

The New Household

Colossians 3:16-4:18

God remakes individuals in the image of his Son, but he also remakes families. As we put on Christ, this will show up differently in our lives depending on our stations and callings. Given the attention marriage and family get in our culture, you'd think they would be thriving institutions. But only when we turn to Christ can we fulfill our roles. In order to do this, we can't sprinkle a few inspirational Bible verses over the "religious" parts of our lives. The Word is rich, and must dwell in us richly. This includes but is not limited to our singing which is abundant in both content and form (v16). *Everything* we do bears the name of Christ, and so we should do it intentionally, full of gratitude. Including these next verses!

Wives & Husbands

Paul's first imperative is to wives. They are to submit to their husbands, not to men generally and not absolutely, but as is fitting in the Lord (v18). This refutes both feminism and masculinism, and protects godly women who are to submit to their husbands in everything except sin (cf. Eph. 5:22-24; Gen. 27, 1 Sam. 25). Husbands are commanded to *love* their wives sacrificially, and not to be harsh (v19). Nowhere is the gospel better seen than in marriage where a sacrificial husband leads and a crowning wife follows and complements. And nowhere is the gospel more distorted when this happy order is abandoned.

Children & Fathers

Children are honored as they are addressed and told to obey in everything because this pleases the Lord. It thus results in a long, happy life on the earth (v20; cf. Eph. 6:3). Fathers in particular are told not to embitter or provoke their children so that they become discouraged (v21). The command of obedience does not justify harshness and should not result in discouragement. Father are to be their kids' biggest fans, *and the kids should know it*.

Slaves & Masters

Roman slavery was as harsh as the master wanted to make it, and again Paul goes against the grain of culture, both their and ours. He doesn't tell slaves to rebuke their masters, but rather to obey them from the heart, fearing God (v22). This is where the great verse about working heartily comes from (v23). Our menial work is not forgotten; rather, we are way overpaid by Jesus (vv24-25). Masters are required to be just and fair, remembering they are slaves to God (4:1). Paul knows how to overcome a system of slavery—without killing people—and uses his power to free slaves (v9, Philemon 17-20). This is the work of the gospel.

On Mission Together

Paul's epistle closes not with lazy goodbyes and formalities, but with the latest result of the Christ's work. He urges them to steadfast and attentive prayer for his opportunities (vv2-4), gracious and winsome speech toward outsiders (vv5-6), and brings them up to date on his work on their behalf (vv7-17). From prison, Paul wants grace for them, and so he becomes the means of it not just for them but for the whole world (v18).