

“The Christian Home”

August 20, 2017

Colossians 3:18 – 4:1

I. Introduction

The major social problem facing society today is the inability of people to get along with each other. From sibling rivalry among children, to the breakup of marriages, to crimes and battles, all the way to confrontations between world powers, the problem is the same: the lack of a personal relationship with God. Without God, there are no absolute moral or ethical standards to regulate one's behavior. Without God, a person doesn't know who he is or why she exists. For a person without God, life has no meaning; as far as he can see he is just a random collection of atoms. A life with no particular standards and no meaning leads to loneliness. With nothing in the world to give meaning to a person's hopes and dreams, he feels isolated and alone. A person without moral standards, facing emptiness and loneliness will see others as threats to his or her pursuit of happiness. Negativism and despair will often cause a person to retreat further into selfishness and alienation. All of this leads to conflicts with others.

When a person becomes a Christian, these problems cease to exist. The Word of God contains an absolute moral standard that is based in the nature of God. No longer is a person just an “accident of nature” existing for some unknown purpose, as [Romans 8:17](#) says, the believer is a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus. Nor do believers suffer from alienation or loneliness; they are now beloved children of their heavenly Father and part of the family of believers.

Earlier in Colossians 3 Paul described the new life in Christ. He wrote that the old self consisted of “sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” ... of things like “anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language.” But the new life consists of “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with each other, forgiving one another and all this guided by sacrificial love” ([Col. 3:5, 8, 12-14](#)). Genuine Christianity consists of both doctrine and holy living. The changes that occur when a person gets rid of the old man and puts on the new man must be seen in the first institution God founded on earth—the home ([Genesis 2:18-25](#)). It's in the home that the rubber meets the

road. It is in the home that we first live out our newness as “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.” In today’s Scripture Paul gave brief, direct instructions on Christian living in the home beginning with husbands and wives.

II. The Christian Home

A. Husbands and Wives

1. Wives Paul has often been criticized as being down on women. Actually, he presented a radical new view of marriage and family which elevated women and children to an unthinkable level of equality. The word translated as *submit* isn’t used in terms of slavery or suppression, it is a military term and means to arrange under rank. The fact that one soldier is a private and another is a colonel doesn’t mean that one person is necessarily better than the other. It only means that they have different ranks; different responsibilities. It has the concept of putting oneself under another person, not by compulsion, but willingly. This same word is used in [Luke 2:51](#) concerning Jesus when He returned from His episode in the temple; we read, “Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient, i.e. submitted, to them.”

Throughout the Bible, God does things “in a fitting and orderly way” ([1 Corinthians 14:40](#)). If there isn’t a chain of command in society, there would be chaos—just look around. [Galatians 3:28](#) says, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Spiritually there is no difference between male and female. In fact, [Ephesians 5:21](#) says that both the husband and wife must be submitted to the Lord and to each other. Jesus submitted to the Father during His life on earth, yet He was in no way inferior to Him. The fact that the wife is to submit to her husband does not imply that the man is better than the woman. It only means that the man has the responsibility of leadership, of headship in the home.

Submission is not absolute. There may be times when a wife must refuse to submit to her husband’s desires, e.g. if they violate God’s Word. Finally, as we read in the next verse, the husband’s

authority is not to be exercised in an authoritative, overbearing manner. The wife's submission takes place in the context of a loving relationship.

When Paul wrote, **“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord,”** he was emphasizing that this was God's design and was God's command for the functioning of the family. This wasn't just a cultural change or adaptation for Paul's day. This was and is God's command for a Christian marriage. Joyful submission is evidence that the wife belongs to Jesus Christ.

2. Husbands Paul then addressed husbands, **“Husbands, love your wives.”** The husband has the responsibility of loving his wife, and the word for *“love”* here is *ἀγαπάω* - agape love—the sacrificial, serving love that Christ has for His church. A Christian marriage may begin with normal, human romantic love, but it must grow deeper into a spiritual agape love that comes only from God. Paul wrote more about this relationship in Ephesians 5—**turn to Ephesians 5:22-28**. Jesus Christ gave His all for the church. He willingly died for us. The measure of a man's love for his wife is not seen only in gifts or words, but in acts of sacrifice and concern for her happiness and her welfare before his own.

God designed that a wife's submission operate within a sphere of sacrificial love. In that way she is protected because a man who truly loves his wife would never force her to submit to something humiliating, degrading, or that violates her conscience. The godly husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church. A husband who truly loves his wife will not behave harshly or try to throw his weight around in the home. Turn to **1 Corinthians 13:4-7** for God's description of this love. This is the kind of love a man must have for his wife.

Paul added a special word of warning for husbands: **“And do not be harsh or bitter with them.”** Husbands must be careful not to harbor bitterness or ill-will toward their wives because of something they did or did not do. **Hebrews 12:15** reminds that a bitter root **“grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”** Harshness or bitterness will give Satan a foothold.

