

Colossian 3:18-4:1  
The Defining Principle  
An Uncomfortable Paradigm

Serving, the emptying of one's self for the benefit of another without the expectation of anything in return, is not a proposition that is easily practice by most. By nature, our bend is to serve self; to look out for numero uno. See, self-preservation is the rule of the culture. No one wants to be anyone's slave, and so, naturally, we avoid such paradigms. However, as it concerns the gospel the chief paradigm for Christ and his disciples is master and slave. Through faith in Christ Jesus, we are set free from slavery to sin so that we might become slaves to God/Jesus the Christ.

**Romans 6:15-23** <sup>15</sup> Well then, since God's grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! <sup>16</sup> Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. <sup>17</sup> Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. <sup>18</sup> Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. <sup>19</sup> Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. <sup>21</sup> And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. <sup>22</sup> But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness

and result in eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Our identifies as slaves of Christ should inform and shape every aspect of our lives. And since this is true, we realize that in all we do Jesus is the reason we give our very best, the reason we give our whole heart to all that we do. This is the defining principle of the text and there is no aspect of a disciple’s life that is free from this defining principle. With this said let’s open the text further. In doing so I want to work backwards and in working backwards share three truths in light of this principle.

**First, in working backwards we see an assurance that our doing what’s right even when we are wronged will not be ignored by Christ. V25** “<sup>25</sup> But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” We should never let the condition for doing what’s right be based upon whether we were wronged. Let me make it practical. My being a good husband should not be conditioned on whether I have a good wife. Being a good employee should not be conditioned on whether I have a good employer. And vis versa. And this principle is to be applied to every relationship entered into by the disciple. Unfortunately, the truth is we often live contrary to this principle. When we are wronged, we get even. This should not be so for the disciple of Jesus because the motivation for who we are and how we live is Jesus and the assurance he will not only reward us but avenge us when we are wronged.

**Matt 5:38-45** “<sup>38</sup> “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’<sup>39</sup> But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup> If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. <sup>41</sup> If a

soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow. <sup>43</sup> "You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup> But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup> In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven."

**Romans 12:17-19** <sup>17</sup> Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. <sup>18</sup> Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup> Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord."

**1 Peter 3:9-12** <sup>9</sup> Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing. <sup>10</sup> For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies. <sup>11</sup> Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it. <sup>12</sup> The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.""

**Second, working backwards we see that the motivation for giving our very best is that we are ultimately serving the Lord, not man.**

**V23-24** <sup>23</sup> And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

Let's face it, it is hard to give our very best on a continual basis and not feel appreciated. To go above and beyond to only be overlooked can be defeating. To give and give only to be taken for granted is very disappointing. But this is only so when our motivation for doing what we do is not Jesus.

Church, what we do for our Lord will never be overlooked. It will never be in vain. And because we believe this, we ward off discouragement, disappointment, and anger when we are unappreciated, overlooked and/or taken for granted because we did not do for man but for Jesus and our reward will come from him!

**Gal 6:8-10** “<sup>8</sup> Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. <sup>9</sup> So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don’t give up. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.”

**Thess 5:14-18** “<sup>14</sup> Brothers and sisters, we urge you to warn those who are lazy. Encourage those who are timid. Take tender care of those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> See that no one pays back evil for evil, but always try to do good to each other and to all people. <sup>16</sup> Always be joyful. <sup>17</sup> Never stop praying. <sup>18</sup> Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

**Finally, working backwards we see that our faithfulness to the Lord starts at home. V18-22, 4:1** “<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. <sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. <sup>22</sup> Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. <sup>1</sup> Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” **Our familial relationships are our first proving**

ground, our first mission field as disciples. Now let me deal with the elephants in the room. First, scripture in no way condones or validates slavery. In Paul's day slavery was accepted. It just was. And we should avoid understanding slavery scripturally from the historical American experience. Second, scripture in no way devalues women or children and places higher value on men. As a matter of fact, scripture is clear that all are created in the image of God and have equal value before Him. Now, here's the point of the text. When you look at your family. Our wives or husbands, our children, etc. see Jesus. And in seeing Jesus serve them, which is to love, respect, and value them, to the very best of your ability.

**John 13:34-35** <sup>34</sup>So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup>Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

The defining principle. Here it is from Jesus' own mouth. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.