

“The Supremacy of Christ at Home and Work”
Colossians 3:18-4:1

Intro: (Col. 3:18-4:1; pg. ____) Why aren't more people attending church these days? If we want to reach people with the gospel, (and we do!) this is a question we must ask and answer. In his research, George Barna tells us two primary reasons why people avoid church. #1) Hypocritical behavior of the church, and #2) they are not convinced the church has anything to offer. Barna says: “The major [obstacles] are indifference and value. Millions of the unchurched do not care about church involvement because they do not see any need to get involved. Millions more stay away because they cannot make the value equation work. In other words, when they calculate the amount of time, money, and energy they would have to invest in church, they do not see a reasonable return on the investment. Unchurched people, like most Americans, are practical individuals.” (*Grow Your Church From the Outside In*, 33-34).

Now, it would be tempting for us to dismiss this research, but we should weigh out the validity. Sadly, there is much hypocrisy among Christians and those who identify with Jesus to a degree by our church attendance. I believe one of the key reasons for this is that we compartmentalize our lives to such a degree that we essentially push Jesus out of certain aspects of our lives.

FCF: We live out our faith as if it were a trip to a department store. When I go to a department store, I pick and choose where I want to spend my time. Electronics. Check. Cosmetics. I'll pass. Men's wear. Check. Home goods. I'll pass. And we do this with our Christian life. Church on Sunday. I'll bring Jesus there. Check. Friday night out with the crew. I'll pass. Prayer before a meal. Check. Prayer when you're feeling the heat at work. I'll pass.

Paul shows us in this passage that we must bring all of life: every sphere of our lives, every moment of our lives under the Lordship of Christ. Seven times in nine verses Paul references the Lordship of Christ. He should motivate everything in our lives. No sphere of the Christian's life goes untouched by the influence of Jesus.

Paul specifically addresses two of those spheres in Colossians 3:18-4:1: the family and the workplace. He's going to teach us that...

The Point: Christians must make Christ supreme at home and at work.

First, Paul addresses the family structure in vv. 18-21 and says...

I. Make Christ supreme in your home life (3:18-21).

Before we jump into these specific commands, let me provide a few encouragements.

- 1) *These verses are for all of us.* Some may read this text and say: “A lot of this text doesn't apply to me. I'm not a wife. I'm not a husband. I'm not a parent.” Well, most of us here today will be in these positions at some point in our life. And even if you don't find yourself in this station of life...
- 2) *These verses provide great instruction for our prayers.* If you are unmarried and/or do not have kids, you can pray for those who do. If you are married, pray for those who desire to be.
- 3) Finally, let me say that we at Redemption Hill value families and children. We want to cultivate an environment where families can thrive, where marriages are built and strengthened, where mothers and fathers are equipped to be godly parents.

Trans: To that end, Paul lays out some specific instructions about how to make Christ supreme in the home. First he says in verse 18...

a. Wives, submit to your husbands (3:18)

- Here is a pointed command given for a particular reason and point of emphasis.
- This first command may be the most difficult for our culture to stomach. It sounds so archaic and so contrary to what we see in our culture.
- Before we jump to conclusions, let's examine more closely what the word "Submit" means *and* what it does not mean. First..
 - What it does *not* mean...
 - It does not mean that wives or women are inferior. Most of the men in this room would say: my wife is smarter than me, cooler than me, and better looking than me. At least that would be a really wise thing to say fellas!
 - It does not mean that wives are to be quiet little angels never voicing their opinion. Man, we've got some spunky women in this church. Nothing wrong with a little sass.
 - It does not mean that husbands are to be dictators in any way. Husbands are to lovingly lead their wives and families, but input and counsel can and should be exchanged when it comes to decision-making.
 - It does not mean that wives follow their husband if they lead them away from obedience to Christ into sin. Jesus has ultimate authority in the home. That's part of what it does not mean.
 - So what does it mean?
 - It means to voluntarily put oneself under the leadership of another. Biblical submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership in the home. I like how others have described it as a *disposition to yield* and an *inclination to follow* the leadership of her husband.
 - It means we recognize God has designed a particular order for relationships in the home.
 - It means men take the lead in the home. Men are, as the Bible says, to be the head of the household, which means they lead, provide for, and protect their families. To be more specific, men are to lead their homes in every way and that includes spiritually!
 - It also means men will be held more accountable before God. Think about the episode in the garden in the first 3 chapters of the Bible. Who ate the forbidden fruit first? Eve. Who did God come looking for? Adam. Why? Because he was the leader and ultimately more accountable.