B. Parents and Children

1. Children Paul then turned to the second relationship in the home, that of parents and children. The Greek word for *children* is a general term; it refers to any child still living in the home and under parental guidance. That children are to honor and obey their parents is taught throughout Scripture beginning with the Ten Commandments: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus. 20:12). Disobedience to parents marks the ungodly—turn to 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Paul wrote that children are to obey their parents “in all things” and not simply in those things that please them. The only limit placed on a child’s obedience is when a parent demands something contrary to God’s law. Jesus knew that some children would have to defy their parents to come to faith in him—turn to Luke 12:51-53. Salvation can bring a division in a family; children may have to reject their parents’ commands if they are contrary to Scripture. The measure of obedience is “everything” and the motive for obedience is that “this pleases the Lord.” Then Paul turned to parents.

2. Parents The word *fathers* in Colossians 3:21 could be translated “parents” like it is in Hebrews 11:23. Paul made it clear that parents must make it easy for children to obey, “do not embitter your children;” in Ephesians 6:4 Paul wrote, “do not exasperate your children.” Too often parents automatically say *no* when their children ask for something when, instead, they should listen and evaluate each request. Parents often change their minds and create problems for their children, sometimes swinging from extreme permissiveness to extreme legalism.

Parents should encourage their children and not discourage them. In our busy age and involvement with technology, parents still need to spend time with their children. It is an encouragement for children to know that their parents, as busy as they are, take time, make time, to be with them. Parents need to listen and be patient as their children talk to them. Life isn’t easy for children—especially Christian children. Their problems might seem small to us, but they are quite large to them. Christian parents must listen carefully, share the feelings and frustrations of their children, pray with them, and seek to encourage them. Home ought to be the happiest and best place in all the world.

C. Masters and Slaves

1. Slaves The final relationship in the home was that of masters and slaves. In Paul's day slavery was an established institution. There were approximately 60 million slaves and many were well-educated people who had great responsibilities in the homes of the wealthy. In many homes, the slaves helped to educate and discipline the children.

The Word of God never advocated slavery, but it did recognize it as an element of society that could be beneficial if both slaves and masters treated each other with respect. Paul was careful to instruct Christian slaves to secure their freedom if they could ([1 Corinthians 7:21](#)); but he didn't advocate rebellion or the overthrow of the existing order. The primary purpose of the early church, like the church today, was to spread the Gospel and win souls. While it is good and right for Christians to get involved in the promotion of honesty and morality in government and society, these concerns must never replace the mandate to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

In our society slavery has been outlawed through the work of Christians, but these principles apply to any kind of honest employment. A Christian worker ought to be the best worker on the job. He ought to obey orders and not argue. He ought to serve Christ and not the boss only, and he ought to do his best whether anybody is watching or not. If he follows these principles, Paul writes that the worker will receive his reward from Christ even if his earthly master (his boss) does not recognize him or reward him.

In our complex, competitive world, it is sometimes difficult for a Christian to obey God and hold his job, or get a promotion. But he must obey God just the same and trust Him for what he needs. Unsaved fellow employees may take advantage of the Christian worker, but perhaps this can be an opportunity for the Christian to witness and back up his witness with his life.

2. Masters On the other side of the relationship, masters or bosses are to treat their slaves, their workers "**with what is right and fair,**" i.e. with *justice and fairness*. This was a new idea to Roman masters because they considered slaves as "*things*" and not people. Social standards and pressures disagreed with Christian ideals, but the Christian master was to practice those ideals just the same. He

was to treat his slave like a person and like a brother in Christ. He was not to mistreat him. After all, the Christian slave was a free man in the Lord, and the master was a slave to Christ. [Colossians 3:11](#) says, “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”

III. Conclusion

The basic principle of Christianity is that every Christian member of a family is equal as a recipient of God’s grace. But some have different roles and different expectations. Someone needs to take a leadership role as a necessary barrier against complete turmoil. A freewheeling family or organization where each person does his or her own thing, refusing to give or assume power when necessary, will fly apart. But this leadership is given freely by others—it is not forced on them. The New Testament has definite views on how power is to be used. Each set of instructions addressed to the one in leadership forbids any injustice, exploitation, or mistreatment. As Jesus demonstrated at the Last Supper in [John 13:2-17](#) when He washed His disciples’ feet, the greatest should become the servant of all. Paul’s instructions do not appoint the husband as the overlord of his wife; parents are not to domineer and crush their children’s spirits; masters are not advised to squeeze the most work out of their slaves/workers. The key is love, justice, and fairness.

The bottom line for all relationships: husband & wife, parents & children, masters & slaves, is the preeminence of Jesus Christ in the lives of believers. Christ must be the Head of the home and every relationship—as [Colossians 3:17](#) says, “And whatsoever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” If He is the preeminent One in our lives, then we will love each other, submit to each other, obey, and treat one another fairly in the Lord.

The heart of every problem is the problem of the heart, and only God’s Spirit and God’s Word can change and control the heart. How about your heart, to whom does it belong? Can people who live with

you detect that you belong to God? Can they see that you are filled with His Spirit and His Word—not just in what you say, but in your relationships in your family and at work? Are you able to say along with Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that “whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you do it all for the glory of God”?