

Colossians, Chapter Three, Lesson Three

SERVING THE LORD Colossians 3:18-25

STIMULATE

** Last week we saw that it was important for us to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. We defined that as doing everything (whatever we do in word or deed) by acting consistently with who Jesus is and what He wants for us. According to Colossians 3:16, how can we know who He is and what He wants?

By letting "the word of Christ richly dwell" within our hearts we can better understand and obey our gracious Lord.

** What did our heart's wardrobe look like? What are we to put on each day if we want to be like Christ?

1) Compassion 2) Kindness 3) Humility 4) Gentleness 5) Patience and 6) Love

** Do you feel that you have done a better job this week of living your life like Jesus would have you to do?

If we are "**Putting on Love**" each day, we can increase our level of success for His glory!

MOTIVATE

** As we began this marvelous third chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians two weeks ago, I cautioned you that our studies were going to be "intensely practical". We have seen so far the need for us to be "Putting Aside Sin" daily, while we are at the same time "Putting On Love". Now that we are prepared by the study of God's word and the application of its truths to our lives, Paul now wants us to put our Christlikeness on display in the one area of our life where it can be most difficult...in the home.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul delineates the qualifications for an elder. In that list, he gives us the one place where the elder is to have proven himself, that is in the home. "...He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?..." (Verses 4 and 5)

All of us, like the elder who sets the example for us to follow, must first live out the reality of our Christian lives at home; before it can have any credibility or impact in the world around us. Let's look together at what Paul has to say about "**Serving the Lord**", at home first and then in the world. Please open your Bible to Colossians 3:18-25 as we set our hearts toward the Word of God.

Read passage (V.18-22) (V.23-25)

Opening Prayer

Serving the Lord

INVESTIGATE

Before we begin our passage for today, may I issue a word of caution? Familiarity can breed contempt! You may think you already know the principles contained in this passage, but I would ask you to be open to whatever the Holy Spirit might teach you anew through this study, even if you have memorized the entire thing.

V.18 ** Alright then, let's get intensely practical. With whom does Paul begin his instruction regarding living the Christian life, in the name of the Lord Jesus, right in our own homes?

He begins with the "wives".

** Paul gives them a direct command, but he also gives them the reason for the command. First the command, what is it?

"...be subject to your husbands..." The phrase "be subject to" translates *hupotasso*, and means "to subject oneself". Here, Paul is painting the beautiful picture of a godly wife who willingly places herself under the loving headship of her husband. This same term is used of Christ when He was in the home and submitted to His parents. cf. Luke 2:51

** Are wives to be subject to any male that happens to be a husband?

No - they are to "be subject to **your** husbands". This is not some cold orthodoxy, cranked out under compulsion, being subject to a detached, impersonal authority. Paul is calling for the Christian wife to submit to the man with whom she shares an intimate, personal, vital relationship. When Paul wrote this instruction to Ephesus he said, "...to **your own** husband..."
cf. Ephesians 5:22

** What is the reason given by Paul for this kind of voluntary, Christ honoring submission?

"...as is fitting in the Lord". This is how He designed the family to operate. The role of every Christian is to live joyfully and voluntarily in subjection to those Christ puts over us. First of all we are in subjection to Christ. cf. Ephesians 5:24

But then we are:

Subject to God's law - Romans 8:6-7

Subject to government - Romans 13:1 and 5

Subject to parents - Ephesians 6:1

Subject to one another - Ephesians 5:21

Here in our passage, the wife is given her most important area of life for applying the principle of Christian subjection.

V.19 ** OK - The godly, Christ honoring wife is joyfully and willingly placing herself in subjection to her own husband's God ordained headship. What two things are the husbands commanded to do?

1) "...love your wives..."

2) "...do not be embittered against them."

** Looking at these one at a time, what is the God designed environment for the wife's subjection?

1) It is in the safety of his continual love. The verb used here (*agapate*) is a present tense imperative and indicates a continuous action. It is best understood to express a willing love, not the love of passion or emotion, but the love of choice. A life long covenant kind of love, it could be translated as "keep on loving".

** Is there an example for husbands to follow as they strive to love their own wives in this Christ honoring fashion?

Yes - they are to love their wives, "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." cf. Ephesians 5:25 This is a sacrificial love which is to operate everyday in the life of the godly husband.

