

## ***Living responsibly in our social relationships, part 3: employers & employees***

Christian Life Disciplines No. 8c

See Colossians 3:22–4:1; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Peter 2:18-25; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:1-2.

There are basics in living which the Christian should make part of his or her life. Some of these basics concern our social relationships. In the New Testament the primary ones were husband-wife, parent-child, and master-slave. The last, the topic of this message, can be applied to employer-employee relationships.

### **I. Observations concerning slavery in the New Testament**

#### *1. What was slavery in NT times?*

- a. It was a wide-spread and legal practice in the Roman empire.
- b. Slavery meant being the possession of someone else with no personal rights.
- c. Never-the-less slaves could hold significant jobs and were often much appreciated.

#### *2. How did the writers of the New Testament view slavery?*

- a. If given the opportunity, slaves could seek their freedom (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 7:21). But Paul restricts this to legal opportunities, as demonstrated by the example in Philemon of Onesimus.
- b. Being a slave (or free) did not have eternal significance and should not trouble the person (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 7:21).
- c. The priority in the New Testament is not physical freedom or personal rights, but to live godly wherever we are.

### **II. *The relationship of masters and slaves or employers and employees: five principles***

#### *1. Full obedience:*

- a. This principle is important, because people tend to do less when the boss is not watching (*cf.* Colossians 3:22).
- b. The believer, however, should not do sinful acts (*cf.* Ephesians 6:5-6).
- c.

In an employer-employee relationship a contract might also restrict what an employee must do.

2. *Sincere motivation:* a good worker does not work just to be seen by people or only when seen by people, but to do a good job which is pleasing to the Lord.

3. *A Christ-focused perspective:* we serve the Lord, who bought us and who will ultimately evaluate and judge our work.

4. *Divine justice:* God will repay for all wrong done by slave or master, employer or employee. God does not favor one over the other, or excuse one or the other because of imagined extenuating circumstances.

5. *Spiritual equality:* in Christ there is neither slave nor free (Colossians 3:11). Both have the same Master and are rewarded by Him. We should treat one another knowing that we both equally give account to God.

God is concerned about our work-place, but wants us first to seek His righteousness and His Kingdom.

In all relationships our love for God is primary, followed closely by our love for others. We pursue God's righteousness and His kingdom and think of others more highly than ourselves. "... 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." (Colossians 3:17 NIV)