

Colossians 3:22-25 - When Scripture Doesn't Make Sense

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Colossians 3

¹⁸ Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²² "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly 1 Peter 2

Interpretive Considerations

1. Every text has a context.
2. Every text has an author.
3. Every context is found in a specific genre of literature.
4. Use what is clear in Scripture to interrupt what is unclear.
5. Look for movement in Scripture as it is revealed progressively and at times specifically.
6. Depend on the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament on Slavery - God Regulated Slavery

Hebrew Servitude was a Voluntary Security Against Poverty in Which Freedom was Offered After a Time of Service

² "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. ³ If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. Exodus 21

⁸ "Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. ¹³ "In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property. Leviticus 25

²⁰ “Anyone who beats their male or female slave with a rod must be punished if the slave dies as a direct result, ²¹ but they are not to be punished if the slave recovers after a day or two, since the slave is their property. Exodus 21

³⁹ “If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves. ⁴⁰ They are to be treated as hired workers or temporary residents among you; they are to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then they and their children are to be released, and they will go back to their own clans and to the property of their ancestors. ⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ Do not rule over them ruthlessly but fear your God. Leviticus 25

God Punished Israel for Not Freeing Slaves

⁸ The word came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim freedom for the slaves. ⁹ Everyone was to free their Hebrew slaves, both male and female; no one was to hold a fellow Hebrew in bondage. ¹⁰ So all the officials and people who entered into this covenant agreed that they would free their male and female slaves and no longer hold them in bondage. They agreed and set them free. ¹¹ But afterward they changed their minds and took back the slaves they had freed and enslaved them again.

¹⁷ “Therefore this is what the LORD says: You have not obeyed me; you have not proclaimed freedom to your own people. So I now proclaim ‘freedom’ for you, declares the LORD— ‘freedom’ to fall by the sword, plague and famine. I will make you abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth. Jeremiah 34

Slave Trading is Condemned

⁹ We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious...for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹ that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1 Timothy 1

- The Ten Commandments
- The Old Testament Law
- Proverbs

Principles to Apply

Work for the Lord

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Give it Your All

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.

The Lord will Right Wrongs

It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism. Colossians 3

Where from Here?