

Colossians 3:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

Analysis

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. Paul addresses slaves (douloi, δοῦλοι, "servants" in KJV)—perhaps majority of early church members. "Obey in all things" (hypakouete kata panta, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα) commands comprehensive obedience to "masters according to the flesh" (tois kata sarka kyriois, τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις)—earthly masters, distinguished from ultimate Master (Christ).

"Not with eyeservice" (mē en ophthalmodouleiai, μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλείαις, "eye-slavery") prohibits working only when watched. "As menpleasers" (hōs anthrōpareskoi, ὡς ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι) condemns working merely for human approval. Instead: "in singleness of heart, fearing God" (en haplotēti kardias phoboumenoi ton theon, ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας φοβούμενοι τὸν Θεόν)—sincere devotion, serving God not merely men. This transforms slavery from mere oppression into opportunity for witness.

Historical Context

Roman Empire depended on slavery; perhaps one-third of population were enslaved. Christianity didn't immediately abolish slavery but transformed master-slave relationships through mutual Christian identity. Slaves served Christ through faithful work; masters treated slaves as brothers. This planted seeds that

eventually led to slavery's abolition, though process took centuries. Paul's teaching gave dignity to slaves without promoting rebellion that would bring persecution and accomplish nothing.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do you work when no one's watching—with same diligence or cutting corners?
2. Does your work ethic reflect 'fearing God' or merely seeking human approval and advancement?
3. How can you view your job as serving Christ, transforming work from drudgery to worship?

Interlinear Text

Oι δοῦλοι ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα τοῖς κατὰ^{G3588}
Servants obey according all things^{G3588} according^{G2596}
G1401 G5219 G2596 G3956 G3787 G2596

σάρκα κυρίοις μὴ ἐν ὀφθαλμοδουλείαις ὡς^{G4561}
to the flesh your masters not in eyeservice as^{G5613}
G2962 G3361 G1722 G3787 G5613

ἀνθρωπάρεσκοι ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπλότητι καρδίας φοβούμενοι^{G441}
menpleasers but in singleness of heart fearing^{G5399}
G235 G1722 G572 G2588 G5399

τὸν Θεόν.^{G3588}
God^{G2316}

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 1:10 (References God): For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Colossians 3:20 (Sin): Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (Sin): But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 (References God): For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

Luke 6:46 (Parallel theme): And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

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