

The previous passage has addressed the fact that the believer has died with Christ and been raised with Him. Paul explained what the old life looks like, and warned that we have to keep putting it to death. (Colossians 3:5) He also gave us some gracious imperative commands, commands to set our heart and minds on things above, to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, to let the Word dwell in us richly, and to speak and act under the authority of Jesus (in His name). Tall orders! But they are not out of reach because we are to be clothed with Christ and access His resurrection power. (Romans 13:14) Those who make the excuse that they can't change are really saying they refuse to yield to the power of God and would rather cling to their sin. God's word is true! If there is a failure, it is in our unwillingness to cooperate with His Spirit. (Philippians 4:13)

Today we continue with instructions on how to live a godly life. It doesn't just happen. We don't just sit back and watch our life change. We must cooperate with the new life within us and continue to put the old nature to death. We have to make the effort to conform to the image of Christ, while realizing that we can only do so by His enabling power. It sounds like a contradiction. "You can't do it. You must do it." You can't do it in your own power, but God can enable you to do it if you will yield to His Spirit. (Romans 8:11)

Paul had been writing about our individual spiritual condition. In our text today he moves to our social obligations as people who live in Christ. The basis of society is the home. If the home is sound, society will be healthy. If the home disintegrates, society does as well. That is what you see happening in our culture. It was the downfall of Rome as well as a number of other societies.

What was God's design for the home? It seems odd that God would begin with the wife's role, but the reason goes all the way back to Eden. ¹⁸ *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.* If a woman is in Christ, if she is raised with Jesus, walking in Him, it is fitting that she should submit to her husband.

Now, before you run out screaming, "Chauvinist women haters!", listen to the reasons and the godly application. After the fall from perfection in the Garden, God announced some of the consequences. (Genesis 3:14-19) One of those consequences was that the woman would have the desire to rule over her husband. She was designed to be his helper, but sin had changed the heart to go against its own design. That is a devastating effect! When we desire to do what we aren't designed to do, we end up frustrated and unfulfilled.

Commented [Paul1]: Colossians 3:5 (NIV)

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Commented [Paul2]: Romans 13:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Commented [Paul3]: Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Commented [Paul4]: Romans 8:11 (ESV)

¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Commented [Paul5]: Genesis 3:14-19 (ESV)

¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

This is not saying that women can't have careers. It is not teaching that they should be doormats. It is not implying that they should not have any say in the decisions of the home. What it is saying is that a woman in Christ will recognize her God given design and will allow her husband to make the final decisions and trust God for the outcome.

The ideal Biblical woman is the woman of Proverbs 31. She is industrious, cares for her family, is strong, generous, invests, is wise, teaches kindness, but most of all has respect for the Lord. She is honored by her husband and children and respected by the community. Now that is a fulfilled and happy woman! Amen?

So why would the Spirit through Paul start the family instructions with the command for wives to submit to their husbands? It's because the greatest danger to the home is a wife who insists on always having her way. It crushes the spirit of the husband who longs for her respect. (Ephesians 5:33) It gives the children a distorted view of how a family is meant to operate. It is the natural tendency of fallen woman. Like all the other imperative instructions in the chapter, this is one that she must intentionally allow the Spirit of God to change in her life. She must continually put to death that desire to rule over her husband. It does not result in passivity, but rather in the influential woman of Proverbs 31.

If we just had that instruction, the burden would all fall on the woman, but it doesn't stop there. We now have the husband's role. ¹⁹ *Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.* The woman's greatest need is to feel loved. The husband is to model the love of Christ. The parallel passage in Ephesians 5 tells us that the husband is to love like Christ loved the church. (Ephesians 5:25) Jesus died for the church! That is as intense as love can get. (John 15:13)

Husbands are also affected by the fall. We are affected by seeing our value in our work. We are affected by lust. Our tendency is to use our wife toward for our ends and to take her for granted. So we overwork. We look for love in the wrong places. We are selfish, ungrateful, and treat our wife with harshness. All that must be put to death, and in its place, we must allow the Spirit of God to give us genuine love, His love, for our wife.

