

NOTES FROM CLIVE BAINE'S SERMON July 23rd am
Series in Colossians "Rooted and built up in Christ"
Part 10 "The Christian Family"
Text: Colossians 3 v 18 > 4 v 1
Scripture references from the ESV

Colossians 3: 18-4:1 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,^[f] not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. 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. ²⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. **4** ¹ Masters, treat your bondservants^[a] justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

We might perhaps want to avoid preaching on this passage because of a sense of our own inadequacy, but that is the best place to start from! None of us are perfect in our family or working relationships. God alone is perfect and we must look to him for strength to work out our relationships. This passage might be hard for those who have been through or are going through painful times, which may also include having unsaved children, but God is able to bring healing, reconciliation and salvation, giving us a glorious hope.

All that we have learned so far from this letter feeds in to how we work out our relationships in Christian family life, keeping our eyes on Jesus so that we walk in a manner worthy of him and bear much fruit.

- Take time to reread the earlier chapters and reflect on all that is written there

We need to stand strong, not in our own strength, but in his glorious might. We endure, have patience and are thankful because he has saved us. Though at one time, we were alienated and hostile, yet Christ has brought us into the glorious presence of the one who loves us so much. All our sin has been laid on him so that we have forgiveness. We have heard of the amazing work of Christ and of his power over all things. He is the

creator of all things and he holds it all in his hands, with all the fulness of God dwelling in him. We are to reflect his glory in all that we do.

**This might seem impossible,
but we can do it through the strength that Christ gives us.**

All of this needs to be worked out in our family life. We need to hold on to all that Paul is teaching us in order to stand firm against the world, as it continues to diminish the importance of family life. As Christians, we hold fast to a precious truth that the world needs to hear - family life is under God's authority. Rather than looking at other books on marriage and family life, we need to go first and foremost to the word of God to learn how to live the Christian life.

Running through this letter is the message of the three-strand cord that will not be broken. When Christ is at the centre of our relationships, then we do not leave room for the enemy to attack. In marriage, the central cord that is Christ is to be entwined between husband and wife. **And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Eccl 4:12)**

Four words weave their way through this passage:

- **Submit (v18)**
- **Sincerity (V22)**
- **Serving (v24)**

Finally **Sacrifice** - which is the core theme running through Paul's letter.

Husbands and wives (vv18-19): in today's culture, submission to anyone (whether within marriage or to any other kind of authority) is frowned upon and regarded as unhealthy. The Bible makes it very clear that, in marriage, the wife is joined to the man and the two become one, with Jesus at the centre as their stronghold. Together, they are called to submit to the word of God within their marriage. It is vital for us to understand what is said in Genesis, as Paul draws upon it here.

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to^{fi} your husband, but 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; (Genesis 3:16-17)

God created Adam out of the dust, but Eve was created from Adam's rib, because God saw that Adam needed a helper. Jesus makes it clear that, despite the result of sin coming into the world, husband and wife become one in Christ and must pull in one direction, not in different ways. The wife is to be clothed in honour, reverence and obedience, and is to think well of her husband as he carries out the duties of family life. Husbands are not to look down on their wives or to speak ill of them.

- You are to love your wife and care for her because she is a part of you.

As the church submits to Christ, so a wife is to submit to her husband. The marriage should be a place of thanksgiving, of looking up to Jesus. A wife is to behave to her husband in a way that is honouring to God, even when it doesn't seem right. In that situation, the place to go is to the Lord. If you are concerned that your husband is doing something that isn't right, then wrestling in prayer for your husband is vital. Even when all is well, prayer for your husband is vital.

Husbands are to love their wives (v19 above). To love your wife well, you are to cherish and protect her and to look upon her as a blessing from God. You are to show her Gospel love and not to be harsh with her. It must be a sincere, honest love and not manipulative. When you look at Jesus, and see the depth of his love and his servant heart for us, you can see how to love in that way.

Children are to submit to parents (v20). If you have godly parents who are signposts to Jesus, then you are blessed indeed! The fifth commandment says: **Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12)**. Children who obey their parents are living the way God intended. As we live in faithfulness to his covenant (whatever our age!), we will find his promises to be full of blessing and trustworthy. Children are to be encouraged to do what pleases the Lord, and grandparents, too, have an important role to play in this. If parents do not set an example of what is right before God, then their nurturing is flawed, and they cannot expect their children to live rightly. Equally, if parents need to

bribe their children to do what is right, that is not obedience! Obedience comes from a heart that is willing and is a submissive response to love and serve for the good of others.

Fathers are also called on to behave rightly towards their children (v21). Roman culture led to men being heavy-handed toward their families. Paul urged them not to lay discouragement on their children, or to give commands that were over-bearing. They should behave in a way that is Christ-centred and full of the gracious authority of God. Children are quick to notice inconsistency in our behaviour. Fathers are not to show favouritism, do anything that will provoke their children to anger or discourage them.

It may be that we have tried to mould our children around Jesus but their hearts are far from God, and we have been trying to make them believe in our own strength. We can give them an awareness of God, but ultimately it is

God who saves. We might need to look at our behaviour and consider whether anything we have done has caused them to turn away from Jesus.

Bond-servants (v22) The Roman Empire was built on slave labour and bond-servants, and Paul addressed the issue of bond-servants and their behaviour. What he has to say applies to all of us in the manner that we serve, whether we are employed, serving in our families or serving in the church.

Paul's greatest concern is for their salvation because only in Jesus can they find the hope they need. However, as believers, they are to obey their earthly masters. We also need to obey those who are in authority over us in whatever sphere of work God has placed us.

There may be occasions when our employer asks us to do something that is contrary to God's law. In this instance, we must seek the Lord in prayer for his guidance, since Paul tells us that we are to work as for the Lord and not for men. We can be sure we will receive this guidance when we seek to please God rather than man. God is watching all we do, and we are to do it with a sincere heart, not as people-pleasers, but all the time

considering that what we do is for the one who reigns over all. That higher heavenly authority should matter more than the transient authority of our employer.

- When we serve with this attitude, we have the assurance that God will be with us, and his promises will stand firm no matter what is happening in our employment or how difficult we might find our boss.

Masters are also called on to treat their employees in a manner that will please God.

In our great inheritance, we have something that far outweighs the world.

In all of these relationships, the key is to look at how our heavenly Father treats us. We need to live in the light of God as we relate to others. We cannot do any of this alone, but we have a helper who works in us, empowering us to

- Be submissive
- Have sincerity
- Be servant hearted
- Be sacrificial

To live in this way brings glory to God and, for us, an inheritance that will last for ever.

We can only do this with the help of God.