Now, some may be thinking of objections to such instruction...

- 1) This is just an isolated text in Colossians. Nope. It's Ephesians 5. It's Titus 2. Oh that's just Paul. Nope. It's Peter too (1 Pet 3:1)
- 2) But, Tanner, Paul is just capitulating to the culture. This is so first century. We live in the 21st century. Women can vote these days!
 - 1) On these issues, he grounds his argument in creation, not culture (1 Tim. 2)
 - 2) On these issues, he grounds his encouragement in the Lordship of Christ. This is huge!. What does he say at the end of v. 18? "as is fitting in the Lord"
- 3) Aren't we all one in Christ? Yes, we are all one in him as Col. 3:11 points out. Yes, we are all *equal* in him,. The gospel doesn't erase social distinctions and roles, but it does transform them!
- Think about the Trinity. Is Jesus fully God? Yes. Is Jesus equal with the Father and share the same essence of deity? Yes. Do they share the same role? No. Did he submit to the Father's will in all things? Yes. Ladies, let Jesus be your example.
- Trans: Wives/Ladies, don't think this word is strictly for you. Paul levels a command to husbands in verse 19 with equal to greater force.

b. Husbands, love your wives (3:19)

- I know some of our guys in here after verse 18 were thinking about all the possibilities when they got home. Let me be clear on this: Husbands, you can't go home this afternoon and say, "_____"
- Husbands, this is how you lead. You lead by love. Real men know how to love.
- Men, listen to what Ephesians 5 says about our role and responsibility as Husbands: "Husbands, love

your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

- Christ is your standard. Men, let Jesus be your example and lead in such a way that your wife wants to joyfully submit to your leadership. How?
 - Sacrificial Service – Look for opportunities to serve. Ask your wife how you can serve.
 - Centered on the Word “wash her in the water of the Word”
 - Men, how often do you open the Bible with your wife? (1 to 1 Bible reading; read a chapter, discuss it and talk about how it applies to your life). Why is this so important?
 - For the purpose of her sanctification (Jn. 17:17)
 - So, in summary, real men know how to use a towel and a sword. (unpack)
- What woman would not want this? What marriage would not thrive where the husband took care of bizness like this?
- Husbands, pursue your wife. Date your wife. Shake the dust off of your game and work your magic like you did *before* you were married. And...
- “do not being harsh” with them. This is another way for you to love your wife. Seek to be patient and understanding in all of your interaction.
- A beautiful marriage is one where wives carry a submissive spirit and men love like Jesus.
- Paul then moves from marriage relationship to the relationship between parents and children. Verse 20.

c. Children, obey your parents (3:20)

- **Obey.**
 - Children, God has given you parents because he loves you. No one in this world, other than God, loves you more than your parents love you. They ask you to obey because they love you and they know it’s for your good.
 - “in everything”. We could say, “In every way.”
- **Right away.**
 - Don’t wait. Don’t put it off.
- **All the way.**
 - When you are asked to make your bed, don’t just throw the cover back in place. When you are asked to clean up don’t just throw a couple toys in the basket, clean up everything.
- **In a cheerful way.**
 - Don’t pout and shrug your shoulders and roll your eyes. When you are asked to apologize to your brother or sister, don’t just say, “Sorry!” Obey with a smile on your face. Why? Kids look in v. 20, “for this pleases the Lord.”

d. Fathers, parent without provocation (3:21)

- “do not provoke your children,”
 - This is a warning against misusing our authority as parents. Paul just instructed children to obey their parents in everything in verse 20 so he is not leaving mothers out, but now he is instructing fathers, in particular, to exercise their authority and discipline in a way that builds children up, rather than tearing them down.
 - “provoke” means to irritate, to stir up. The idea is that we would not provoke our children toward a rebellious attitude. We can do this by failing to set proper boundaries and clear expectation, by harsh and degrading tones, by neglecting to love our children and spend quality time with our children. Do you consistently find quality time with your children? Do you go out and have fun with them? Do you play with them and talk with them? We only have one opportunity to be a great father, a great mother, to love our children as God has loved us.
 - We can do this at times by being overprotecting and over-disciplining, or disciplining in the wrong way. Our discipline needs to be based on clear expectations and boundaries. Our

- discipline needs to be loving, patient, not impulsive or harsh.
- “lest they become discouraged.” as Paul goes on to say.
 - Parenting the right way should lead our children to be hopeful, confident, and courageous.

