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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**"THE FULFILMENT OF MINISTRY"**

**Colossians 4:1-18**

***Colossians 4:1 "Masters, give unto [your] servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."***

The slave owner must consider his behavior in light of the Master in heaven. Paul is reminding these masters that they have a Master up in heaven, who is watching the way they deal with their subordinates here. To have a really good servant, you must be a good, honest master. Masters and servants are brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not a respecter of persons. We are all one in Christ. Whatever position you are filling here on the earth, do it to the best of your ability. Be kind to all people, and especially those you are over.

***Ephesians 4:32 “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”***

Justice and fairness exclude any kind of abuse or oppression. Although Paul’s teaching was directed to literal slaves and masters, by way of secondary application it can be brought to bear on contemporary employee employer relationships. Employers ought to treat their employees with dignity, justness, and fairness. Your employment practices are to reflect the character of the God you serve. It should be noted that contrary to some erroneous teaching, the Bible neither instituted nor ended slavery. It gave instructions on how slaves should be treated but did not outlaw slavery altogether. Several laws regulating slavery appear in Exodus 21. These laws gave some basic rights to slaves and curtailed the actions of masters in a historically unprecedented way. In the ancient world outside of Israel, slaves had no rights. Even in the New Testament era, the Bible did not demand that every slave owner immediately emancipate his slaves. Rather, the apostles gave instructions to slaves and their owners on godly behavior within that social system. Jesus and the apostles did not outright condemn slavery. They didn’t need to. The effect of the gospel is that lives are changed, one by one, and those changed lives in turn bring transformation to entire families, clans, and cultures.

***2 Corinthians 5:17-19***

***17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.***

***18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;***

***19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.***

The word used in verse 1 for servant is the Greek word “doulos”, which is a “bondservant” and means “one who is subservient to, and entirely at the disposal of, his master; a slave.” The Hebrew word for “bondservant,” ‘ebed, had a similar connotation. Many prominent men of the Old Testament were referred to as servants. God spoke of Abraham as His servant. Joshua was Moses’ servant and is also called the servant of the Lord, as are David and Isaiah. Joseph’s slavery was divinely used of God to facilitate deliverance for His people.

***Genesis 45:7 “And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”***

Even the Messiah is called God’s Servant. In all of these instances, the term servant carries the idea of humble nobility. Servanthood is one way God demonstrates His divine strength and order through submission one to another. Being God’s servant is an honorable position.

***Matthew 20:28 “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”***

***John 13:13-17***

***13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.***

***14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.***

***15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.***

***16 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.***

***17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.***

***Colossians 4:2 "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"***

Paul urges the Colossians to pray. Christians must take prayer seriously and not casually. Like a lookout watching for the enemy, we must stay alert in prayer. Prayer is a conversation with God. Jesus taught the disciples the way to pray in what we call the "Lord's Prayer". He told them in this prayer to reverence the Father. Prayers are prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus. Jesus opened the way for us to go to the Father, when the veil covering the holy of holies was torn from the top to the bottom at the crucifixion of Jesus. We have power of attorney to use the name of Jesus. Pray, believing that you will receive your answer. All prayer should be in the name of Jesus. The power is in His name.

***John 14:12-14***

***12 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."***

***13 "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."***

***14 "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do [it]."***

***James 5:16 "Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."***

Paul’s teaching addresses three common challenges to effective prayer: lack of dedication and honesty (confession is good for the soul!), a sluggish approach to prayer (stay aware and alert!), and prayers filled with requests but devoid of thanksgiving. While we are praying, we should give God thanks for everything. Remember, if you are a Christian, the devil cannot do anything to you that God does not permit. We should grow in every tribulation that we have. They come to make us strong in the Lord.

