



Living Out Lordship

December 15, 2024

Colossians 3:18-4:6

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*<sup>18</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. <sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. <sup>22</sup> Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

*<sup>4</sup> Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. <sup>5</sup> Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

*(Pastor prays)*

Today is the third Sunday in Advent, and this may seem like a strange passage to be adding to a third Sunday in Advent. The third Sunday in Advent always calls us to rejoice that Jesus Christ, who was born of a virgin, lived on Earth in a holy and righteous way, and that same Jesus, after living 33 years in perfect sinlessness, is crucified. That is to say, he is nailed to a cross in the place of sinners. That is the heart of Christianity: Jesus as our substitute. He died there on the cross, and they buried him in a borrowed tomb. For three days, he was dead, and on the third day, God raised him from the dead. It's Easter, and he appeared to many, and then he ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God the Father. And one day, he will come again

in the clouds. And we rejoice in what Christ has done to save us. We trust that he saves us. We rejoice and claim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But we say that not like you would say a pledge. If you came up in school like I did in elementary school, you would stand in the classroom and say a Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. You would say it so many times that you would have it memorized, which I think is a good thing to do. But saying the Pledge of Allegiance to a flag is not the same thing as saying Jesus Christ is Lord. The claim that Jesus Christ is Lord has an instant and then lasting implication for your life. Paul writes to a church of people who are gathering together and are saying Jesus is Lord. And in this passage, as he closes down his letter, Paul is saying, if that's the case, I'll say this as the theme...

### **If You Claim Christ as Lord, It Matters How You Live**

If you say I've given my life to Jesus Christ, he has saved me. If that's the case, then it actually does matter how you live your life at home, at work, how you pray, and in your neighborhood. Now, you're going to see some things in this passage as it's opened up. The very first verse had the word submission, and when you come down the page, you see the word slavery. And in this passage, Paul does not speak to the rights people have. We certainly believe people have rights, but Paul speaks to the responsibility that you and I have been given to live for Christ in a Christian way, regardless of the difficulties. You live every bit of your life for the gospel and the glory of the Lord Jesus. So, Paul invites us to follow him down the street and up to the front porch of a home and to look inside. He starts us off with the first point and says: number one.

### **It matters how you act at home**

Paul says, look inside the window, and the very first person that he points to is a mother and a wife. You understand that the first person you witnessed to are right inside of your house living with you. Paul takes us, in verse 18, to the very heart of the home, and this is what he says to the wives.<sup>18</sup> *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* The Christian wife, because she has been saved and subdued by the Lordship of Jesus, is to voluntarily display deference to

her husband as a living example of the gospel. You could go to Ephesians 5. If you are engaged to be married, go and memorize Ephesians 5. It shows us the woman submitting to her husband because that marriage is a picture of the gospel, and she is picturing the church submitting to the Lordship of Jesus. What does it mean to be submissive? To be submissive to is to stand under, to stand behind, to show deference, to display respect, to give support, to live loyally. Now, be careful what you do with this. Let me talk to the husband just for a moment. This is not a command for the husband to try to get submission. You might do that, but you might get your arm broken.

This is Paul speaking directly to a Christian woman living in a home, married to a husband, and saying, regardless of your situation, you are called under the Lordship of Jesus to live like this as a picture of the gospel. This is Christian womanhood, regardless of the husband. Now, I've heard this passage preached like; if a husband would love his wife as Christ does the church, then she would be able to submit to him like the church does to the Lord. And that is true. But that's not what Paul says. Paul writes in such a way that this is a picture of the Christian woman because her life is going to be a reflection of the gospel. You find this in Ephesians 5, in Colossians 3, and in first Peter 3:4. Peter says *“but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.”* He had earlier said, not with makeup and gold. And Paul says in verse 18, wives be submissive to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. You know what Paul doesn't say? Paul doesn't say, wives be submissive to your husband if he is a baptized Superman, he's the greatest Christian husband you've ever met, and he's leading the way and he does everything right, then you submit to him. This command has nothing to do with the husband and all to do with you as a Christian woman. Now listen, obviously, if he's abusive, there are a lot of what ifs; if he's abusive or he's trying to keep you from worship or he's ungodly treating you, certainly you get out of there because that's not as is fitting in the Lord. But even if you're living with someone that is not a believer, that is not a reason to not be submissive because the submission is a picture of the gospel that may one day point him to Christ. So, you ask God to help you to live in such a way that your home reflects the gospel.