When a woman feels secure in her husband's love, it is much easier for her to show her husband the respect he needs and submit to his leading. When a man feels respected and honored by his wife, it is much easier for him to put to death his fallen tendencies and truly love her. (Ephesians 5:21) The result is a heavenly home that is secure and sound. It won't be free of problems, but the problems are easier to deal with because of the stability in the home. The children grow up in an environment that sets the right

Commented [Paul6]: Ephesians 5:33 (ESV)

³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Commented [Paul7]: Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Commented [Paul8]: John 15:13 (ESV)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Commented [Paul9]: Ephesians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

example. They feel secure and are not worried about their parents divorcing. Society is stable and productive.

That leads us to the children. They have a role as well. ²⁰ *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.* If a child is in Christ, just like his or her parents, they should put to death the old nature that tends toward rebellion. They should obey the authority God has placed over them. The picture in the home is to be a mirror of our relationship with our heavenly Father. We place our trust in Him and are obedient. The father in the home, for better or worse, represents God to the children. Fathers have a heavy responsibility to represent Him. How we do that forms their first impressions of God, the heavenly Father. That is the reason for the next instruction.

²¹ *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.* We must encourage our children and grandchildren more than we correct them. They need loving guidance, but more than anything else they need to be encouraged in their God given abilities and gifts. Encouraging them in the right direction goes a lot further than making them feel bad about wrong choices. Love is more powerful than anger. Seeing their value in the Lord, will overcome the esteem the world gives them when they follow its ways. Watch for signs of them yielding to Christ and tell them what it means to you to see that in them. Share how you found your calling. And that is one of our greatest callings in life.

Today's music is seducing another generation toward hate and self-destruction. Rather than knock it for its style, find the same style that has godly content. Talk about the content of the destructive music and ask them if they really want to think about those things. (Philippians 4:8) For the child that is in Christ, ask them if they would be comfortable sharing those headphones with Jesus during that song. Instead of discouraging them, you are encouraging them to think about what they are doing and to make godly choices. If you aren't sure what to offer as an alternative, ask one of the young adults that are in Christ and they will probably be able to guide you to the same style with godly lyrics. I listened to some recently that had a solid Biblical perspective. It wasn't my style of music, but I was impressed!

Next, the Apostle moves to the field of labor. ²² *Slaves, 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.* A large percentage of the early church was slaves. We can relate this to employees. When I was in the workforce, this verse always convicted me. The boss has the right to ask you to do anything that is ethical. Unlike slaves, you have a choice to work for them or not. So if they are paying for your time, you have an obligation to give your time to them. The warning goes to the heart of the

Commented [Paul10]: Philippians 4:8 (ESV)
⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

issue. You can look like you are doing what was requested, but not be doing it with a sincere heart. God sees the heart. To cheat those in authority over you is to mock the final and great authority, God.

There is a great general instruction within this command to slaves. Christians should be sincere and act from the heart. Earlier in the passage we were warned to not be deceitful. (Colossians 3:9) *If we are faking our actions to impress people, we are living for the approval of man rather than God. It means we haven't found the security of knowing how we are valued in Jesus. Our life is focused around the wrong things. People-pleasing is a difficult thing to forsake. (Galatians 1:10) We all want to be valued and respected. The only way to really overcome it is to know our value is in Jesus and His love for us.*

Sometimes we act differently than we feel out of respect and love for others. That is a different matter. That is putting the old nature to death. Only you and God really know the condition of your heart. If you detect that your behavior is just for the approval of man, take time with the Lord to let Him show you why you are so desirous of that. Let Him reveal how He can meet that need in your heart. There are times when this issue needs counseling to help overcome some habits or thought patterns that have been formed. Believers should always act out of sincerity and never for the sake of impressing or deceiving others.