***1 Thessalonians 5:17-18***

***17 Pray without ceasing.***

***18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.***

***Colossians 4:3-4***

***3 "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"***

***4 "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."***

Paul is in chains when this is written. He requests prayer for his preaching ministry, first, for good opportunities (door of utterance) that had been curtailed by his imprisonment. This does not stop him, however. He has his door of utterance. Some of Caesar's household were saved. Paul, also, preached in the home where he was under house arrest. This is a reminder that Christians must pray for pastors, missionaries, and themselves that God would open doors with unbelievers. Second, even such an experienced missionary as Paul asked for prayer that he might be enabled by God to make clear the mystery of Christ. Wherever you are, whatever the situation is, solicit prayers that God will open a door for you and show you how to minister in that particular place to those particular people. Ministry relevance is essential to salvation. The only thing you must do, is say Lord, here am I, send me. Be willing to minister wherever you are. Christianity is an individual thing. If there is just one person there, tell them about Jesus. Paul was in bonds because he would not compromise the Word of God. To manifest is to make real. Paul wanted to make Christianity real to the people he spoke to. The best way for any of us to minister, is for Christ in us to minister. Turn yourself, especially your tongue, over to God and let God minister through you.

***1 Corinthians 9:19-23***

***19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.***

***20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;***

***21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.***

***22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.***

***23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.***

***Colossians 4:5 "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."***

Since witness to the gospel is so important, behavior toward nonbelievers (outsiders) must be characterized by wisdom and seized opportunity. Our life on this earth is such a short time, so we must make every minute count. Walking in wisdom is walking the path that God has chosen for you, doing the things that God would have you do. This is saying, minister to everyone the love of Jesus. Be wise and do what you can at whatever level you are. Don't waste precious time.

***Ephesians 5:15-16***

***15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,***

***16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.***

***Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech [be] alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."***

When teaching others of the Lord Jesus, we must do it in love and gentleness. Our witness should be crafted for each person in his unique situation, so that the gospel message is applied rightly to those who need to know about the Christian faith. This requires spending time with people sharing the love of Christ prior to sharing your knowledge the gospel. People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care! Paul asserted that the answer to them should not be harsh or boring but rather should be a delicate blend of tact (grace) and wit or spice (seasoned), crafted for each individual person. Salt is a preservative. The salt in the teaching must be something that will help them keep their salvation, after they have received it.

***1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”***

***Colossians 4:7-9***

***7 "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, [who is] a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord:"***

***8 "Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts;"***

***9 "With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is [one] of you. They shall make known unto you all things which [are done] here."***

We see that Paul is sending Tychicus to them. Paul gives him a recommendation, when he calls him, beloved brother. Tychicus will possibly bear this letter to the church of the Colossians. Paul was very interested in what became of these Christians, and it appears that Tychicus was to bring a report back to Paul on their growth in the Lord. They had desired Paul to come, but since he was in chains, he sent Tychicus in his place. This showed the loving care of Paul for these people. Notice, that he had ministered with Paul {fellowservant}. We, also, see in this that he was a capable minister. Perhaps, Paul had trained Tychicus as he traveled with him. It seemed that Onesimus was a native, he was going along with Tychicus. Jesus had taught them to send them out by twos. It was important for two to go out, so they could have the power of the prayer of agreement. It would be much better, if two ministers could work together in a church.

***Colossians 4:10 "Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)"***

Paul had six fellow workers who passed on greetings beginning in verse 10. The first three are Jewish Christians (from the circumcision): Aristarchus, Mark, and Jesus (Justus). The second group of three contains Epaphras, Luke, and Demas. Aristarchus was a Thessalonian. It seems that he had gone to Rome and was imprisoned with Paul. Marcus is the same John Mark who went with Paul on the first missionary journey. Sometime during the journey, he left Paul (Acts 15:38-39), later Paul forgave him, and even recommends him here. Paul tells them to receive John Mark, if he comes, as a brother.

