.

So ultimately, what we learn is this and this is a principle which is so important, dear friends, and it comes all the way through this letter and all the way through what we've been looking at, the practical way of living as a Christian.

Every part of your life is lived in the service of the Lord. So there's no secular and sacred divide, if I can put that, in the life in the life of the Christian.

All we do, we do for Christ. So even when we are scrubbing the steps at home, when we are baking a cake, when we are fixing someone's car, when we are tidying our room, we are doing it all because we are under Christ's mastery.

The missionary is no more serving God on the mission field than you, dear friends, are in the office or the workplace. We are all called to full-time Christian service.

[ 27 : 50 ] Now, we can get that all wrong and we mustn't do. We must recognize that every part of our lives is lived out in the presence of the Lord and lived out for His glory.

So when you go to work in the morning tomorrow, there is a purpose for you going to work, a joy in knowing that you are about the Lord's work, that you are about doing His will from your heart and He takes notice of that.

He counts it as service to Himself and He rewards it as He sees fit. Whatever we do, most menial task to what we might think the most important task, is to be done with that attitude so that we might serve the Lord.

that we might serve Him who is our Master. And so the question comes, doesn't it, is that how I view myself as a servant of Christ?

Do I confess Him as my Lord with my mouth? But do I also live for Him and confess Him by my life? Does every part of my day belong in His service?

[ 29 : 04 ] And is every part of my day live for His pleasure? Do I avoid those things which I know would dishonor Him and be displeasing to Him?

Do I seek out and seek to do those things which I know are His good will and pleasure? Every work that I do then becomes not a burden but a joy because I do it for the one who loves me and who served me and gave His life for me.

See, this amazing teaching here you might think is important for us as Christians but not really life-changing or world-changing but in fact it is.

See, the power of the Gospel is what changed the Roman Empire eventually so that slavery was wiped out because it wasn't through revolution and it wasn't through rebellion but from within that slaves and masters were converted and changed people that the empire was changed and history has changed.

We want to be world changers don't we? We want to be community changers we want to be those whose lives affect the people that we meet with and speak to and around about us we want to see people converted.

[ 30 : 23 ] This is how it's done living as servants of Christ in all ways making the Gospel attractive and showing the power of God's Spirit in our lives.

Let's just take a moment of quietness in our own hearts and respond to God's Word in our own situations circumstances asking for His help before we sing our last hymn.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. A So sweet Conceprate him unto thee  
Take thy lovers and thy days Let them know in ceaseless grace Take my love, my Lord, I  
call And at thy feet this precious dawn

Take thyself and I will be And at thy holy, all for thee May the God of peace equip you with  
everything good for doing his will and may he work in us what is pleasing to him through  
Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Amen.