**Colossians – Pre-eminence** – **wk 8 – Dirty Jobs**

**Background: Paul – 6yr old Colossae – Epaphras needed counsel…**

**Theme – The preeminence of Christ in all things**

**So far… Knowing the real Jesus / putting on a new life in Christ / Single life and marriage life, family, now the daily grind**

**Colossians 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.**

**This week - Col 3:22 Bondservants, (tr. slaves, bondslaves, some servants) obey in everything those who are your earthly masters…**

**I want to stop right here and talk about this.**

**Some might hear this and take up the false claim that the Bible supports slavery. This is a false claim.**

**To be clear: The Bible has NEVER promoted slavery**

**OT- Human abduction and human trafficking were punishable by death.**

**Exodus 21:16 “Anyone who kidnaps someone is to be put to death, whether the victim has been sold or is still in the kidnapper’s possession.**

**Masters were always instructed to treat bondservants like family. Leviticus 25:43 If someone does become your bondservant – you are never to treat them harshly as you are to answer to God for it.**

**Biblically all bondservants were to be released every 6 yrs - Exodus 21**

**In NT Paul & Peter mention slavery often - Why so much talk?**

**NT never condones but speaks to the context of their lives.**

**2/3 of the Roman world were bondservants (60% during 1stcen) daily / common fact of life. Luke possibly at one time a slave**

**Roman slavery (pics) legal servitude. 3 reasons: \* Captured foreigners / \* debt payment / \* willingly signed up - to learn a trade - contract labor, trade school, joining the military (Includes professionals, blacksmiths, medical professions, skills jobs). (Possibly Luke was once a salve)**

**No unions. Most masters were brutal - many treated as family.**

**Slaves could marry, accumulate wealth, run a business, be a local leader, a witness in court - even purchase their freedom.**

**\*\* In the NT you could hold church leadership authority positions.**

**\*\* NT speaks to all classes in a highly Roman caste culture.**

**Christianity was groundbreaking and revolutionary!**

**Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

**Bible does not nor ever support human ownership and abuse! In fact, Christianity is the 1st recorded faith in the world to combat it. The Abolition movement was and still is a Christian movement.**

**Unfortunately, people have used it out of context to hurt others.**

**(in that context Paul writes) Col 3:22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, (not just when they were watching and keeping track) 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.**

**How do we apply bondservant passages to us today?**

**The best we can relate this to today is the boss and employee relationship, a student and teacher, a soldier, and his superior.**

**A THEOLOGY OF WORK – Work as Worship**

**1. Work is a blessing, not a curse**

**Many cannot wait until the day they stop working… but we were created to work it was God’s plan**

**Work was not the result of sin. We were not destined to chill in Eden.**

**Gen 2:15 – 15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. – God looked at all this and said “This is good.”**

**Genesis 1:28 – God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."**

**Work is not a bad thing – it's part of God’s plan for everyone – getting the right perspective on work is vital – even in the new heaven and earth scripture mentions we will work**

**2. Work this side of heaven, is tough**

**Genesis 3:17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. (the curse is the weeds – not the work – for a farmer it’s weeds, for a builder it’s regulations, for you it’s your co-workers) 19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."**

**We have got to realize every job will have thorns on this side of heaven – there is no perfect job out there, without work.**

**We think the Grass is greener over there until you get there and realize it's no fun either – there are toilets to clean in every job.**

**3. Christians don’t have jobs – they have a ministry assignment**

**Some are long-term, short-term, some harder than others – but all are an assignment by God – to lead others to Christ.**

**We lead up (Employee) – we lead down (employer) and - we lead horizontally (co-workers)**

**WHEN YOU’RE NOT THE BOSS: Biblical principles to change your life**

**Any employees here?**

**Col 3:22 Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, (when their eye is on you) as people-pleasers… (NIV - not only to win their favor)**

**1. Do what you were hired to do - in every area, every time**

**Funny thing - when you show up on time and do what you’re asked w/ excellence, you stand out - that should be the norm.**

**Every time? V.22 in everything… not by way of eye-service.**

**Many of the errors we make in work and life are simply because we are being lazy – I try to bring my best every day.**

**Everything? The answer – Yes and No!**

* **If it’s legal and moral = Yes (hard, annoying, strange & legal - yes)**
* **If it’s stupid or unfair = Yes (where many struggle, dumb, foolish…)**
* **If it’s illegal or immoral = No (no matter what)**