** Again, we can see that this type of sacrificial love is to be expressed by all Christians. Do you recall what Paul said to the Philippians about our sacrifice for others?

Philippians 2:3-4 - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interests of others."

If that humble, sacrificial attitude is to be part of every Christian's life, it first of all should be the description of the loving husband's character.

** What sin in the heart of the husband could get in the way of him loving his wife in this Christlike manner?

2) The sin of bitterness. This imperative could be translated "stop being bitter" or "do not have the habit of being bitter". cf. Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:15

Bitterness is completely self-serving! Simon Magus was driven by bitterness to try and purchase the gift of God with money, so that he could turn it into sordid gain. cf. Acts 8:18-19 and Peter's response in Acts 8:20-23

Even though the Church has failed the Lord and will continue to sin against His expressed will, Jesus never becomes bitter against us. He gave His life so that He might demonstrate His sacrificial love for all eternity, which He has for His bride. That is precisely how a husband is to love his wife!

V.20 ** As Paul continues his point of genuine Christianity beginning at home, who does he address next?

The children!

** What are children to do - and how thoroughly are they to do it?

"...be **obedient** to your parents in **all** things..."

** There are two great reasons for children to obey their parents. One is given here in our text and the other comes from Ephesians 6:1, what are they?

1) "...for this is well-pleasing to the Lord."

2) "...for this is right."

As the principle of authority and submission continues to be played out in a loving environment, in the home, the Lord is very pleased because He has said that it is right!

V.21 ** What are godly fathers to avoid in the raising of their children?

Exasperating them, or provoking them to anger.

Note: Fathers (pateres) can be translated parents, as in Hebrews 11:23. Both parents must avoid this sin, which is usually caused by impatience.

** What negative impact on the heart of a child can be avoided if godly parents do not exasperate their children?

"...that they may not lose heart."

V.22 ** Still in the household, to whom does Paul now direct his instruction?

Christian slaves!

** What does he want them to do?

"...in all things obey those who are your masters on earth..." lit. "according to the flesh"

** How do we know that Paul is building a case for the integrity of the Christian life being lived out first inside the home?

He is calling for obedience "with sincerity of heart". The Lord is appalled at all superficial displays of obedience. That which is "with external service, as those who merely please men."
cf. Matthew 23:27

** Did you notice at the end of verse 22, what drives us toward spiritual integrity?

"...fearing the Lord." A reverence for Jesus Christ who gave His life for us!
cf. Philippians 2:12-13

V.23 ** While continuing to instruct slaves, Paul's next words should certainly be applied by us today in our life outside the home. How limited is the scope of Paul's next command?

It is not! "Whatever you do..."

** How should we do all that we do?

"...do your work heartily..." lit. "from the soul"
My mom told me repeatedly as I was growing up, "If a job is worth doing, its worth doing well".

** While that is a noble thought, Paul takes us to an even higher plain. Whom are we serving!

We are "**Serving the Lord**" - "...as for the Lord rather than for men..."

V.24 ** What do we know for sure, as we spend our life "**Serving the Lord**"?

"...that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance."
cf. 2Corinthians 5:10, 1Peter 1:3-4

** Just to drive the point home, of what does Paul remind us?

"It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

V.25 ** What will become of the Christian wife, husband, parent, child or slave who does not heed this call to obedience, but does wrong in defiance of God's word?

He "...will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality." Our God is just! cf. Galatians 6:7, Acts 10:34-35

EXTRICATE

** What are some of the attitudes or characteristics of Christians who want to spend their life "**Serving the Lord**" according to our passage for today?

Subjection, humility, sacrificial love, obedience, patience, integrity and reverence for the Lord.

DELINEATE

** Obviously we can apply what we have learned regarding our own walk with the Lord. If we are husbands, we can respond by truly loving our wives as Christ loves His church. But, what can we do with everything else we have learned?

We must remember the general principles which apply to all Christians, and be prepared to share with others what God says about the way they live.

EVALUATE

** How serious am I about spending my life "**Serving the Lord**", with sincerity of heart?

ACTIVATE

** May we serve Him with the devotion and reverence He deserves.

Closing prayer