That's one part of the home. Let's go to another part and look at the husbands. What does it say to the husbands? Love your wives with the overarching depth of love that is agape love. It's a joyfully sacrificial love. How does Paul write it in Ephesians? He says to the husband, you are

to love your wives as Christ loves the church, giving himself up for her. Let Jesus be your example as to what lengths you will go for your wife. To love her as Christ does the church is to gladly strengthen her, to press for her flourishing. It is a picture of her being first without you resenting that. It's one thing to do the things you're supposed to do. It's another thing to do the things you're supposed to do and do them joyfully. What does it mean to love her as Christ loves the church? It's a happy willingness to do whatever it is going to take to strengthen her, to stabilize her, to bring joy to her. And then Paul says, husbands, don't be harsh in your tone and your attitude. For instance, you wouldn't talk to your wife the same way that you might talk to another man. I think it's fine to be harsh with men, but you wouldn't act like that to your wife. And you'll notice that this is a command. You understand this is not something you hope will generate a feeling. You love your wife in such a way that the gospel you claim to hold onto is adorned and made to look good. This is a command and not a feeling.

So, I have been pastoring churches for 33 years, and when you're doing that, you spend a lot of time in and out of dealing with couples that walk through difficulty. And sometimes you'll hear a man say, I just fell out of love. That is the dumbest thing you can say. You fall in holes. You don't fall in love. You can't be commanded to fall. And Paul is commanding something that is beyond the romantic version. That romance, it's good that is there, but he's commanding something that goes beyond that. Ask God to turn your heart in that way, then live out that affection. Why? Because the gospel is at stake. These are not just house rules of everybody play nice. This is given to us for the gospel.

So now the attention is on the children. Join me there in verse 20. <sup>20</sup> *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* OK, so every person in here that is 20 years old or younger, and you have given your life to Jesus Christ, and you claim Christ as Lord, you claim to be a Christian, how you respond and how you live in front of your parents matters. If you are claiming that Jesus Christ is your Lord, if you are claiming to be a Christian, and yet you are disrespectful and disobedient, you have a bad attitude, and you talk back, and you argue, you are living in sin. What does Paul say? It's a direct command; this is the word obey. It is an inner attitude here. Children are told to obey their parents in everything. This is the way you please the Lord. The opposite is true. If you are disobedient in everything, it displeases the Lord. Maybe you have some parents that you think are too strict. It doesn't matter. Maybe they're not believers. Unless they are telling you to do something that is unchristian or ungodly, how

you treat and respond to your parent is a reflection of your walk with the Lord. To be a rebellious and hateful teenager is displeasing to God. So, what's the application? Find a way in your own heart, the things you're dealt with, maybe parents that are not good, they're ungodly, you find a way to honor God. You ask God to help you. You cling to the gospel. You seek forgiveness and restoration where you can.

So, wives are submitting, husbands are loving, and children are obeying. Now let's come down one more to verse 21 and that is for fathers. But for all of you that are maybe single mothers, the father is not at home; maybe you're a single father, the father here is what was called the pater familias. It is the overarching authority in the home. But maybe that's you, so you can apply this to your life. <sup>21</sup>*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* This is a warning for dads. Don't be so hard that you are impossible to please. If you are impossible to please, and that child is trying to do the right thing, and you never give encouragement, you're going to break that child's will. Look, the best chance for a kid to come up well-adjusted and confident in the Lord and confident in herself is to have a parent or parents that lovingly discipline, guide, support, and point to Christ. Why do I tell you all of this? According to Paul, wives, husbands, children, and parents, it matters how you act at home. Let me give you a second one, number two.