II. Make Christ supreme in your work life (3:22-4:1).

- If we didn’t have enough fun with verse 18 with the idea of biblical submission, now we can address the issue of slavery. I want to do so very briefly by bringing in some historical and textual observations.
 - 1) Paul is not endorsing the institution of slavery. He is dealing with a huge aspect of the culture in the 1st century world. One scholar estimates that nearly 1/3 of the population in cities like Colossae would have been slaves.
 - 2) Liberation from slavery in the Greco-Roman world was not the obvious good that it is in the modern world. Though some slavery was forced, many voluntarily sold themselves into slavery.
 - 3) Additionally, I know we read these words with American eyes, but slaves did not come from one ethnicity or social class in the first century. And...
 - 4) Finally, Christians were a tiny religious group living in a powerful, authoritarian empire. They lacked power to change policy. But, it is significant that Paul addresses them as equal members of the community. Already the gospel is subverting the institution of slavery.
- I want to take the principles Paul lays out in vv. 22-4:1 and apply them to our work.
- Trans: How does Jesus transform the workplace?

Principles for the Work Place

1. Do your job (22).

- a. Do your job well. Whenever you are tasked with a responsibility, knock that joker out.
- b. Trans: You might say, “Well, I don’t really care for my supervisor. I don’t agree with their approach. I don’t even have a lot of respect for them...”

2. Do your job with the right motives (22).

- a. “not by way of eye-service, as people pleasers”
 - i. Story: Conditioning...
 - ii. We’re still tempted with this today. We are prone to be motivated by what people see than what God sees (and he does see; Prov. 15:3 – The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch over the good and evil). That’s why Paul finishes verse 22 by saying.
- b. “but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.”
 - i. integrity drives you and your work, not a watching eye.
 - ii. Our respect for God and a desire to please him should drive us to do our jobs well.
 - iii. Trans: Then Paul says in v. 23...

3. Do your job the right way (23).

- a. “Whatever you do, work heartily”
 - i. Did you notice Paul says, “whatever you do”? What task are you above? Are you too good to take out the trash? Above staying late to help someone else finish a project?
 - ii. Paul says, “whatever we do, work heartily” Work hard. Put your best foot forward.
 - iii. It’s so tempting to be slack in our work, to fall into the temptation of laziness.
 - iv. How great is your work ethic? Do people see your dedication and commitment?
 - v. And what drives our work ethic?
- b. “as for the Lord and not for men.”
 - i. When you punch the time clock, you get to work for Jesus. Crunch numbers, write reports, serve and care for people: do what you do for Jesus.
 - ii. Have this attitude: Jesus is my supervisor. Jesus is my manager. Jesus is my professor. Jesus is my editor-in-chief. You say, “you don’t know my boss! They are straight up

evil. They are nothing like Jesus!” Well, that’s all the more reason to work for them as if they were him. Perhaps God will use you to change them.

4. Do your job for the right reward (24-25).

- a. Why do you do what you do? For fame? Notoriety? A promotion? The respect of others? Do you do your job for money? Listen, I understand we all have bills to pay, and as Jesus say, “the laborer is worthy of his wages,” but our primary motivation should be what Paul says in v.24
- b. “knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.”
 - i. “Inheritance” refers to our personal share in the kingdom of God. This is our reward. The divine “will of God,” if you are in Christ, has your name on it.
- c. “You are serving the Lord Christ.”
 - i. At every turn, Paul has hammered the Lordship of Christ as *the* motivating factor for the way we work.
 - ii. Gospel Motivation: Jesus worked heartily, finishing his work to the Father’s glory enduring the cross, because there was joy set before him.
 - iii. Finally...

5. Do your job with justice (4:1).

- a. Paul has word for those in positions of authority as well.
- b. In the way you lead, in the way you run your business, treat people with “justice and fairness.”
- c. Why? “knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Again, what’s the motivator? The gospel. Let Jesus transform your workplace.

Conclusion:

Are you ready to bring all of your life under the Lordship of Christ? Are you ready to display your commitment to Christ in the details of your home life and your work life? If you are, a watching world will take notice and through your words and deeds, people will begin to see that Jesus really makes all the difference.

If your marriage is struggling, struggling in parenting, work life is a continual burden, go to Jesus.