To the slaves, Paul goes on to say, *²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.* He's reminding them that all service to those placed over us is ultimately service to the Lord. (Ephesians 6:7) *That is why we should be sincere when we are seen or not. It applies to every laborer. The Christian labors for God. (Matthew 9:37-38) This is where the Christian work ethic originated. The Christian should be the best employee. He works as unto God, not himself, not even the company. The Lord is the unseen observer of all that we do. Since we know He is just and repays for all service done for Him, we should work knowing we are investing in eternity. (Luke 14:14) Our eternal inheritance is not speculation. It can't rust or be stolen. (Matthew 6:20) It is the only sure way to invest for the future.*

If every employment is about serving Christ, then shouldn't we be excited to go to work? Shouldn't we see our work as ministry? Just like the instructions for the home make the home a heavenly home, so these instructions for our mindset toward work will make our employment a blessing rather than a burden. A happy sincere employee is more likely to be promoted and trusted than the one who is constantly complaining about his work.

Commented [Paul11]: Colossians 3:9 (NIV)
⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

Commented [Paul12]: Galatians 1:10 (NIV)
¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Commented [Paul13]: Ephesians 6:7 (NIV)
⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,

Commented [Paul14]: Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)
³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;
³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

Commented [Paul15]: Luke 14:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Commented [Paul16]: Matthew 6:20 (NIV)
²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

I wrote our Christian radio station and reminded them that work isn't meant to be a burden but an opportunity to serve God. (1Corinthians 10:31) The way they talk about Mondays and Fridays makes it sound like we have to do this drudgery that is forced on us by the curse. That is not the attitude of the New Testament! **You are serving the Lord Christ! Should we speak despairingly about serving Him?** I don't think so! It perpetuates a wrong attitude toward work and keeps us from the joy of service to Christ. (Psalm 100:2)

²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. This is in regards to the slave deceiving his master about his work. It certainly applies to all situations. God is just. The books will balance. You don't escape justice because of your status in life. Money may buy you a good lawyer, but it won't buy God. In the Roman world there were all kinds of preferential treatment according to your status or occupation. In the kingdom of God there is no such thing. The only favor you get is in Christ, and that doesn't spare you from the consequences of sin in this life.

Now for the other side of the employer – employee relationship.¹ *Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.* The Christian owner of slaves had to change his mindset. Romans treated slaves like tools, mere objects to be used up and discarded. The Christian slave owner was to be just and fair, and so too, the Christian employer. (Leviticus 19:13) Remember, we represent our Master in heaven and He expects you to treat others as He treats you. (Matthew 18:33) He is the standard, for the father and the slave owner/employer.

Consider how this would have created a much more favorable environment for the servant. It would help them to work with sincerity. It would even make them feel special among slaves to be treated better than the average. If they weren't a believer, it would certainly make them think about what had made such a change in their employer. (Ephesians 6:9)

The great Master is God, and we are all servants. Some refuse to serve and will only serve self. Others do so insincerely thinking that heartless performance is enough. But if we who believe will heed God's instructions, others will see God's good intentions for our homes and our work are for our good. When we do things out of selfishness, we make it difficult for those around us to see the goodness of God.

When it comes to home and work, are you clothed in Christ? Are you renewed in knowledge? Do you have the heavenly mindset? Are you demonstrating for others the goodness of God by yielding to His design? Are you passing on the design of God to your progeny?

Commented [Paul17]: 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

³¹ So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Commented [Paul18]: Psalm 100:2 (ESV)

² Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Commented [Paul19]: Leviticus 19:13 (ESV)

¹³ "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.

Commented [Paul20]: Matthew 18:33 (ESV)

³³ And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"

Commented [Paul21]: Ephesians 6:9 (ESV)

⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Paul was giving these instructions to help the Colossians experience Christ in their daily life. How are they speaking to you today so that you can experience more of the goodness of God in your home and work? Do you need an attitude adjustment about the role God has for you? Do you really believe His way is the best way?

Questions

- 1 Go over the preceding instructions.
- 2 Why is the home so important?
- 3 Why start with the wife?
- 4 What is her struggle?
- 5 What is the ideal Biblical wife?
- 6 What is the man's struggle?
- 7 What does the ideal home look like?
- 8 What is at the root of employee discontentment?
- 9 What should the heart attitude be?
- 10 What is required of the employer?
- 11 What should a Christian business be like?