### **It matters how you act at work**

So, I'm going to take Chapter 3, verse 22, all the way to Chapter 4, verse 1, to prove this point. Let me just give some backstory. In the Roman world, where Colossians was written to this little church, the population would be about 50% slaves. And if the gospel is expanding, 50% of the people that are joining the church are going to be people that are slaves. And Paul writes some directives for them. These are instructions on how you live in the situation that you are in, and I think the very best way to apply these directives to bond servants is to understand that they apply to how we work. Whether it's a career or a job that you don't even like, or maybe you are staying at home, taking care of the home, I think there are some principles that we can find there in verse 20. What do we find? Here's the first one. We need to find contentment. Now, the Bible speaks clearly about the evils of slavery, but the thing about this passage is Paul doesn't address it here. He doesn't say go try to get your freedom. What he says is that you are in this situation, and you are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. This is how you live in this situation. Here, Paul is addressing where they are. If you can get a better job, get it, that's great.

If not, this is where you are. This is the job you have. We believe that God is sovereign. So, if that's true, God has the power to change where you are. He has not changed it, so you joyfully trust his sovereignty, and you do the best you can do where you are as an example of the gospel. So, the boss tells you to do something, do it. Why? Because the gospel is at stake. You do it without grumbling. Do it without complaining. You do it with joy in the Lord because you realize that even in your situation, where you are in a job you hate, doing menial tasks, there is a picture of what it means to be a Christian in this situation.

Let me give you a second thing about work in verse 22. We need to work hard. We need to work hard as long as it isn't sinful or, dishonest or dishonoring to the Lord. We work hard. Go back up the page a little bit to verse 17. Paul says, <sup>17</sup>*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Don't be a window dressing. Don't be somebody that looks good when looking through the window, but when you get in, you see it's not actually any good. What does he say in verse 22? <sup>22</sup>*Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.* Don't be the person who looks like they're working when the boss is there, but when the boss walks away, you goof off. When your supervisor is around, you're working on your computer, and they see what you're doing, but as soon as they leave the room, you flip back over to Facebook. That's not what it means to work as a Christian. Instead, the text says, *but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.* That means, with integrity, that we are concerned with how God sees what we do, and that is to not ride the clock. We view work as a devotion. Regardless of the job, do the work. Regardless of whether or not you are in management, you are a nurse, a doctor, a teacher, driving a truck, a salesperson, maybe an accountant, what we have here right here in verse 23 is the Protestant work ethic. A lot of people think it means we are just blue-collar workers. We have a blue-collar attitude and just work hard. That's not the Protestant work ethic. The Protestant work ethic is verse 23. <sup>23</sup>*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* So, he just sanctified everything we do by saying this is not for a paycheck. This is not for a promotion. This is not so people see you work. This is an offering to the Lord. This is an act of worship. I provide a full day's work for full pay, and I do so because I'm doing this for God. I know it that my reward is in heaven. Verse 24 says, <sup>24</sup>*knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* Don't

forget that God is sovereign over our work. So, let's say you're in a job that you can't stand. I would say if you can find a better job, get it. But just know this: you don't live in frustration. You are serving the Lord Christ, regardless of the job. That's the Protestant work ethic. By the way, this is the only time in the New Testament that you see the phrase the Lord Christ. He is sovereign over those who he has redeemed. And if God has the ability to change your circumstances and he has not yet changed them, then honor God in the hard place.

I'll add one last thing before I move on. If you're the master, you're the boss, you're the supervisor, you are in charge, chapter 4:1 says you treat people with dignity, justice, and fairness because there is an unblinking eye. God is watching you. You are aware that you are doing this as a servant to the Lord. It matters how you act at home. It matters how you act at work. Let me give you a third point, number three.

### **It matters how you pray**

Look at chapter 4, verses 2-4. Paul has now addressed the home life: wives, husbands, children, and parents. Paul has addressed work life, and now he tells us how we pray. He says, <sup>2</sup>*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.* We need to set a time, I would suggest around 20 to 25 minutes, with the Lord. You can read a couple of chapters in the Bible and then ask God to help you pray. Pray for your friends and family, and then you go live your life. But you do that every day continuously. Find a way where that is incorporated into the very fabric of your life. We are alert to the world we live in, to the news that's going on, the events of our society, the people in our lives. The Bible says that we pray with gratitude, with thanksgiving. Just think with me about things that God has provided by way of provision. Just list how God has provided in my life. Think of your salvation. Think about what happened to lead to the events of you coming to put your faith in Jesus when you trusted Christ died in your place, and God raised him from the dead, and your heart opened to that. So, you thank God for that. Thank God for the relationships you have with people in your life who have had this positive gospel influence on you. And let's go out on the edge here and thank God for the painful thing you walked through; maybe a broken heart or you lost a child or a spouse. Maybe somebody did you so terribly bad that it damaged you. Turn your heart and look at the Cross of Christ and thank God that he has made you weak. Because in your weakness, he's made strong. We pray with intentionality. When you read verses 3-4, you hear Paul just pouring out. He prays very specifically. <sup>3</sup>*At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the*