**We obey God over man – when we are instructed to sin – no.**

**We see it with Daniel in OT – sometimes we will face the lions.**

**If it’s sinful, or unethical don’t do it. If it’s stupid, do it well! Most the time we just disagree with the method.**

**Don’t roll your eyes, belittle, or chime in dissent. If we work well we earn the right to come alongside and make changes.**

**Joseph, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, – worked for godless jerks - they earned the right to become advisors and turned the heart of their boss**

**2. Have a Christ-honoring attitude – have a positive attitude**

**Colossians 3:22 - … with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.**

**But if I fake a good attitude, I'm being dishonest / hypocrite**

**When did we get so self-absorbed? If your baby is crying in the middle of the night you get up and do it anyway – that is a greater show of love than when you’re playing together… We think that being genuine to our feelings is more important.**

**“Sincerity of heart” - Today the seat of our emotions is our heart but in Greek times the seat of their emotions was their gut – the bowels – it was the seat of your will and commitment – this was not about feelings but a choice - this is about knowing inside what it right.**

**Attitude check: You get to choose your attitude.**

**BTW - 2 things that cause your boss to avoid you- whining & drama**

**2 things that keep you from promotion- bad attitude & lack of flexibility**

**Here's Some Work Advice**

* **If you can find a better job – take it (1 Co 7)**
* **If you can’t find a better job – quit complaining!**

**I want to quit but I can’t… Guess what - you have the best job for you. Bloom where we are planted!**

**The next verse gives us another challenge – Col 3:23 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.**

**Your job is not about you… it is about pleasing God. It is an act of God and a way to serve the Lord.**

**3. Pursue excellence – work like you’re doing it for Jesus.**

**23 …work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men… You are serving the Lord Christ.**

 **\*\* Reject good enough**

**Just a thought – pursuing excellence and pursuing perfection are different – sometimes it’s a home run – sometimes a double - sometimes strike out – but you did your best - pursuing excellence**

**Does anyone here want to be paid more? This verse reminds us**

**\*\* If you want to be paid more later, be worth more (pursue excellence).**

**Something I heard once – “If I never do more than I am paid to do – I’ll never be paid more for what I do”**

**Every day is an audition for tomorrow – the director and producer is watching – opportunities do not send emails to tell you in advance.**

**When we work as unto the Lord, we do more than the minimum and integrity leads our work, values, and ethics.**

**\*\* Remember, you are a missionary on a special assignment!**

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

**Our reward may not be a bonus in this life, it may be in heaven.**

**Titus 2:9 Teach servants to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, 10 and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. (God placed you there to bring his presence to that place. What do they see in you in how you work?)**

**Colossians goes on – Col 3:25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. (Don’t expect favoritism)**

**4. Don’t expect special treatment**

**Just because you are a Christ follower does not exempt you from the rules or work – on time, hard work, team player…**

**Don’t blame God for getting punished at work for a poor work ethic or being irresponsible.**

**Then he talks to the bosses - one rich verse - Col 4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**

**Any bosses (or employers) here?**

**WHEN YOU ARE THE BOSS**

**1. Create a work environment that is just**

**4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants justly…**

**This is a stronger statement than to the servants.**

**The workers are to be kind hard workers - bosses are to be just.**

* + **Justly Lit. - do what is right in the eyes of God.**

**Treat them the way God would treat them.**

**To be a good boss – you need to know God’s character.**

**This is a great example of how Jesus was changing culture. Nothing like this is found in other ancient writings. Roman servants had few rights. But this set’s a new president.**

**2. Create a work environment that is fair**

**4:1 Masters, treat your bondservants… fairly.**

**This is even stronger as this means treating them as equals.**

**You are to do what is required and more.**

**Philemon (Paul writes - sending back a fugitive bondservant) 12 I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. / 15 Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever— 16 no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. (We are an eternal equal family – in Christ)**

**This undermines the very foundations of slavery itself.**

**Great verse for managers - Proverbs 20:28 - Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love, his throne is made secure.**

**Want to make sure there is no coup? Love them – put their needs above your own and be faithful to care for them. Be a shepherd.**

**3. Treat subordinates as you want God to treat you**

**Col 4:1 Masters… knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.**

**Every boss will face *the* boss...**

**We see examples of this in a parable by Jesus in Matt 18 – a boss who treats his servant with wicked judgment is judged by his master.**

**You’re not really working for that company… you are a special agent on assignment to bring the presence and life of Christ to those people.**

**This verse is the whole point - Colossians 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.**

* **NEXT week – Paul ends with a powerful neglected fundamental**