***2 Timothy 4:11 “Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”***

***Colossians 4:11 "And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only [are my] fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."***

The name Jesus was sometimes Joshua. It seems in this case, it is Justus, however. This name means just, or righteous. Notice this has to do with the Jews {of the circumcision}. Paul is saying that these are brothers that are still with him here in Rome.

***Colossians 4:12 "Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."***

It appears that Epaphras was a native of Colosse. It, also, appears that he was devoted to the work of Christ {servant of Christ}. We see that he is sending greetings to his people in Paul's letter. There is no more important job in a church than the job of prayer intercessor. Any church is just as strong as the prayers that are prayed for it. This is unusual in that the desire of the prayer is made known here. Paul says the desire of the prayers was that they would be in the perfect will of God.

***Colossians 4:13 "For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them [that are] in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."***

The church in Laodecia is mentioned in Revelation as one of the 7 churches. It seems they had fallen to a lukewarm condition at that time. It seems that Epaphrus prayers were needed for this church. Perhaps, Epaphrus was the one who started these churches, or perhaps, he was an overseer.

***Colossians 4:14 "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you."***

Luke is the author of the gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts. As such, he would be the only known Gentile to have authored any biblical books. Luke appears as a companion to Paul elsewhere (Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:10), but only here is he called a physician because he was Paul’s physician. Paul had prayed three times to God to remove the thorn in his flesh, and God said no. When God does not heal you, He gives you physicians to help. Luke went on most of Paul's journeys with him. Demas is, possibly, the one from 2 Timothy that had forsaken Paul. At any rate, Paul did not give him a recommendation.

***Colossians 4:15-16***

***15 "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house."***

***16 "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the [epistle] from Laodicea."***

Paul asked the Colossians to send greetings to the believers in Laodicea located about ten miles from Colossae. He also wanted these churches to pass around the letters he had written, which shows how Paul’s letters were first circulated. Though we do not have a copy of Paul’s letter to the Laodiceans, we do have the risen Lord Jesus’s letter to the church in Laodicea that the apostle John records in the book of Revelation 3:14-22. It appears that Nymphas had turned his house into a church. This person he was a leading member of the Laodicean church. House churches were common and are mentioned a few times in the New Testament (Acts 16:15; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2).

***Colossians 4:17 "And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."***

Archippus had an important job in the church at Laodicea. Whether he was pastor, we cannot say. It does appear that he has been discouraged, and Paul is telling him to stay in there and do the work that God has called him to do. Paul, also, says in this that he was chosen of God for this job, he had not appointed himself. This level of commitment is required of all ministers.

***Hosea 2:20 “I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.”***

***Matthew 25:3 “His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”***

***2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”***

***Titus 3:8 “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.”***

***Revelation 2:10 “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”***

***Colossians 4:18 "The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace [be] with you. Amen."***

This letter, and the greeting at the end here, were from Paul himself. Paul asks them to pray for him, remembering that he is still in bonds. Paul always speaks grace to the one he is writing to. "Amen" means so be it.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Masters, give unto your servants that which is \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. We must remember we have a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in heaven.
3. What makes the master and servant brothers?
4. Continue in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
5. All prayer should be in the name of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Paul wanted them to pray that a door of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ would be open for him.
7. What mystery did Paul want to speak?
8. Where is Paul, when this is written?
9. Who was saved while Paul was ministering in Rome?
10. What does manifest mean?
11. Why must we make every minute count?
12. Let your speech be alway with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
13. Season it with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
14. Salt, in the Scripture, is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
15. What does fellowservant show us about Paul and Tychicus?
16. Onesimus was from where?
17. Who did Paul call fellowprisoner?
18. Marcus, here, is the same as whom?
19. Who was Mark's mother?
20. What does the name Justus mean?
21. What is one of the most important jobs in the church?
22. Where is the church at Laodicea mentioned?
23. Who was the physician mentioned?
24. What warning did he send to Archippus?
25. Paul always speaks \_\_\_\_\_\_ to the one he is writing to