*word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— <sup>4</sup> that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.* It is interesting that he didn't pray to get out of prison. He prayed that he may make it clear how I ought to speak. Let's pray for someone very specifically. Ask God to do something very specific. And when he answers that, God will be glorified. It matters how you pray.

So it matters how you live at home. It matters how you act at work. It matters how you pray. There's a fourth thing that matters, number four.

### **It matters what kind of neighbor you are**

Whether you live in a townhouse, or an apartment, or in a neighborhood, it matters what kind of neighbor you are. Let me show where I get that in verses 5-6. <sup>5</sup> *Walk in wisdom*

*toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. <sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

Outsiders are those who are not in the church, in Christ. Walk with wisdom toward outsiders and you make the best use of the time. You redeem the time you get as much as possible. What does it mean to walk in wisdom? Wisdom is knowledge that you've gained over time and you have rightly applied it to your life. It's experience that you've applied and you are aware of the people that live around you. God has put you in the apartment building, or in the townhouse, or in the neighborhood, so that you can take advantage of the opportunity. That's what verse 5 says. <sup>5</sup> *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.* And verse 6 gets to the gospel. <sup>6</sup> *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.* Let your speech be gracious; that's kindness. What we're explaining is what saves people. It's going to bring preservation and hope. Let your speech always be seasoned with salt so that you might know how you ought to answer each person, so you might know how to actually explain the gospel.

Let's do it like this. Open the Bible to pages 1-2, and you'll find God there creating all things. He's a holy God. If you keep reading the Bible, you see the Holy God has laws. When you get into Exodus, you have the 10 commandments. They are the expectations that God; this Holy Creator, has. The problem we have is we don't meet those expectations even though we were created in the image of God. Adam and Eve are there in the garden with God, they are created to have fellowship with him, but there's something that breaks that fellowship. We call it the

fall. It's sin. Sin has so broken the fellowship that we are not just far from God. The Bible says we're dead in sin; we are an offense to God. We are born with the nature of Adam, that's sinful. That nature makes us enemies of God. We feel it in our rebelliousness.

The Bible says that God is not just this creator who created us and leaves us. He's also a loving God that pursues us. He sees our problem, and he fixes it. The first Adam fell into sin, but there's a second Adam, and that second Adam is Jesus Christ. And although we are born in the sinful nature of the first Adam, the second Adam comes; that's Advent. He comes and does everything the first Adam was supposed to do. He's in perfect fellowship with God the Father. He fulfills all the commandments. He does everything right. That righteous life and fellowship with God, if you read the Bible further, after Christmas, after the birth of Jesus, 33 years later, Jesus goes to the cross. And at the cross, Jesus dies in the place of all the condemnation that we deserve. All that we had stored up is poured out on Jesus. Read the story at the end of the Gospels. It's terrible the agony that Jesus went through. It was for us. He did that in our place. They killed him instead of killing you. They buried him, and God raised him from the dead. He ascended into heaven. And here's the offer of the Gospel. If you will believe, you can take the righteousness, and like a robe, you can put it on. The way that happens is that you believe that Christ died for you, that Christ lived for you. You turn from your sin, and you take that filthy garment off, and by faith, you put on the righteousness of Christ. Jesus Christ lived and died in your place. The resurrection is proof that it worked. You become a Christian by trusting Christ. And if you claim Christ as Lord, it will matter how you live your life at home and at work. It will matter how you pray and how you live in your neighborhood. And this morning, as we come into our time of prayer, I'd like to pray for you and invite you to either trust Christ to save you or pray for somebody who needs him.

*(Pastor prays)*